I. Dissertation topic approval process:
   A. This document is designed to help students select the appropriate topic and mentor for the dissertation or thesis.
   B. Upon successful completion of preliminary examinations, a student will submit a topic proposal to the area faculty (Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, or Theology).
   C. Area Approval: The initial proposal will be a maximum of 500 words in length and should be written in consultation with the suggested mentor of the dissertation. After the professor approves the topic proposal, he or she should submit the proposal to the Academic and Student Support Associate in the Graduate Studies office, who will distribute it to area faculty for approval. Area faculty should indicate their approval by initialing the approval form in the Graduate Studies office. After area faculty approve the topic proposal, the Graduate Program Director will present it to the Administrative Committee for approval.
   D. The proposal should include three items at the top of the page: the student’s name, the subject of the dissertation proposal in the form of a working title, and the name of the dissertation mentor who has agreed to supervise the project. The mentor must be a member of the Faculty of the Graduate Program in Religion. The mentor must have demonstrated competence in the dissertation area to serve as its director. "Demonstrated competence" is understood to mean that the faculty mentor has an active publication record in the subject area.
   E. The area faculty will approve the topic and the mentor. The area faculty will indicate their response to the Topic Proposal by initialing and dating the Topic Proposal Approval Form in the Graduate Studies Office. The Religion Graduate Studies Office will notify the mentor and student when a majority of the area faculty approves the Topic Proposal.
   F. Graduate Administrative Committee Approval: The Director of Graduate Studies will forward the area-approved proposal to the Graduate Administrative Committee for final approval. The Committee will review the information and sign the Topic Approval Form or give through the suggested mentor written recommendations against acceptance of the proposal. If the Committee accepts the area’s recommendations, the Graduate Studies Director will inform the student and the mentor that approval has been granted for the student to move to the next stage, the prospectus.

II. Prospectus: The prospectus is a description of a proposed thesis/dissertation idea.
   A. Format and Content: The prospectus commonly includes:
      1. A clear statement of the purpose of the research project and a statement of the significance of the thesis proposed.
      2. An articulation of the methodology to be used in the study.
3. Evidence, in the form of a literature review, that the topic has not been previously examined.
4. A detailed outline and a narrative of the logic connecting the chapters of the thesis/dissertation idea.
5. Supporting bibliography with emphasis on primary sources.

B. Length: The text of the prospectus should be a maximum of 10 typed, double-spaced pages, and the bibliography a maximum of 12 pages. The prospectus should be formatted according to the standards of a dissertation.

C. Style: The latest edition of Turabian is the Department's approved style guide for Historical and Theological area students. Biblical area students will use the latest edition of the SBL Handbook of Style. Use of inclusive language is strongly encouraged when referring to human beings.

III. Resources:
A. Dissertation Abstracts, electronic databases, and published books and articles should be consulted to assure that the proposed idea has not already been researched.
B. Copies of numerous successful proposals are available for reference in the Graduate Studies Office, Department of Religion.

IV. Prospectus approval:
A. The student should prepare the prospectus with the advice and consent of the assigned mentor. Several revisions may be required.
B. When completed to the mentor’s satisfaction, the prospectus should be submitted to the Academic and Student Support Associate in the Graduate Studies office, who will distribute it to area faculty for approval.
C. Area faculty will indicate their response to the prospectus by checking in the "yes" or "no" box, and initialing and dating the Prospectus Approval Form in the Graduate Studies Office. The Graduate Studies Office will notify the mentor and student when a majority of the area faculty has approved the prospectus.
D. The student will copy (at Duplicating Services) the prospectus and distribute it to all members of the Religion graduate faculty 10 working days prior to the graduate faculty meeting in order to be eligible for consideration.
E. The prospectus is presented by the mentor to the full Religion graduate faculty for approval, revision, or rejection.
F. The Office of Graduate Studies notifies the student by letter that his/her prospectus has been approved.

V. Admission to Candidacy: A student is recognized as a candidate for a doctoral degree only after he or she has met the foreign language requirement, passed the preliminary examinations, and secured prospectus approval by the Department of Religion graduate faculty. At this point the student can be classified as ABD. The Graduate Studies Office will complete and file with the Graduate School the Admission to Candidacy Form.

VI. Dissertation/Thesis Committee:
A. After the prospectus is approved, the student, in consultation with the
mentor, should select second and third readers and secure their verbal approval to serve on the committee. The mentor will chair the Dissertation/Thesis Committee. The second reader is chosen from within the Department of Religion and normally from within the student's area. The third reader is chosen from outside the Department of Religion. Readers must have graduate faculty status.

B. Occasionally a student will want to add an additional member to the committee, someone in the discipline of Religion who has expertise in the proposed dissertation area. The student, in consultation with the mentor selects this fourth reader from outside the Department of Religion (or faculty from an institution other than Baylor). That committee member will become an additional reader (that is, he or she will not count as part of the regular three Dissertation Committee members).

C. Within thirty days after the prospectus is approved the student should furnish the Graduate Studies Office a mentor-approved list of the three members of the student's Dissertation Committee.

D. The Graduate Studies Office will send a confirmation of each reader's appointment to the dissertation committee.

VII. Filing for graduation: Students must file for graduation with the Graduate School the first week of classes during the semester in which they plan to graduate.

VIII. Doctoral Oral Examination/Dissertation Defense:

A. The mentor is considered the chairperson of the Doctoral/Thesis Oral Examination Committee.

B. No less than two weeks before the oral examination, the candidate will submit the penultimate copy of the dissertation/thesis to the chairperson of the Doctoral/Thesis Oral Examination Committee.

C. At least two weeks prior to the oral examination, the candidate must meet with Sandra Harman of the Graduate School. The candidate must take a formatted copy of his/her dissertation to her for review and guidance.

D. In consultation with the mentor and the student, the Graduate Studies Director will choose two (one for the M.A.) graduate faculty members from the Religion Department who can serve as fourth and fifth readers and attend the Doctoral Oral Examination.

E. At the time the penultimate copy of the dissertation is approved by the three member Dissertation Committee, the student will arrange with his/her committee members and the fourth and fifth readers to schedule a time for the Oral Examination. The preferred date and time must be submitted to the Religion Graduate Studies office no less than 4 weeks prior to the desired date and time. Students are responsible for consulting the Graduate School's calendar for dissertation defense deadlines each semester.

F. When the oral defense is scheduled, the department will pay to have spiral bound copies made for each of the five members of the examining committee. Check with the Academic and Student Support Associate in the Graduate Studies office for the procedure.

G. As a requirement for graduation, you must provide the Religion Department with two bound copies of your dissertation. A copy will be given to your mentor and one will be archived in the department. At the time...
you submit your approved and penultimate copy electronically to BearDocs, you should place an order for two bound copies. **Once you have submitted proof of the order and shipping to the Religion Department (by way of a receipt or confirmation email), to the Graduate Studies office, the necessary paperwork for you to graduate, will be released.**

Several options for binding are listed below. These are only options; you may make arrangements for binding however you wish. Baylor University, the Graduate School, nor the Religion Department, officially endorse either of these companies.

**Thesis On Demand** : online ordering for around $35-$65, depending on number of pages, color pages, etc., plus shipping cost

**Houchen Bindery** : online ordering; currently $55 + tax and shipping

Regardless of where you choose to have your dissertation copies bound, they should be printed on 8 1/2 x 11 white paper (typically 60#), single-side or two-sided printing, dark green binding, and gold lettering. The title, author's last name, degree, and year, should appear on the spine. The title and author's full name should be printed on the front cover.

H. After the Doctoral/Master's Oral Examination, students should complete the following procedures:

1. The student has **10 working days** to complete changes to the dissertation recommended by the Doctoral Examining Committee.
2. The final copy is printed on standard paper and submitted to the mentor for his or her approval.
3. The chairperson signs the Approval of Final Thesis/Dissertation Copy Form and the student then takes it to the Graduate School, Office of the Associate Dean, along with the final copy of the dissertation.
4. From this point forward the student is to follow the instructions of the Associate Dean's Office to complete the requirements for graduation.

IX. Required Notification: The Graduate Studies Office will complete and furnish to the Graduate School the Oral Examination Form (scheduling form), Change of Grade Form, and Record of Oral Examination.