

Religious Studies PhD Program Student Handbook

2023-2024

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ASU prohibits all forms of discrimination, harassment and retaliation. To view ASU's policy please see <https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd401.html>.

Title IX protects individuals from discrimination based on sex in any educational program or activity operated by recipients of federal financial assistance. As required by Title IX, ASU does not discriminate on the basis of sex in the education programs or activities that we operate, including in admission and employment. Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX may be referred to the Title IX Coordinator or to the U.S. Department of Education, Assistant Secretary, or both. Contact titleixcoordinator@asu.edu or 480-965-0696 for more information. Office located at 1120 S. Cady Mall, INTDSB 284. For information on making a report please go to www.asu.edu/reportit/.

GENERAL INFORMATION

G1. Welcome to the Program

Welcome to the Religious Studies PhD program at Arizona State University (ASU)! We're excited to have you join us. This handbook will help you navigate your time at ASU, outlining resources that will help you succeed and policies that will keep you in good academic standing and on schedule for a timely graduation. Our hope is that much of the information that you need can be found here and that you will consult this first when questions arise. But if you can't find all the answers here, you should certainly reach out to Mark Barrios (Graduate Programs Coordinator for the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies) at Mark.Barrios@asu.edu and/or to Joel Gereboff (Associate Head of Graduate Studies in Religious Studies) at joel.gereboff@asu.edu. We're here to help and are happy to do so. Our program is first and foremost about participating in the academic study of religion. You will learn from your outstanding peers and professors as we pursue exploring important aspects of how religions have been central to the human experience over the centuries. You will develop the creative, analytical, skills and enhance your abilities communicate effectively. We'll be doing that soon enough. But, in this handbook, you will mostly find information both about the logistics of our program and about the policies, procedures, and resources that will help to keep you in good academic standing.

G2. Our Collegial, Congenial, and Inclusive Community

The Religious Studies PhD Program is committed to creating an inclusive community where everyone can thrive. We uphold the ASU Charter which states that we are “measured not by whom we exclude, but rather by whom we include and how they succeed.” Our small program provides an excellent setting for learning from your peers, from professors within Religious Studies and from colleagues across the campus.

We also know that learning is richer and more rewarding when there is a sense of community. We strive to create such a community through faculty being open and available to students and through programs such as the Religious Studies Forum that bring together faculty and graduate students for lectures and conversations on a range of topics relevant to our field of study. Lastly, our graduate students have formed the Graduate Religious Studies Society, which meets regularly, and serves as a way to provide advise and feedback to the Religious Studies Faculty on relevant issues.

G3. Our Faculty

The Religious Studies Faculty are committed to maintaining excellence in the major subject areas of Religious Studies and to participating in innovative programs that build an interdisciplinary setting for exploring the relevance of developments associated with religion throughout the course of history with particular emphasis on today's world.

G4. Student Success

ASU is one of the largest—if not *the* largest— Research University in the United States. That means there is a wide range of resources available to help you succeed as a graduate student. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources as they will greatly assist you. Here, we highlight some of the

resources we expect that you'll find most useful, though you should be aware that this is only a partial list.

Professional Development Workshops: To help ensure the success of our students, the Religious Studies Faculty sponsors several extra-curricular workshops on a rotating basis. These may include topics such as: "Teaching and Pedagogy," "Preparing for the Job Market," "Writing and Research in Religious Studies," and "Getting the Most Out of Graduate School."

Placement: Our PhD program is designed to prepare you both for more advanced degree programs and for various employment opportunities within and outside of academia. Many of our PhD graduates have received academic appointments at leading colleges and universities across the United States and around the world. Others have gone on to careers in such fields as law public, non-governmental and international organizations or to pursue careers as counselors and freelance writers. Since we're a small program, we don't have a designated placement director, but the Associate Head of Graduate Studies (AHGS) will help you both with finding jobs and programs to apply to and with putting together a professional dossier and/or application.

Funding: Doctoral students generally receive five years of full funding through teaching assistantships. Additional support is provided through research funds administered by SHPRS and provided via a block grant from the Graduate College. A call for proposals takes place twice per year in the fall and spring. We also encourage you to see the following link for ASU's information on [Financial Aid and Scholarship Services](#). The Grad College gathers many funding opportunities at this page: <https://shprs.asu.edu/graduateawards> while also including good information at their [Pay for your Graduate Education Site](#). Additional sources of funding include various research centers and programs at ASU such as The Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, The Center for Jewish Studies and the Center for Asian Research. Finally, be sure to check your email regularly, as financial opportunities are occasionally sent via email by program faculty and staff.

Mental Health: Graduate school is challenging and those who are most successful typically attend to their overall wellbeing and mental health. ASU offers professional [Counseling Services](#), EMPACT: a 24 hour ASU-dedicated crisis hotline: 480-921-1006 (with Crisis TEXTLINE: Text HOME to 741741). In addition there are a range of wellness resources including Live Well @ASU: <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling>
TAO [Connect](#) – a self-help tool for emotional well-being, Center for Mindfulness, Compassion and Resilience: <https://mindfulnesscenter.asu.edu/>, and a set of [10 Best Practices in Graduate Student Wellbeing](#).

Advising: The Religious Studies PhD Program has multiple people who can help answer your questions, but a good place to start is with Mark Barrios (PhD Graduate Programs Coordinator for SHPRS) at Mark.Barrios@asu.edu and/or Joel Gereboff (Associate Head of Graduate Studies in Philosophy) at joel.gereboff@asu.edu. All students should by their second semester have identified a primary advisor and that faculty member should serve a major role in advising.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center (<https://tutoring.asu.edu/student-services/writing-centers>) helps students at every stage of the writing process and with all types of assignments and genres of writing. The Writing Center operates on a peer-to-peer, collaborative model where graduate students meet one-on-one with a graduate writing tutor in 60-minute appointments. Our tutors are ASU graduate students who undergo training each semester that provides them with tools and strategies to discuss students' writing goals.

Your Peers: One of the wonderful things about this program is that you will meet dozens of other philosophy students. Introduce yourself! Exchange email addresses! Form study groups! Draw on each other's knowledge and expertise! Also, there is a graduate student-run Discord channel, which is an app available for your smartphone or desktop that allows students to message each other, share documents, post content, and voice chat.

Other ASU Resources: [ASU Libraries](#), [Graduate Student Writing Centers](#), [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#), [Provost's Office](#), [Career Services](#), [Campus Parking](#), [Student Business Services](#), [Sun Devil Student ID Card](#), [IT Help Office](#) and [Campus Dining/Banking/Student Organizations](#).

G5. Situating Our Program within the University

ASU is an enormous enterprise, and so it will help to have a quick orientation to the major branches of the university and their relations to our program. The Religious Studies MA Program is overseen by the Religious Studies Faculty, who are a proper subset of the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies (SHPRS). The Religious Studies Faculty is led by the Head of Religious Studies, currently Jason Bruner (Jason.bruner@asu.edu). And SHPRS is led by the Director of SHPRS, currently Richard Amesbury (Richard.Amesbury@asu.edu). SHPRS faculty manage degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in all three disciplines: History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies. SHPRS is housed within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences ("The College"), which oversees programs ranging from English to Physics. As a graduate program, our program is also overseen by ASU's Graduate College. Each of these organizations—Religious Studies Faculty, SHPRS, The College, and the Graduate College—set policies on different matters. Fortunately, this document captures the vast majority of these policies, and your advisors can help you navigate any other bureaucracies if, or when, that becomes necessary.

SHRS PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

S1. Introduction: Handbook Purpose and Student Responsibility

This handbook provides information on degree requirements for students enrolled in SHPRS PhD programs to ensure consistency in program objectives, maintain the quality of degrees to be awarded, and enable students to progress through their programs in a timely manner. It also provides important web links for students concerning various policies and procedures set by Arizona State University, the Graduate College, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies (SHPRS) on academic standards expected from all students. The handbook and all program policies are reviewed annually and are subject to change. All past and current Handbooks can be viewed on our [Resources](#) page.

It is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with policies and regulations of the Graduate College and Arizona State University and meet deadlines for registration and payment of fees. The resources for this information are the [ASU Graduate College Website](#), the [ASU Catalog](#), and the Graduate Policies and Procedures Manual. Students should discuss questions concerning progress toward their degree with their supervisory committee chair, the director of graduate studies (ADGS), and/or the graduate coordinator.

Enrolled SHPRS graduate students can also find program procedures, forms, and references on the SHPRS PhD Graduate [Resource Website](#).

All university related emails are sent to the Student’s ASU email address. **Students are required to have an active ASU email account and check it frequently.** A guide for establishing and maintaining an ASU email account is found on [this website](#).

Resource	Email or Web Address	Location	Phone
SHPRS Grad Programs Resource Site	https://sites.google.com/asu.edu/shprsgrad		
Graduate College	http://graduate.asu.edu/		(480) 965-6113
ASU Policies and Academic Schedules	https://catalog.asu.edu/		
SHPRS Director, Richard Amesbury	Richard.Amesbury@asu.edu	Coor 4566	(480) 965-7467
SHPRS Associate Director of Graduate Studies, Christopher Jones	CJones36@asu.edu	Coor 6632	(480) 965-5778
Associate Head of Graduate Studies in History, Christopher Jones	CJones36@asu.edu	Coor 4538	(480) 965-5778

Associate Head of Graduate Studies in Religious Studies, Joel Gereboff	Joel.Gereboff@asu.edu	Coor 4548	(480) 965-5778
Associate Head of Graduate Studies in Philosophy, Douglas Portmore	Douglas.Portmore@asu.edu	Coor 3366	
PhD Graduate Programs Coordinator, Mark Barrios	Mark.Barrios@asu.edu	Coor 4499	(480) 965-5778
Student Health & Counseling Services	https://eoss.asu.edu/health https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling	Health Services Bldg	(480) 965-3349 Crisis Hotline: (480) 921-1006
University Registrar	https://students.asu.edu/registration	Student Services, 140	(480) 965-3124
International Student and Scholars Center	https://students.asu.edu/international/issc	Student Services, 170	(480) 727-4776
Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services	https://eoss.asu.edu/accessibility	Matthews Center Building	(480) 965-1234
Student Support Services	https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/supportservices		
Bookstore	https://www.bkstr.com/arizonastatestore/home/en	525 E. Orange Street	(480) 965-3191

S2. SHPRS Organization

The School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies (SHPRS) is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and comprises the disciplines of history, philosophy and religious studies. The Director of SHPRS is the school's chief administrative officer responsible for the overall operation of the school (i.e. faculty, budget, facilities, university policies, and school standards and procedures). The director establishes an executive committee (ExComm) made up of the associate directors of undergraduate studies, graduate studies, and research and heads of faculty for each discipline to advise the SHPRS director on the needs and resources of their academic groups.

The school director, in collaboration with the associate director of graduate studies (ADGS), assigns a faculty member from each academic discipline to serve as Associate Head of Graduate Studies (AHGS) in their discipline. The role of the AHGS is to work with the discipline's faculty to develop new programs, assign graduate teaching assistantships, monitor and ensure program integrity, determine program requirements, and resolve various student issues.

The history, religious studies, and philosophy disciplines also convene graduate committees, made up of graduate faculty members, who work with the AHGS to review applications in admitting new graduate students, improve the graduate programs, oversee student evaluation and mentoring, resolve student concerns, and make policy decisions.

Within each faculty, there are tenured and tenure track faculty who are eligible to serve on supervisory committees for graduate students. Lists of these faculty members can be found on the [websites of each academic program](#).

The disciplines of SHPRS share a staff who support hiring and HR, budgeting and payroll, course scheduling, maintaining the academic catalog and program integrity, advising for undergraduate and graduate students, communications, and event planning. SHPRS employs dedicated program coordinators and academic success specialists who support graduate students in navigating the landscape of Arizona State University from matriculation to completion of each student's academic program.

S3. PhD Program Overviews

A. History PhD Program

The focus of the History program is to encourage the development of advanced skills in research, critical analysis, writing, and teaching needed for a professional career. The PhD program enables each student to seek professional employment as a faculty member in higher education, as a researcher, as a teacher, or as a public historian. Students may enter the PhD program either directly from a bachelor's program or, more commonly, with a master's degree in hand.

B. Philosophy PhD Program

The Philosophy faculty offer a PhD program focusing on practical and applied philosophy. General areas of research include ethics, political philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of law, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, philosophy of religion, and the history of philosophy. Members of our faculty are involved in interdisciplinary work in a variety of fields and enjoy close ties with the Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics, the College of Law, and a number of other graduate programs

at ASU. Philosophy sponsors an active colloquium series and regular philosophical conferences on diverse topics. The Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics also sponsors a wide range of activities, including large-scale conferences, distinguished visitors, and support for graduate study.

C. Religious Studies PhD Program

The focus of the Religious Studies Doctoral program is to promote scholarly excellence and understanding about the ways in which religion has been a vital feature of the human condition and remains an important force in the world. Scholarly excellence is achieved through the ability to understand at least one foreign language, critically analyze primary and secondary sources, and the inculcation of strong writing skills needed for a professional career.

The PhD program enables the degree recipient to seek professional employment as a faculty member in higher education, a researcher, or a teacher. Students may enter the PhD program either directly from a bachelor's degree program or with a master's degree.

S4. Graduate Faculties

Graduate faculties consist of faculty internal to each SHPRS discipline and faculty from other ASU academic programs approved by the SHPRS Internal Unit Graduate Faculty to serve as supervisory committee members. A complete list of the graduate faculties who are internal to each discipline can be found on the [SHPRS Grad Programs webpages](#). SHPRS graduate faculty, including their endorsements for supervisory committee roles (chair/member) can be found in the [ASU Graduate Faculty Search listing](#).

S5. Academic Integrity

The School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies strongly supports the high standard of academic integrity set by Arizona State University. Failure of any graduate student to meet these standards, either in academic coursework or related research activities, may result in serious consequences including suspension or expulsion from the university or, if discovered after a degree is awarded, may result in the university revoking that degree.

Violations of academic integrity include the obvious offenses of cheating, fabricating information or results, falsifying academic records, tampering, and plagiarism, but also include aiding and/or facilitating such activities and, in some cases, failing to reference one's own work. It is extremely important that students become familiar with what academic integrity entails so they do not inadvertently violate University policy. The Graduate College recommends several websites to help students with academic integrity:

- [ASU Academic Integrity Policy \(Office of the Provost\)](#)
- [ASU Student Academic Integrity Resources](#)
- [The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Academic Integrity Webpage](#)

History students should also become familiar with the Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct on the American Historical Association [website](#).

Students must take an academic integrity training on My ASU before beginning their first semester in the program.

S6. Research Integrity and Assurance

The Office of Research Integrity and Assurance's [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) oversees all research at ASU that involves living human or animal subjects. (Note: most oral history interviews [no longer require IRB review.](#)) Students should plan to contact the IRB in the planning stages of their research to get approval, if necessary, prior to initiating research.

Students are required to contact the IRB in the planning stages of their research to obtain approval prior to initiating any investigations. The Office of Research Integrity and Assurance requires that the student's faculty committee member supervising the research also has IRB approval. When a dissertation document is submitted to Graduate College for format review, the document is also checked by IRB. Failure to follow the procedures set by the IRB may result in the student not being able to include the data collected for that particular research.

Further information can be found on the [Institutional Review Board website.](#)

S7. Safety, Discrimination, and Harassment

ASU always has safety in mind and wants students, faculty, staff and visitors to be in a secure environment. Please visit our Campus [Safety](#) site for more details.

All ASU students and student organizations are bound by the [University's Code of Conduct](#), which promotes an educational environment that encourages respect, honesty, safety, and collegiality. The Code of Conduct and directions for filing a report can be found on the [Dean of Students webpage](#). Students are encouraged to report any breach of the Code of Conduct or any concerns about other students or members of the ASU community to the Graduate coordinator or AHGS. Anonymous reports of misconduct may be filed with the Dean of Students using the [Campus Community Incident Report form](#). Additionally, ASU takes sexual violence seriously and aims to prevent sexual violence. More information and directions for handling incidents of sexual violence can be found on the [Sexual Violence Prevention website](#).

Institutions of higher education have a large community of people with a variety of backgrounds and beliefs and a large international presence. Arizona State University welcomes diversity among students, staff, faculty, and visitors. ASU has strict policies against discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, and qualified veteran status. Providing a safe environment, free from harassment (sexual, religious, racial, etc.), is a priority concern for ASU and should be reported immediately when it occurs or is witnessed.

There are different types and levels of discrimination and harassment. Students should become aware of them so they are careful not to cause an offense and to recognize when they have become a victim. Descriptions can be found at the [Office of University Rights and Responsibilities](#). Students who witness offensive behavior or experience inappropriate and unwelcome responses should contact [the Office of Equity and Inclusion](#) (Phone: 480-965-5057). All information is kept confidential and it is the responsibility of everyone to report instances when observed. Retaliation against those who report such behavior is not tolerated and every effort will be made to protect those involved.

S8. Enrollment, Tuition and Financial Assistance

A. Registration and Tuition

Graduate students register for courses through My ASU according to their enrollment appointment dates. Details regarding registration and course drop/add procedures are provided in the [Registration and Tuition Payment Guide](#).

A guide to tuition, tuition estimator, tax forms, and information about payment plans can be found on the [Student Business Services website](#).

B. Continuous Enrollment

Once admitted, students must enroll continuously each fall and spring semester until all requirements for the degree have been met. Students who have completed all course requirements may enroll in HST/REL/PHI 795 Continuing Registration credits. Continuing Registration meets the continuous enrollment requirement but is not graded. A “Z” is assigned as the final grade.

The Graduate College will remove any student from the program who fails to maintain continuous enrollment without obtaining official leave approval from the Graduate College. The student may reapply for admission; however, the student must pay reapplication fees and re-admission is not guaranteed.

C. Full-Time Status

SHPRS requires full-time study in the first fall and spring semesters after admission to a graduate program. Nine hours each semester is considered full-time for students who are not on TA or RA funding; six hours is considered full-time for students with TA or RA appointments. Audited courses do not count toward full-time enrollment. Students are strongly encouraged to enroll in nine hours each semester throughout the program (regardless of funding status) to achieve good progress through the curriculum and meet program expectations. More information is available on the [Graduate College website](#) under “Registration and Enrollment”.

International F-1 and J-1 Visa students must maintain full-time enrollment status. Any exception to full-time enrollment must be previously approved by the [International Student and Scholars Center](#). More information can be found in the [Graduate Policies and Procedures Manual](#), published by the Graduate College.

D. Enrollment Verification Requests

Students who have completed coursework, are enrolled in HST/REL/PHI 795: Continuing Registration, and who wish to be considered half- or full-time for insurance or loan deferral purposes can submit an [Enrollment Verification Request](#) to the Registrar. This form will not allow loans to be disbursed; it is only for deferral of payment.

E. Withdrawal Requests and Leaves of Absence

Before considering complete withdrawal, students should explore the possibility of Incomplete (I) grades, which allow a student additional time up to one year to complete coursework based upon a documented agreement signed by the professor, student, and AHGS. Questions should be directed to the graduate coordinator.

A student may apply for a leave of absence (also called “leave status”) with the Graduate College in an extraordinary case in which serious illness or injury (medical leave), significant personal situation (compassionate leave) prevents a student from continuing classes, or in the case of military activation. This leave status cannot exceed a maximum of two semesters during the student’s enrollment in their program. A student on leave is not required to pay fees but is not permitted to place demands on university faculty or use any university facilities including the library. An official Leave of Absence is requested in the iPOS system – Interactive Plan of Study. For further details, please access the [Graduate College’s Leave of Absence Policy](#)

More information on withdrawals can be found on the [Graduate College Registration webpage](#) and the [Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal webpage](#). Students requesting leave who are on financial aid are strongly encouraged to consult [Financial Aid and Scholarship Services](#) prior to requesting the leave. International students with an F1/J1 visa must consult with the International Students and Scholars Center to discuss the immigration consequences that may result from their withdrawal from ASU.

G. Financial Assistance

Please visit ASU’s [Financial Aid and Scholarship Services](#) and [SHPRS Funding](#) page for opportunities. Also, students can apply for Fellowships and Awards by visiting the Graduate College’s [Pay for your Graduate Education Site](#).

S9. Residency

Doctoral students in SHPRS must maintain a physical presence in the department as they complete coursework in the first few years of the program. Students sometimes wish to move elsewhere for research later in the program, though graduate students are encouraged to maintain regular contact and be an active and visible part of SHPRS. Graduate students on TA funding must be in local residence (i.e. able to be on campus multiple days a week) unless they obtain approval from their supervisory committees and AHGS to live remotely and TA online classes. These approvals are subject to the curricular needs of SHPRS.

Living in state provides many benefits, including lower tuition with in-state residency classification. Students must live in Arizona for at least 12 months and file a petition with the ASU Registrar in order to qualify for in-state residency status. To gather more information and apply, please visit <https://students.asu.edu/residency>.

S10. Interactive Plan of Study (iPOS)

Students enrolled in graduate programs at ASU are required to file an online Plan of Study (iPOS) with the Graduate College. The iPOS is accessed through MyASU, under “My Programs and Degree”. This plan serves as an agreement between the student, the academic unit, and the Graduate College to identify the selected supervisory committee, verify the quality and acceptability of the culminating document, and approve the coursework required for the degree.

PhD students must submit an iPOS by April 1st of their first year in a program. The iPOS must be approved by the student’s chair, their AHGS, and the Graduate College.

Since students are required to identify courses for future semesters, they should enter courses that best match program requirements and their area(s) of interest. Changes to the iPOS are almost always necessary as a student moves through the program; these are easily requested through the iPOS system. All iPOS changes are approved by the graduate coordinator, who must receive approval from the student's chair (in writing or via email).

Note to History Students: At the time the iPOS is submitted, history students must also submit the Research Fields Proposal and Advanced Research Skill (ARS) Proposal forms. Fields of study and the ARS should be chosen in discussion with a student's committee and the form should be sent to the AHGS for approval once all committee members have signed. More information can be found in the history section of this handbook.

S11. Teaching Assistantships & Associateships

Students who receive teaching assistantships and associateships (TAs) will be assigned as graders in courses taught by faculty or doctoral candidates (assistants) or will teach their own courses (associates).

In the first semester of the teaching assistantship, students must be assigned to experienced instructors. In accordance with ABOR regulations, faculty must provide instruction in teaching and written feedback to their teaching assistants.

The [TA/RA Handbook](#), published by the Graduate College, clarifies all conditions of TA appointment, benefits (tuition remission, insurance, parental leave), and University policies. The [ASU TA Resource Guide](#) provides clarity on TA roles and responsibilities, designing syllabi, instruction, and addressing concerns or problems. TAs should become familiar with both of these resources before beginning an assistantship. Any problems that cannot be resolved in concert with the assigned faculty member should be addressed to the AHGS or the SHPRS Director.

Teaching Assistantships and Associateships are extended to students on an annual or semester basis and are renewed based on the availability of funding and the student's satisfactory fulfillment of related duties and progress in the academic program. Continuation of funding should not be assumed and is confirmed annually by a letter that must be signed and returned to the department. The Associate Heads of Graduate Studies are responsible for offering and renewing funding. Students who do not adequately fulfill their duties as TAs or make appropriate academic progress while on TA funding may be placed on probation and/or removed from funding in subsequent years.

Newly hired TAs must also attend the Teaching Assistant/Associate Development (TAD) Program offered by the university. Orientation information and professional development activities are listed on the TAD webpage. International Teaching Assistants must prove English proficiency before they begin teaching by passing the [SPEAK Test](#) with a score of 55 or higher or the Internet-Based TOEFL (iBT) with a score of 26 or higher on the oral portion of the test. In the event that an international student required to take the SPEAK Test or iBT has not become fully certified to teach, the faculty member to whom that student is assigned as a TA must meet regularly with the student to provide guidance in instructional design. Please visit the [International Teaching Assistant](#) site for complete details.

The SHPRS graduate programs attempt to offer all doctoral students the opportunity to teach independently before they graduate. Prior to teaching their first course, students must complete and pass HST/REL/PHL 700 Introduction to College Teaching.

TAs who do not wish to teach their own course will be assigned to assist faculty members or advanced graduate students who are teaching courses that qualify for teaching assistants.

S12. Supervisory Committee

The Graduate College requires all graduate students to establish a supervisory committee to direct their graduate study. A supervisory committee has three basic charges:

- Recommend and approve the student's plan of study.
- Advise a student regarding the topic and for a dissertation.
- Administer the final oral examination in defense of the dissertation.

The committee must be comprised of at least three people: a chair and two other members. An additional one to two members may be added, one of whom can be external to ASU. No more than five people may serve on a committee. Graduate Faculty including their possible supervisory committee roles (chair, co-chair, or member), dependent on AHGS guidance and approval, can be found on this Graduate College [webpage](#). Lists of all SHPRS Faculty are [here](#).

A. Committee Chair and Member Selection

Each graduate student is responsible for choosing a committee chair as primary dissertation director and advisor. In making this important choice, students should consider several qualities of a potential chair: expertise in a particular field, religious tradition, geographical area, time period, theory and/or methodology, availability, scholarly reputation, and the possibilities for developing a good working relationship.

In most cases, students will choose a chair because of that professor's expertise in a field, time period, religion, theme, or geographic region related to the proposed dissertation topic. Students interested in Buddhism, for example, will normally work with one of our Buddhologists; those studying history of the Americas will study with one of our Americanists. Supporting members of the student's supervisory committee should complement the methodological and/or theoretical strengths of the chair and bring additional geographical, historical, theoretical, methodological, thematic, or other relevant scholarly expertise.

The student's chair must be a tenured or tenure-track member of the discipline's internal unit graduate faculty (the faculty who officially work within the relevant discipline at ASU, not those employed by other units) who is endorsed to chair. The student and the supervisory committee chair work together to develop a plan of study, dissertation topic, and research plan.

Students have the option of having two faculty members serve as co-chairs (co-directors and co-advisors). Co-chairs must be tenured or tenure track faculty members in the discipline's internal unit graduate faculty.

At least two members of a student's supervisory committee, including the chair or co-chairs, must be internal unit graduate faculty.

All supervisory committee members need to be approved by the AHGS and Graduate College. The supervisory committee's chair(s) and members should be selected by April 1 of the student's first year.

B. Supervisory Committee Selection Form

Supervisory committee members must be selected by April 1 of each student's first year in the academic program. The student prints and completes the [Committee Selection Form](#), obtains the signature of the chair and all members, and submits the form to the graduate coordinator, who will obtain a signature from the AHGS. The student must also enter the supervisory committee members on their iPOS.

C. External Supervisory Committee Members

Students may select one university faculty member not affiliated with ASU or their discipline's graduate faculty to serve on their supervisory committee. To get approval to appoint an external member, students need to submit a [Committee Approval Request – Individual Student Committee form](#) to the graduate coordinator, along with the external member's current CV and date of birth. The external committee member can be added in addition to at least three faculty members from within the discipline's internal unit graduate faculty.

D. Supervisory Committee Member Changes

Faculty listed on the student's plan of study (iPOS) serve as their supervisory committee. Supervisory committee chair and member changes must first be approved by the AHGS, and then submitted through the iPOS for final approval by the Graduate College.

Note to Religious Studies students: You may not change the chair of their committee more than once, except in the case of your chair leaving the department during your time in the program.

The student completes a [Supervisory Committee Member Change Request form](#) to request a change and submits it to the graduate coordinator. Students must obtain signatures from the chair, outgoing member(s), new member(s), the remaining supervisory committee, and finally the AHGS. The student then submits the original form with signatures to the graduate coordinator.

S13. Transfer Credits

Students entering SHPRS PhD programs with a previously earned master's degree in their discipline or a related field may request 30 credit hours be applied toward the total credit hours required for the degree, reducing the total hours required to complete the PhD to 54.

Students may request that graduate credit earned at ASU, or while attending another accredited university, be used toward program requirements if the coursework was completed within three years of the first semester of admission to their program. Courses must be related to the student's research and not have been used toward a previous degree. A total of 12 hours can be used, contingent upon the approval of the student's chair and the AHGS.

An original transcript showing an MA degree was awarded or, in the case of transfer course, coursework showing a final grade for the courses, needs to be on file with the [Office of Graduate Admissions](#). The student submits a written request with a copy of the syllabus and a statement or support from their chair in support of the request to the graduate coordinator. The graduate coordinator will present the request to the AHGS and notify the student with the decision.

S14. Satisfactory Academic Progress

Graduate students are expected to make steady progress towards completion of their degrees. Students must meet the standards and deadlines of the Graduate College as well as the requirements established by the graduate programs, as stated in this handbook, to maintain satisfactory progress in their respective degree program. Students who fail to meet requirements will receive written notice from the AHGS identifying the deficiency and be given the opportunity to meet with the AHGS to discuss difficulties the student may be having in reaching goals of the program. The student's chair may be included in this meeting. A written plan will be set in place by the AHGS, giving the student specific steps to remedy the deficiency and a time period to complete the plan, during which the student will be placed on academic probation for a specific period identified in the letter. Students placed on probation may be restricted from teaching courses or being otherwise employed in the department and may lose funding.

When the student remedies the deficiency satisfactorily, the probation will be lifted and a new letter issued stating that the student is back in good standing. Failure to resolve the issue as directed will result in one or more of the following options:

- Termination of funding, if any.
- Recommendation from the SHPRS Director to the Graduate College to dismiss the student from the degree program.

A recommendation of immediate dismissal may occur under certain circumstances, such as:

- Failure to follow proper procedure set by the office of Research Integrity and Assurance.
- Violation of the University's academic integrity policies.
- Unprofessional or threatening behavior in a classroom, internship, or any public setting in which the student is representing their degree program, the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, or Arizona State University.
- Student's GPA falls below program requirements.

The student will be notified in writing that they are recommended for dismissal and will be given ten business days to appeal the dismissal decision or complete a voluntary withdrawal. Voluntary withdrawal from the program will avoid the notation of a dismissal on the student's record. To appeal a dismissal recommendation, the student should follow guidelines set out in the dismissal letter and contact the SHPRS Director in writing by the specified date. All mail and email will be sent to the addresses on file for the student. The student is responsible for checking mail regularly. A student may appeal any action concerning dismissal through the Graduate Council Appeals Board (GCAB).

S15. Grades

A. Overview

Graduate students are expected to maintain high grades in all courses in order to show mastery of course material and skills. ASU's grading scale can be found on the [Grades and Grading Policies webpage](#). Translations of numerical grades (1-100) into letter grades ("A" through "E") can be acquired from instructors. In rare cases, graduate courses are offered on a Pass/Fail basis, in which case a student will earn either a "Y" to indicate passage or an "E" to indicate failure. A grade of "Y" contributes to a student's earned hours but does not affect GPA. A failing grade of "E" is calculated into a student's GPA. Courses with grades of "D", "E", or "W" and audited courses (graded as "X") cannot be included on an

iPOS. Students may be required to re-take core courses if earned grades are below the standard set by their program.

Students who wish to dispute a grade should refer to the [Academic \(Grade\) Grievance webpage](#) for instructions.

B. Auditing Courses

In some cases, students may choose to audit a class, allowing them to attend but not earn credit. Students must obtain approval from the instructor and their supervisory committee chair prior to enrollment. Auditing is not an option for every course; contact the graduate coordinator to determine whether auditing is an option. This grading option may not be changed after the drop/add period has ended. Audited courses are given a final grade of "X". Audited courses do not count toward full-time enrollment calculations or the minimum number of credits required for international students with visa restrictions, students employed as TA/RAs, or students receiving financial assistance. Audited courses do not satisfy [Graduate College continuous enrollment policies](#).

C. Incomplete Grades

Graduate students should avoid taking a grade of "I" for any graded course work. However, if a student doing acceptable work in a course needs additional time to complete coursework after the end of a term because of extenuating circumstances (illness or other circumstances beyond a student's control), an [Incomplete Grade Request](#) form must be completed by the student and professor and filed with the graduate coordinator at the end of the term in which the incomplete ("I") is entered.

Per university policy, coursework for classes marked "I" must be completed, and the grade must be changed by the instructor, within one academic year. SHPRS strongly encourages students to finish coursework to rectify incomplete grades in a timely manner, usually within one month of the end of the term. If the "I" is not replaced with a final grade within one year of the official end of the course, it will remain permanently incomplete. Accrual of "I" grades may be seen by graduate faculty as evidence that a student is not making satisfactory academic progress.

No student may accumulate more than two "I" grades at any one time. Should this occur, the student may be barred from taking a full load of course work until one or more of the "I"s are removed, which can affect the student's ability to apply for SHPRS and ASU funding. Students with two or more incompletes at any time will automatically be placed on academic probation. Students with three incompletes on a graduate transcript can register for no more than one course and will lose any graduate assistantship they hold and will be placed on probation.

Students violating these conditions or who fail to meet the requirements of probation will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

S16. PhD Candidacy and ABD Status

Graduate students enrolled in a PhD program do not officially become doctoral candidates until they have successfully completed all coursework, demonstrated proficiency in any required languages or skills, passed the comprehensive examination, and successfully defended a dissertation prospectus.

Students will receive notification when they have been advanced to candidacy. Notification will include a list of Graduate College requirements that need to be completed for the degree. The student must complete 24 semester hours of research/dissertation credits (12 hours of each) and must pass the oral defense of the dissertation. The student's supervisory committee will direct the research and writing of the dissertation. Doctoral candidates, at their chair's discretion, may begin applying for tenure track faculty positions.

S17. Doctoral Dissertation

Researching, writing and defending a dissertation are required to be awarded a doctoral degree. Further details regarding the dissertation appear at the end of the next section of this handbooks.

S18. Applying for Graduation

Students need to closely follow graduation deadlines and procedures set by the [Graduate College](#). Links to the graduation process are also on the My ASU website under the "My Programs and Degree Progress" section. The iPOS should be reviewed with the graduate coordinator to be sure courses and exams have been recorded appropriately.

Once the graduation semester has been determined and the iPOS has been reviewed, the first step is to apply for graduation. Clicking the "Graduation" tab will link students to an online graduation application and information on how to apply for the graduation ceremony. In order to graduate, students must complete an oral dissertation defense and submit the results form, submit a Survey of Earned Doctorates, and complete the dissertation submission process. They must also have their iPOS reviewed by the graduate coordinator, committee chair, and AHGS.

Once the dissertation has been completed, all "Z" or "NR" grades earned for 792 and 799 courses must be changed to "Y" to show successful completion of the dissertation. Students must request these grade changes from instructors via email and may contact the graduate coordinator if they need assistance. In order for a graduation application to be processed, students may not have any "NR" grades or any "Z" grades in courses other than REL 795 on their transcripts at the time of degree conferral.

The student should check the progress of their application to graduate periodically on My ASU and refer any questions to the graduate coordinator or Graduate College as appropriate.

S20. Graduate Financial and Wellness Resources

[wellness_resources.pdf \(asu.edu\)](#)

Money Moments: <https://students.asu.edu/moneymoments>

iGrad: a website for financial Literacy: <https://asu.igrad.com/>

ASU Graduate College Funding Opportunities: <https://graduate.asu.edu/current-students/funding-opportunities/awards-and-fellowships>

Live Well to Succeed – employee wellness: <https://wellness.asu.edu/>

ASU Student Business Services – billing, payments & payment plans: <https://students.asu.edu/tuitionandbilling>

EMPACT's 24 hour ASU-dedicated crisis hotline: 480-921-1006

Crisis TEXTLINE: Text HOME to 741741

TAO Connect – a self-help tool for emotional well-being:

<https://www.taoconnect.org/>

Center for Mindfulness, Compassion and Resilience: <https://mindfulnesscenter.asu.edu/>

Live Well @ASU: <https://wellness.asu.edu/>

Sun Devil Fitness Complex: <https://fitness.asu.edu/home>

Sexual Violence Awareness, Prevention and Response: <https://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/>

SunDevilSync – a resource for more information on Grad Student Organizations:

<https://asu.campuslabs.com/engage>

ASU Police [non-emergencies]: 480-965-3456, <https://cfo.asu.edu/police>

10 Best Practices in Graduate Student Wellbeing:

https://graduate.asu.edu/sites/default/files/student_well_being_best_practice.pdf

S21. Additional University Resources

[Dean of Students Office](#) [centralized advocacy resource for students] , [ASU Libraries](#), [Graduate Student Writing Centers](#), [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#), [Career Services](#), [Campus Parking](#), [Student Business Services](#), [Sun Devil Student ID Card](#) and [Campus Dining/Banking/Student Organizations](#)

RELIGIOUS STUDIES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

R1. Religious Studies Program Progression

The doctoral program has two main goals: to train graduate students for careers as scholars and teachers in the academic study of religion and to provide supplementary training for graduate students in a range of related programs (including history, anthropology, political science, journalism, secondary education, and justice studies) who would benefit from greater expertise regarding the nature and role of religion around the world.

A. Phase I – Meet Requirements of MA Degree:

The student entering the PhD Program with a previously earned master's degree may request that 30 credit hours be applied toward the total credit hours required for the PhD degree and begin their program in Phase II. These credits cannot replace core course requirements; they are applied as a blanket 30 credits toward elective requirements.

Students who have not earned a previous master's degree approved for use in the program will focus in the first phase on earning a Master's in Passing (MIP). They must fulfill all the requirements of the Religious Studies MA program, including course work, language exams, and either a thesis or portfolio culminating event. Mastery of the Phase I material is demonstrated by successful completion and oral defense of the thesis or the portfolio. For additional information on the MIP, please consult the program coordinator and/or the AHGS.

All students must complete the foreign language requirement before moving to Phase II.

B. Phase II – Coursework & Examinations

Students advance to Phase II of the program when the MIP degree is attained. They take 30- 36 hours of graduate level coursework to bring the total number of credit hours on the student's iPOS to 60+.

During Phase II, students must pass written and oral comprehensive exams and successfully defend a dissertation prospectus.

C. Phase III – Candidacy

During Phase III, students complete all research and dissertation requirements (12 credit hours each of 792 and 799 courses) and prepare to defend and submit a dissertation.

Students enrolled full-time are able to graduate within six years. The Graduate College requires degree completion within ten consecutive years from the time of initial enrollment.

R2. Admission Requirements and Application Process

When considering the Religious Studies PhD program at ASU, know that in the admissions process SHPRS looks for students whose research interests can be well served by the members of our Graduate Faculty at ASU. Prospective students are encouraged to contact the faculty member(s) they might want to work with while they are at ASU.

A complete application requires:

- online [Graduate Admissions application](#)
- references
- statement of purpose
- writing sample
- CV
- transcripts
- TOEFL scores

Application deadline is January 15. For more information on the application process and requirements, please click [here](#).

R3. Doctoral Research Tracks

Students are required to select an area of study from one of six tracks: Anthropology of Religion, Global Christianity, Religions in the Americas, Religions in Asia, Islam in a Global Context or Religion and Conflict. Study in our tracks is complemented by faculty in Jewish Studies, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Religions of Russia.

Students typically specify a research track upon admission. Students hoping to change their tracks should submit the [Track Change Form](#). This form is signed by the supervisory committee and approved by the Associate Head of Graduate Studies for Religious Studies.

A. Anthropology of Religion

The Anthropology of Religion track trains students to account for and engage in research and teaching about the complex and dynamic roles of religion in the world today. Students develop mastery of social theory and ethnographic methods in order to understand the religious idioms and cultural practices that underline many contemporary human behaviors and political ideologies. The Anthropology of Religion track formalizes new directions in the field that reflect the dramatic changes religion is undergoing in contemporary cultures and includes debates in cultural identities, post-colonialism, modernity, globalization, gender, traditional values, public discourses in multi-cultural milieus, and media practices. Students in this track are required to take our ethnographic theory and methods seminar and conduct ethnographic fieldwork for their dissertation in the target populations' pertinent language(s).

B. Global Christianity

Students in the Global Christianity track will critically examine Christianity as a global religion, both in its long historical context and in the contemporary world. Students will also consider the academic, intellectual, theological, and missiological dimensions of Christianity and its global extension. They will explore how political, economic, racial, and social factors have, in turn, shaped the face of Christianity across the world. Using a variety of tools, from ancient languages to post-colonial and race theory, students will be encouraged to investigate important questions about Christianity and its history, from considering the complex relationships between Christianity, modernity, and colonialism, to examining Christian ethics and conceptions of international relations and human rights.

C. Religions in the Americas

Students in the Religions of the Americas track focus on a religious tradition or traditions within one of the regions of the Americas, such as North America, Central America, or South America, as appropriate to the focus of the dissertation project. Expertise acquired will include an understanding of religious traditions and practices in their cultural and historical contexts, the study of the relevant language(s), and related course work in history, literature, anthropology, art history, or other fields. Our thematic and/or theoretical research focus trains students in the professional mastery of a body of literature, traditions, and religious practices within the academic study of religion. Topics can include, but are not limited to, both indigenous and immigrant religions and their expressions in Canada, the United States, Mexico, and the nations within Central and South America.

D. Religions in Asia

Students in the Religions in Asia track focus on a religious tradition or traditions within one of the regions of Asia, such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, or East Asia, as appropriate to the dissertation project. Expertise acquired will include an understanding of religious traditions and practices in their cultural and historical contexts, the study of the relevant language(s), and related course work in history, literature, anthropology, art history, media studies, global studies, or other fields. Topics can include, but are not limited to, the concepts, histories, and practices of any of the religious traditions in the regions of Asia including their transnational expansion to and interaction with other regions of the world.

E. Islam in a Global Context

Students in the Islam in a Global Context track develop a transdisciplinary approach drawing on anthropology, sociology, history, and religious studies. We provide students with theoretical tools, conceptual sophistication, and historical and cultural background for studying Islam in various contexts. Students situate their work within particular cultural formations and utilize the language(s) relevant to their project. They draw and expand on projects that are globally or thematically defined or geographically grounded in the Arab Middle East and North Africa, Iran, South and Southeast Asia, Africa, Russia, or beyond. Students engage issues such as ethics, peace and violence, memory and traumatic histories, power, performative embodied practices, state formations, political modalities, social movements, gender, sexuality, race, modernity, urbanism, post colonialism, globalization, and migration.

F. Religion and Conflict

Within each Religious Studies track of study, students may choose to focus on issues in Religion and Conflict, including religious discourse in the public sphere, religious violence and nation states, religious conflict and the secular, debates over religion and science, and comparative ethics and theories of religious or just war.

R4. Coursework

A. Required Coursework for All Religious Studies Tracks

Students entering the program with an approved MA must complete 54 credits to complete the program. Those entering without a BA must complete 84 credits.

All Religious Studies doctoral students, regardless of their track, take the following core courses:

- REL 501 The Study of Religion I: Genealogies, Disciplines and Power (3 credits)
- REL 502 The Study of Religion II: Epistemology, Practice and Mediation (3 credits)
- REL 700 Introduction to College teaching (3 credits). - A three-unit course focused on pedagogical methods and instructional design. Students are required to complete and pass this course before they will be authorized to teach an independent course.
- REL 792 Research (12 credits)
- REL 799 Dissertation (12 credits)

B. Curriculum for Anthropology of Religion

Anthropology of Religion Track doctoral students take the following core courses in addition to the courses required of all Religious Studies students:

- REL 620 Anthropological Theories of Religion (3 credits) - Basic theories from Levi-Strauss and Victor Turner to the work of Marshall Sahlins, Maurice Bloch, David Scott, etc.
- REL 621 Ethnography of Religion (3 credits) - Ethnographic theory and method approaches to recording and studying lived cultural practice.
- REL 626 Topics in the Anthropology of Religion (3 credits) - Under this rubric, faculty offer seminars on thematic concerns germane to the track, such as the anthropology of ritual, memory, modernity, post-colonialism, conflict and revolution, hybridity, peacemaking and secularism, semiotics, conversion, iconography, embodiment, material culture, etc.

Electives, which may not replace the courses listed above, may include:

- REL 626 Topics in the Anthropology of Religion
- REL 598 Special Topics
- REL 591 or 691 Seminars
- Graduate courses from a related discipline that support the student's research (up to 6 credits)
- REL 690 Reading & Conference Course (up to 3 credits)

C. Curriculum for Global Christianity, Religions in the Americas, Islam in a Global Context, Religions in Asia or Religion and Conflict

Religions in the Americas, Islam in a Global and Religions in Asia track doctoral students take the core courses listed in section A. There are no additional required courses.

Electives, which may not replace the courses listed above, may include:

- REL 598 Special Topics
- REL 591 or 691 Seminars
- REL 620, 621 or 626
- Graduate courses from a related discipline that support the student's research (up to 6 credits)
- REL 690 Reading & Conference Course (up to 3 credits)

D. 400-Level Courses

Graduate students may, with chair and AHGS approval, take up to 6 credits of 400-level courses as electives (to be included in the iPOS) in the case that appropriate graduate courses are not available. 400-level courses taken prior to admission and 400-level courses graded as “Pass/Fail” are not acceptable. 400-level courses not listed on the iPOS do not satisfy the Graduate College continuous enrollment policy; graduate level courses must be taken concurrently to satisfy this requirement.

E. REL 690: Reading and Conference Courses

These custom-arranged courses with a single instructor allow a student to do intensive reading with the objective of acquiring a sophisticated knowledge of a topic. For 3 credits of Reading and Conference, students are expected to read the equivalent of a book each week during the semester. Reading and Conference courses cannot replace required seminars.

To obtain approval for a Reading and Conference course, the student must submit a 1-2 page written proposal and the [Reading and Conference Request Form](#) to their chair and the AHGS that states the reason for the independent study, how it relates to the student’s research plan, the content of the course (syllabus), and how the student’s knowledge will be evaluated. A resource list that provides information on readings and/or other methods that may be used to support the proposed course must also be provided. This must be done and submitted with all signatures to the graduate coordinator several weeks before the start of the semester to allow time for the course to be created and the student to register.

R5. Annual Review of Students

The Religious Studies faculty reviews all graduate students annually to provide students with feedback about their progress through the program and identify concerns the faculty may have with their work. The annual review also provides an opportunity for students to keep their committee members and the graduate faculty informed of their professional activities, accomplishments, and progress toward graduation. Students are required to submit an annual self-evaluation that their chair will use to prepare a presentation for the AHGS and Graduate Affairs Committee.

Each faculty member reviews each student for whom they are a chair. After each student is reviewed, the student’s chair, in conjunction with the AHGS, will prepare a letter reporting to the student their progress, performance, and concerns.

R6. GPA and Grade Requirements

Students enrolled in the Religious Studies PhD program are required to maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.5 on the iPOS GPA, Overall Graduate GPA, and Cumulative GPA. The iPOS GPA is based on all courses that appear on a student’s approved iPOS. The Cumulative GPA represents all courses completed at ASU during the graduate career. The Overall Graduate GPA is calculated based on all courses numbered 500 or higher that appear on the transcript after admission to the program. These GPAs are all visible through My ASU. If a student’s GPA falls below 3.5, the student is automatically placed on academic probation for one semester with the expectation that the GPA will improve and

meet the requirement by the end of the following semester. Failure to raise the GPA and meet other terms set in the academic probation letter may result in dismissal from the program.

The AHGS may also recommend a student for dismissal from the program if the following situations occur:

- Student receives three C or lower grades or incompletes in courses taken after admission to the program.
- Student's Cumulative GPA, iPOS GPA, or Overall Graduate GPA falls below 3.5 for two consecutive semesters.
- It becomes impossible for a student to graduate with a 3.5 iPOS GPA.

R7. Foreign Language Requirement(s)

The foreign language requirement specifies proficiency in the language(s) of both primary sources and scholarly literature in the major field of specialization. The specific foreign language(s) required is determined by the student's supervisory committee, who may require two languages or more. At least one foreign language requirement must be met. Proficiency in reading will be required of all students and will be established by passing the language exam(s) administered through the School of International Letters and Cultures (SILC) at ASU. The SILC examination is required for all students with the language requirement and may include students, subject to AHGS discretion, who have taken courses or reported proficiency by other methods.

Language exams are offered two times per year by the School of International Letters and Cultures (SILC) at ASU. [Exam applications](#), specifying the selected exam book, must be submitted to the School of International Letters and Cultures approximately one month before the scheduled exam date. Students must complete and submit a [Religious Studies Program Foreign Language Approval form](#) prior to scheduling the exam through the School of International Letters and Cultures. The form requires justification for the selected language, exam book selected, as well as supervisory committee and AHGS approval.

The Foreign Language exam must:

- be in the foreign language designated by the student's supervisory committee;
- be a minimum of 200 pages;
- be a scholarly work;
- not be fiction or poetry; and
- relate to the student's closest relevant field of study or research (language learning books from foreign language courses *may not* be used).

Additionally, the chosen foreign language and text to be used for an exam (including a re-examination) must be justified by the supervisory committee and approved in advance by the AHGS of Religious Studies.

Students will be graded on their ability to translate a short text from the foreign language being tested into coherent English. Translations should include main ideas and important details of the passage. Test results are Pass/Fail. Students earn a "Pass" grade if:

- translated text contains main ideas and important details of the foreign language text;
- vocabulary and grammar contain main ideas and important details of the foreign language text;
- English translation consists of grammatically correct sentences that form a coherent text that

stands on its own as an understandable piece of prose.

Students who do not pass the language test on the first try may retake the exam once. If a student fails the exam on the second attempt, they must meet with their chair and AHGS of Religious Studies to determine probation toward the degree which will likely result in a recommendation to dismiss the student from the program.

Undergraduate language classes taken to obtain proficiency for the foreign language requirement do not count toward the total number of hours needed for the program or used to meet proficiency in a language.

R8. Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination is designed to ensure the student's mastery of the field, including its broader issues, theories, and key findings. The exam also tests the student's ability to organize, synthesize, and analyze a substantial corpus of knowledge and reading in response to questions posed by the faculty. The exam consists of two parts: written and oral. The examination committee is composed of at least three tenured or tenure-track faculty members who are usually, but not always, the student's supervisory committee. The chair and at least one of the other two members must be members of the religious studies internal unit graduate faculty.

Students entering with a BA are expected to pass comprehensive exams in their fourth or fifth year in the program; students entering with an approved MA are expected to pass comprehensive exams by the end of their third year in the program. Failure to pass exams in a timely manner will result in academic probation, which may lead to dismissal from the program.

Students qualify for comprehensive examination when they have completed Phase II, have an approved Plan of Study, and have completed the language requirement(s). When the chair decides that the comprehensive stage has been reached by the student, the chair will email the AHGS (copying the graduate coordinator) to request the examination, provide the names of the committee members, and inform the date and time of the exam. Comprehensive examinations can be taken in the fall or spring semester. In order to take the comprehensive examination, the student is required to be registered for one of the following:

- At least one semester hour of credit that appears on the Plan of Study.
- At least one semester hour of appropriate graduate-level credit, for example: Research (792) or Continuing Registration (795).
- At least one hour of a graduate-level course.

A. Comprehensive Examination Preparation

Bibliographies, reading lists, and conceptual frames for each of the three examination test areas should begin amongst the student and all examination committee members as early as a year prior to the planned examination time. The student is required to meet with their examination committee several months prior to the comprehensive exams in order to begin to form a shared understanding of the student's interests and project as well as the role of each faculty within it.

Each student, in preparation for the comprehensive exams, along with their chair prepares a reading list covering key sub-areas of the student's research area and includes major works defining those areas (the sub-areas must be approved by the chair). The reading list needs to be approved by the student's entire supervisory committee (no formal meeting is required for such approval).

Reading lists are extensive, open-ended, and position the field of study in relation to the student's research areas. Recognizing that there are important publications in each field, the faculty in Religious Studies does not use standard reading lists for comprehensive exams or standardized exam questions. As no two exams are alike, there are no sample questions on file. Chairs can share past reading lists or exam questions, if available as an illustration or example; however, students should expect their exam questions to be uniquely formulated in relation to their research areas.

Faculty provide each student with a sense of the type of questions they may ask and are explicit about the high level of competence they expect from their student in the exams. A student should have a general sense about what kind of exam questions to expect. Students should have an outline in mind prior to starting the exam and bring their own research interests in conversation with the strengths and weaknesses of the literature in each examination field. Students may want to make reference to different sections of their comps (e.g. "I discussed this in greater detail in Question #1") to avoid repetitive answers.

B. Written Examination

The written portion of the comprehensive examination is presented online and is administered by the graduate coordinator. It consists of three written essays – one for each of the following areas:

- Method and theory in the academic study of religion.
- Major world area of study.
- Major religious tradition of study.

Comprehensive examination questions are released to the student one at a time on specified dates and times during a five-day period. One question is given each day, usually Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of one week. The student has four hours to complete and upload each response. Student responses are checked for plagiarism before being evaluated by the exam committee.

C. Oral Examination

After the student has completed all parts of the written exam and the examination committee has reviewed their answers, the student will undergo a culminating oral exam. The oral requirement usually takes place between seven to fourteen days after completion of the written portion. The oral examination tests a student's ability to engage in discussion of issues relevant to their fields of competence. The focus will be on the student's answers to the written examination questions as well as the student's proposed dissertation topic. In cases where some or all of the written examinations are below the Pass level, a strong oral exam is necessary in order for the student to pass the comprehensive examination. The student's chair is charged with convening and administering the oral exam.

Each student is responsible for scheduling the rooms in which the oral examinations take place by calling (480) 965-5778.

D. Exam Results

The graduate coordinator provides a [Religious Studies Comprehensive Exam Results Form](#) to the chair of the examining committee prior to the start of the exam. Examination committee members discuss student responses and record their individual decisions of the outcome on each exam on the results form. The committee chair submits the completed form to the AHGS for approval and then the graduate coordinator submits the outcome to the Graduate College.

To pass the comprehensive examination, a student must score a “pass” or “pass with distinction” on all written examinations and complete the oral examination at a passing level as determined by the examining committee. When the members of an examining committee agree that a student did not successfully complete the comprehensive exam, the chair of the committee must gather comments from the other members and write a summarized explanation as to why the student failed and a recommendation given as to whether the student should be permitted to re-take the exam if the student decides to petition to do so. The chair meets with the student to discuss the report.

Students who fail the comprehensive exam may petition the Graduate College for a re-examination by completing the Petition to the Graduate College. Students need to obtain physical signatures for this petition in the following order: each member of the examining committee followed by the AHGS.

Religious Studies does not allow a third retake of the comprehensive examination. Failure of the comprehensive examination will lead to dismissal from the PhD program.

R9. Dissertation Prospectus

Students are required to complete a dissertation prospectus that must be approved by their supervisory committee within one academic year (two semesters) of the date they passed their comprehensive exam. A student who fails to meet the deadline must meet with their chair and the AHGS to discuss their progress.

A. Prospectus Format

The prospectus explains the focus of the research proposed, its relevance, its location within the wider discourse in the field, the contributions the project will make to this conversation, a time line, a discussion of methods, and a general outline of the dissertation chapters. Students need to confer with their chair before preparing the prospectus for advice concerning its format. The proposal should:

- Include clear statement of the **major research question** addressed in the dissertation.
- Present a thorough **literature review** of sufficient scope making the problem statement fully comprehensible. The literature review needs to provide the reader with a clear and concise understanding of the current scholarly discourse about the major question and shows how the project contributes in an original way to its broader scholarly discourse.
- Outline the **sources** of data and defend the selection of those sources.
- Detail the **methods** employed in the research project.
- Delineate plans for obtaining IRB approval, if necessary.
- Include an extensive bibliography of the relevant literature.

Proposals submitted to funding agencies can often be re-worked into a dissertation prospectus.

B. Prospectus Review & Defense

When the student completes the prospectus document, the student submits a copy to each member of the prospectus committee and arranges a date and time for the oral defense. Students reserve a room for the defense by calling (480) 965-5778.

The student must take a [Prospectus Defense Results form](#) to their defense. The chair is responsible for obtaining the signatures of the committee and submitting the form to the graduate coordinator.

C. Defense Results

If the prospectus committee agrees that a defense was not successful, the chair gathers comments

from the other members and writes a summarized explanation as to why the student failed and a recommendation given as to whether the student should be permitted to re-take the defense if the student decides to petition to do so. The chair meets with the student to discuss the report.

Students who fail the prospectus defense may petition the Graduate College for a re-examination. Petitions are initiated by completing the [Petition to the Graduate College form](#). Students will need to obtain signatures, at the committee member's discretion, for this form in the following order: each member of the examining committee followed by the AHGS.

R10. Dissertation

Research and writing of the dissertation comprise final stage of the doctoral program. During this time, students should stay in communication with their chair and supervisory committee members about the status of their progress toward completing the degree by remaining in the local area unless doing fieldwork. Chairs generally read and comment upon individual chapters of the dissertations. Committee members may elect to read chapters as they are completed and/or the entire dissertation when completed. Feedback, comments, and revisions should be done in a timely manner. The supervisory committee must have sufficient time, a minimum of three weeks before the defense, to read the doctoral dissertation. Doctoral candidates should expect revisions that must be completed prior to depositing the dissertation and graduating.

A. Dissertation Format and Committee Review

The style of the document is determined by the committee chair and is usually based on style manuals, such as *A Manual for Writers* by Kate L. Turabian or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The format of the document must follow the specifications presented in the [Graduate College Format Manual](#) and students need to closely adhere to the requirements for setting margins, spacing, pagination, etc. Students should also review the topic of Academic Integrity presented in this handbook.

At least one month prior to the date the student plans to defend, the student must submit a copy of the final dissertation draft to all faculty members who officially make up their supervisory committee for a critical review of the arguments, narrative, footnotes, and bibliography. The critical review allows the student to make revisions before submitting the document to the Graduate College for format review.

B. Format Review

The final draft of the dissertation document must be emailed to the Graduate College for format review – **no later than 10 calendar days prior to the planned defense**. After being submitted, additional links appear that guide students through the formatting process and final submission to ProQuest (the electronic submission of the dissertation). This review process contains several recursive steps. Students must diligently check for updates from the format review team.

C. Oral Defense of the Dissertation

The oral defense is open to the public and advertised to the school. Defenses include a presentation of argument of the dissertation by the candidate and questions from each of the committee members. Schedule a defense well in advance. Doctoral defenses take no more than three hours total. At the time of the defense, members may approve the dissertation as is, delay their decision at the orals pending further revisions by the student, or approve leaving the revisions to the supervision of the committee chair.

C. Scheduling a Dissertation Defense

When revisions have been made and all members of the committee agree that the document is ready for a defense, the student arranges a date and time for the defense with all supervisory committee members. The student requests a conference room by contacting the SHPRS Front Desk, 480-965-5778.

Scheduling the defense with Graduate College is done through My ASU (My ASU > My Programs and Degree Progress > Defense). The “Defense” tab provides an electronic form to schedule the final defense and must be submitted **no later than 10 business days prior to the planned defense date**.

D. Dissertation Defense Reminder

The student must send an email reminder to all members of their supervisory committee at least three days before the exam confirming the time and location of the exam. Any problems with the agreed upon time and date must be reported to the graduate coordinator as soon as possible.

E. Dissertation Defense Results

Results of the final defense are recorded on the Graduate College Dissertation Results Form (informally called the Pass/Fail Form) that is generated at the time the defense is scheduled and emailed to the committee chair and graduate coordinator. Students may pass, pass with minor revisions, pass with major revisions, or fail. If the student does not want the dissertation published for a period of time due to ongoing research, impending publication by a press, or sensitive information contained in the document, an embargo can be requested for approximately two years. Directions for obtaining an embargo are included with the Pass/Fail form.

At the conclusion of the defense, each supervisory committee member signs the defense form indicating their decision. If revisions are needed, the chair must, when revisions are completed, sign the form verifying that revisions have been completed. The completed form is given to the graduate coordinator, a copy is placed in the student’s file and the coordinator submits the original to the Graduate College. Once the results form is submitted, the student will see “Defense Status: Pass” in the defense section. Right below the “Defense Status” you will see “Format Review Status.” The “Review Status” will change to “Ready for ETD/ProQuest.” The document can then be submitted by following the instructions found [here](#).

If the petition is approved, the student must submit the new prospectus by the end of six months (the six months begins from the date that the first doctoral dissertation prospectus defense was held). If the academic unit does not grant the student permission to retake the proposal defense, or if the student fails to pass the retake of the prospectus defense, the Graduate College will withdraw the student from the degree program. Religious Studies does not allow a third retake of the prospectus defense.

Religious Studies PhD Timeline Summary – *Students Entering with BA*

(This timeline will vary according to students' track, language, and/or fieldwork needs, etc.)

Fall semester, first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin coursework, including REL 501 • Decide Doctoral Study Track & Foreign Language needs • Approach possible committee members 	Phase I Coursework & Master's In Passing (MIP)
Spring semester, first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue coursework, including REL 502 • Select supervisory committee by April 1 • Complete Plan of Study (iPOS) by April 1 	
First summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study required foreign language 	
Second year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue coursework • Pass foreign language exam • Look into research grants & awards 	
Summer 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study second foreign language, if required by supervisory committee • Begin research and/or fieldwork 	Phase II Coursework, Examinations, and Attaining Candidacy <i>Phase II begins when the student has completed the foreign language requirement and earned an MIP.</i>
Fall semester, third year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue coursework • Compile reading list for comprehensive exams • Submit funding proposals 	
Spring semester, third year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue coursework • Pass second foreign language exam, if required by supervisory committee • Prepare for Comprehensive Exams 	
Fourth to Fifth year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete coursework • Pass Comprehensive Examination • Prepare Dissertation Prospectus 	
Fifth to Sixth year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit and defend Dissertation Prospectus • Apply for IRB approval, if needed • Research and/or fieldwork • Dissertation research and writing 	Phase III Candidacy and Dissertation <i>Phase III begins once Prospectus Defense is passed and student attains Candidacy.</i>
Seventh to Eighth year onward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for graduation and follow Graduate College timeline and procedures for scheduling final defense and Format Review • Pass final defense of dissertation • Electronically submit dissertation to ProQuest 	

