Doctor of Philosophy in Theology (PhD): Biblical, Moral, Systematic Theology

The PhD in Theology (PhD-Th) program has the following purposes: [a] To help students acquire a high professional and scientific competence in one of the following areas of theology: Biblical Theology, Dogmatic Theology, Moral Theology, Religious Education. [b] To help them manifest in a scholarly dissertation the capacity for disciplined research, for clear communication, and for both critical and creative theological reflection regarding situations and problems facing the Christian community in the Philippines and Asia. [c] To equip men and women who can train students to a level of high qualification in their own disciplines according to Catholic doctrine.

Upon admission to the program, the doctoral student must choose from any of the following area of concentration:

a.) Biblical Theology

b.) Systematic-Dogmatic Theology

c.) Moral Theology

d.) Religious Education

Admission Requirements

Applicants to the PhD in Theology program must satisfy the following requirements:
1. hold a government-recognized (civil) Master’s degree in Theology with a thesis: e.g., MA in Theological Studies, and at least a general average of B+ (2.0).

2. follow the basic requirements for application and acceptance to the civil degree program indicated [here](#);

3. submit a copy of their master’s thesis.

### PhD-Th Language Requirements

The PhD-Th program requires a reading knowledge of two modern languages, besides English, in which significant theological writing has been done (e.g., German, French, or Spanish). Latin or Greek may substitute for one of these. The PhD-Th with concentration in Scripture will demand Biblical Hebrew for those specializing in the Old Testament, or Biblical Greek for those specializing in the New Testament. All these language requirements must be fulfilled before writing the dissertation.

The requirements may be satisfied either by {a} taking language courses of two semesters each language in any university/college, provided that at least a grade of B is attained; or by {b} passing a proficiency test administered by LST in any or all of these languages. The test, lasting for 30 minutes, consists in translation of a page of Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Greek, or Church Latin, or German, or French, or Spanish.

### PhD-Th Course Work

The PhD-Th program requires at least four semesters of course work in which the student must complete successfully sixteen (16) doctoral level courses belonging to the following categories:
a) **Philosophical Theology (9 units):** Three courses chosen from the following: Theological Method; Methods in Religious Education; Multidisciplinary Foundation for Theological Reflection; Faith and Culture; Faith and Science.

With the approval of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, any doctoral level course offered by the Philosophy Department of the Ateneo de Manila University may be taken.

b) **Concentration (30 units):** Ten courses or seminars in the student’s area of concentration, two of which must be reading courses that are specifically geared toward the topic of his/her dissertation. At the end of each reading course, the student must submit a written report in the form of a Review of Literature, i.e., a survey and evaluation of books and articles dealing with a specific research topic. The review must cover all the books and articles assigned by the professor as well as other readings that the student may have discovered for himself/herself in the course of the research. The reading course includes pre-arranged meetings with the professor to discuss the reading materials.

Note: Before enrolling in the reading courses, they must first be approved by the Director of Advanced Graduate Students and/or the Vice President for Academic Affairs. A clear distinction should be made between reading courses and tutorial courses. Reading courses are tailor-made to suit the specific topic of the student’s dissertation. Tutorial courses may also involve reading assignments on a course bibliography, but the readings may not necessarily deal with the topic of the student’s dissertation.

c) **Electives (9 units):** Three courses chosen from outside the student’s area of concentration.

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**Probation Period**

Before successfully completing eighteen (18) units of course work, the student is on academic probation status. He/she cannot enroll beyond the nine units until he/she has been approved for definitive acceptance to the PhD-Th program by the Vice President for Academic Affairs upon the recommendation of the Standards and Degrees Committee.

The six courses taken during the probation period must already include courses in Philosophical Theology and in the area of concentration, in which the student must write at least
one major research paper that conforms to the following specifications: [1] it must be between 30-40 pages in length; [2] it must be formatted according to LST Style Manual based on Turabian, 6th edition; [3] it must include footnotes and at least two full-page bibliographies listing only the titles of books and articles that have actually been cited in the paper; [4] it must have received a grade of at least B+ (2.0).

**Definitive Acceptance**

The bases for definitive acceptance are the grades, the professors’ evaluations, and at least one major research paper written in the doctoral course work. Without definitive acceptance to the PhD-Th program the doctoral student will not be allowed to enroll beyond the 18 units of course work.

**PhD-Th Comprehensive Examination**

After the completion of all course work, the student takes the comprehensive examination. The matter of the comprehensive examination arises out of the bibliography assigned to the student in the field of concentration. The process is as follows:

The student formulates six thesis statements — each thesis supported by a short, pertinent
bibliography — with the help of a professor who shall approve the thesis statements for submission to the school.

Once the thesis statements are approved by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the student prepares for the comprehensive examination. The preparation time shall be not less than two months and not more than one semester. After the preparation, the student applies at the Office for an examination date.

Twenty-four hours before the examination proper, the student is informed which particular thesis he/she will have to present and defend. The examination board is composed of three professors. The student presents the thesis for 30 minutes. Presentation, however, should not be reading a prepared paper, but actually teaching the matter as if the examinee were before a class of students. He/she should teach the matter clearly and in a well-ordered way within the allotted timeframe of 30 minutes.

Each of the three professors questions the student for fifteen minutes. The entire examination lasts one hour and fifteen minutes.

In case of failure, only one retake is allowed. Students who fail the retake are dropped from the program unless, for special reasons, the Standards and Degrees Committee recommends that a second retake be given.

PhD-Th Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation is expected to manifest the student’s firm grasp of theological method and criticism and his/her ability to control and marshal pertinent data around some original specialized topic.

The dissertation must fulfill all the requirements of the Graduate School of the Ateneo de Manila University regarding form, style, and method of registration. The doctorate thesis should be between 180 and 220 pages in length with an upper limit of 250 pages.

The proposal (excluding bibliography) should normally not exceed 10 pages and should follow the LST Style Manual based on Turabian, 6th edition.

Once approved by the mentor, five (5) copies of the dissertation proposal are submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs who appoints a panel of professors to examine it. On a date specified by the school the student defends his proposal before the panel.

The oral defense consists in [1] a clear presentation (for about 15 minutes) of the written proposal by the writer, covering the basic problem or theme of the dissertation, its scope and limitation, its importance, and the basic sources (bibliography) and methods to be used; [2] each professor reviews the proposal with the writer through questions, suggestions, etc., usually for a period of 10 to 15 minutes, depending upon the particular needs of the proposal.

The professors may offer brief written recommendations, analyses, suggestions, etc. to the writer, copies of which are also given to the mentor and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

b) PhD-Th Dissertation Writing: After the proposal has been approved by the panel, the doctoral student may now proceed to writing the dissertation chapter by chapter. All throughout the writing of the dissertation the student must seek the guidance of this mentor. Each chapter must be approved by the mentor one at a time.

The doctoral dissertation should be between 180 and 220 pages in length with an upper limit of 250 pages. In addition, it should follow the LST Style Manual (based on Turabian, 6th edition). The dissertation must make an original contribution to the field of concentration and must manifest an appropriate standard of scientific theological research.

c) PhD-Th Dissertation Public Defense: When the whole dissertation is finished and meets the approval of the mentor, it is submitted to the school. The Vice President for Academic Affairs appoints a second reader, who, ideally, should come from the panel that examined the dissertation proposal. It is the task of the second reader to ascertain that the dissertation is ready for public defense. He/she has the right to order any changes in the dissertation he considers necessary for it to be truly ready for defense. In case of an unsolvable conflict between the second reader and mentor, an independent panel appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs will decide the issue.

After the second reader declares the dissertation ready for defense, unbound copies of the dissertation are submitted to the other readers who, together with the second reader, shall make up the panel of professors for the defense. A date for the defense is then scheduled.
After the successfully defending the dissertation, the student must submit to the school two bound copies of the corrected and approved final edition of the dissertation.