DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (THEOLOGICAL STUDIES)

Purpose and Nature of the Program

The Doctor of Philosophy (Theological Studies) Program is an advanced graduate degree primarily intended to prepare students for academic teaching/research and pastoral/institutional leadership in the fields of Church History/Historical Theology, New Testament Exegesis and Theology, Old Testament Exegesis and Theology, and Systematic Theology. Students choose one of these fields as a major concentration in which they will take coursework, write comprehensive examinations, and write a dissertation. Students should also be theologically informed and able to integrate their work with other theological disciplines.

Program Outcomes

Students graduating with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Theological Studies will:

- Gain competence in a particular field of theological study (OT, NT, CH, ST).
- Be equipped to do original, independent research as lifelong learners.
- Be theologically well-formed, able to integrate their work with other theological disciplines to read Scripture faithfully in dialogue with interpreters past and present.
- Cultivate theological virtues, engaging in issues in a way that is constructive and edifying for the global church.
- Be able to provide theological leadership (e.g. in teaching, writing, and institutional leadership) in the global academy and church.

Program Design

The PhD (Theological Studies) Program is designed on a five-year, full-time model, usually consisting of two years of residence coursework followed by an additional three years of comprehensive exams and dissertation research and writing. Completion of the program in five years assumes strong biblical and modern language skills and no entrance deficiencies. The current average program length is about 5.5 years, due primarily to language deficiencies and employment (financial) needs.

The THS program is 45 units. Proficiency in the biblical languages and in German and French (or other language, if approved) must be demonstrated prior to writing the comprehensive exams. Residence coursework includes the completion of required PhD cohort courses, independent proposal preparation, departmental advanced electives, electives in education and intercultural studies,and research methods courses. Additional units of dissertation research follow the residence coursework and comprehensive exams.

While some participants may complete the required coursework within two years of matriculation, many will take longer than two years depending on their level of academic preparation, their aptitude, and the time they are able to devote to the demands of the program. A normal student course load for the program is 10 units per semester. Full-time status in the program is defined as at least 8 units per semester. In no case may a student exceed a course load of 16 units of doctoral work per semester. Part-time students can be accommodated, although preference is given to full-time applicants. Prospective students must indicate their intent to be full or part time at the time of application.

Proposal Study Courses

In addition to traditional required and elective courses, each semester students will meet with their prospective dissertation mentors and conduct independent work toward their eventual dissertation proposals. This work might include broad reading in the field to refine the topic, reading on methodology, collection of secondary literature related to the research question, creation of a database, or anything that the student and mentor finds profitable. The goal of this work is to have a defensible proposal by the time the student takes comprehensive exams at the end of coursework. With the dissertation mentor's approval, proposal study units can be substituted with an elective that is particularly relevant to potential dissertation research.

Admission Requirements

Students interested in this program should apply via Trinity Western University (https://www.twu.ca/apply-twu/), see TWU (https://www.twu.ca/academics/trinity-evangelical-divinity-school/) for more information.

Advanced Standing and Transfer Credit

A request for advanced standing on the basis of previous graduate work (e.g., a completed ThM degree) should be made known to the program director prior to the annual fall/spring review toward the end of the first year of study. The maximum number of advanced standing units granted in the PhD/THS program is 6 units; the actual number of units granted may be fewer depending on the nature of the graduate program and the courses taken. The program director evaluates all past work and progress in the THS program and informs the Academic Doctoral Committee of the decision. Petitions made for advanced standing beyond what is normally allowed must be received by the Academic Doctoral Committee within the first two semesters after matriculation. Such petitions are exceptional and will be considered only in cases where previous course work has been completed in an academic doctoral program.

Transfer credit is not normally given for PhD doctoral study except as planned in advance in consultation with the program director.

Language Requirements

Proficiency in Biblical Hebrew and Greek as well as two modern research languages (usually German and French) are required for the THS program. Proficiency for all languages must be demonstrated before the student writes the comprehensive exams. This may require some exams/courses to be taken in the semester prior to matriculation and/or in the summers of the student's program. The exams for any given language may be taken no more than two times, after which the participant shall meet with the Director. Language examinations are administered on a regular basis by the Academic Doctoral Office (ADO).

Students whose biblical or research language skills are not at the PhD level will find it difficult to complete program coursework in two years, resulting in a longer period of doctoral studies. In no case will a student lacking proficiency in the required languages be eligible for comprehensive exams, candidacy, or dissertation research.

Proficiency

Participants must demonstrate advanced exegetical and reading skills in biblical Greek and Hebrew.

The Greek Proficiency Exam evaluates proficiency in the biblical language at a level similar to that of MDiv graduates. Participants whose biblical Greek skills are not at this level will find it difficult to complete program coursework in two years, resulting in a longer period of doctoral study. Students are NOT permitted to take BNT advanced electives (and certain other courses where such proficiency is required) until they have proven their proficiency in Greek.

Students are NOT permitted to take BOT advanced electives (and certain other courses where such proficiency is required) until they have proven their proficiency in Hebrew.

Modern (Research) Languages

Within the first year of study, participants are required to demonstrate reading proficiency in German and in a second research language. Proficiency is demonstrated with a proficiency exam or the passing of the final after taking a language course.

Residency Requirements

All students are required to enroll for a minimum of four semesters on campus, two of which are consecutive and full time. Continuous participation in the doctoral learning community (THS Community Gathering on Thursday and colloquia) is expected during the required period of residency.

Serving missionaries who find it impossible to leave their ministries for two or three continuous years may apply for an exception to the requirement for continuous enrollment in the program. Students who are granted an exception will still have to spend at least four semesters on campus and complete the program within seven years.

Student Assessment

Student Progress Evaluation

Upon completion of the first year in the program (typically 18 units or more, including advanced standing), each student's fitness for PhD study is evaluated. Student progress is assessed by several criteria: completion of program deficiencies, including course work; Greek, Hebrew, and research language proficiency; cumulative GPA; writing aptitude; promise of teaching/research ability; exemplary Christian character; involvement in the academic community; and department of concentration recommendations. The student progress evaluation is initiated by the program director.

In a case where the program director, faculty, or the student has concerns about the student's' academic progress, or if there is some other reason the student is unable to complete the PhD/THS program, the program director and the student should meet. If the program director is unable to recommend that the student continue in the program, or if the student believes that he or she is unable to continue the program, the student may be given the option of completing a terminal Master of Theology degree in lieu of completing the PhD/THS program. If such action is recommended by the program director in consultation with the chair of the student's department of concentration, the student must submit a written request to withdraw from the PhD/THS to the program director. Completed course work is evaluated according to the following criteria:

- When 41 units or more of PhD-level coursework has been completed and the PhD Comprehensive Exam has been passed (at the ThM level), the student may be considered for a ThM. If the PhD Comprehensive Exam has not been taken, the ThM Comprehensive Exam must be passed. The capstone thesis or major research papers requirement is waived in lieu of the substantive writing in program courses.
- When fewer than 41 units of PhD-level course work has been completed, the student may complete a Change of Program form through the Admissions Office with applicable coursework transferring into the ThM degree program, and the ThM Major Comprehensive Exam must be passed. (In the case of a student having completed 30 units or more of PhD coursework, the capstone thesis or major research papers requirement is waived in lieu of the substantive writing in program courses.)
- A second ThM from Trinity in the same concentration will not be awarded in cases where a Trinity ThM has already been awarded. Students opting for the ThM in lieu of the PhD/THS will not be readmitted at some future date to a PhD program at Trinity.

Comprehensive Examination

Students take the PhD major comprehensive examination after the completion of entrance deficiencies and language requirements and prior to registering for dissertation research. The major comprehensive examination focuses on the student's concentration, with special attention given to matters of theological method and theological integration. The last part of the comprehensive exam is the dissertation proposal. The student writes the proposal under the direction of his/her primary mentor throughout the coursework and prior to the comprehensive exams. The last portion of the comprehensive exams is a hearing comprised of the Dissertation Mentor, second reader, and the program director. The purpose of this hearing is to test and refine the thesis/research question, structure, methodology, and limitations/delimitations of the dissertation.

Candidacy Requirements

Admission to the PhD/THS program does not guarantee acceptance into candidacy for the degree. A student will be certified as a candidate for the degree only after:

- Fulfillment of all deficiencies and prerequisites indicated as conditions for admission.
- Successful completion of a minimum of 39 units (including all doctoral seminars and the approved education and research methods courses) with a grade of "B-" or higher in each.
- A cumulative grade point average of 3.2 or better.
- Successful completion of the minimum residency requirement of four semesters, which includes two consecutive semesters of full-time (minimum of 8 units) course work.
- Successful completion of all biblical and research language proficiency requirements.
- Successful completion of the major comprehensive examinations and conditions (if any).
- Acceptance of the dissertation research proposal and revisions (if any).
- Attendance at a minimum of four doctoral colloquia.

Students must receive candidacy before registering for the first dissertation research course.

Leave of Absence

For extraordinary reasons (prolonged illness, serious family crisis, unusual work situation), a doctoral participant may be granted a leave of absence from the program. Request for a leave of absence is to be submitted in writing to the program director and the ADC for

consideration. The letter must include the reason(s) for the requested leave of absence and be submitted during the circumstance, or as soon as possible after the event. A leave of absence may be granted on more than one occasion but not to exceed two years in total. Once approved, the leave of absence will not be counted against the program statute of limitations (seven years). Similarly, the leave of absence will suspend the time related to continuation fees.

The Dissertation

After being granted candidacy the student proceeds with the writing of the dissertation, embodying original research and making a genuine contribution to knowledge in the field of concentration. Students enroll for a minimum of two consecutive semesters of dissertation research and, if necessary, for dissertation continuation courses thereafter until the dissertation is written, the oral defense successfully completed, and the final copies received. No letter grades are assigned for these courses.

Once the dissertation has been completed, the student is required to defend the dissertation before the dissertation committee consisting of the Dissertation Mentor, the second reader, an external third reader, and the program director. The dissertation defense is in the form of an open hearing including faculty and peers. Once the dissertation has been successfully completed and defended, the student will make whatever corrections are necessary and proceed to have the manuscript prepared in final form according to requisite style requirements. Upon acceptance of the final copies, the student has completed all requirements for the degree. The Academic Doctoral Committee will then make a recommendation to the faculty for graduation.

Graduation Requirements

Students pursuing the PhD/THS degree are required to satisfy the following graduation requirements:

- Recommendation by the faculty of eligibility for the degree on the basis of academic stature and evidence of Christian life and character during residence at Trinity.
- Successful completion of all course requirements, including a minimum of 39 units in appropriate seminars, core courses, electives, comprehensive exams and dissertation proposal preparation; and 6 units of dissertation writing courses, with a minimum cumulative grade point average for program course work of 3.2 (on a 4.0 scale), and with no grade below "B-" applicable to the degree.
- Successful demonstration of proficiency in the requisite biblical and research languages.
- Successful completion of the minimum residency requirement of four semesters, which includes two consecutive semesters of full-time (minimum of 8 units per semester) course work.
- Attendance at four doctoral colloquia.
- Passing of the major comprehensive examination and the dissertation proposal hearing.
- Successful acquisition of candidacy.
- Submission of the Application for Graduation form to the Records Office.
- Successful completion and defense of an approved dissertation that exhibits the student's ability to do competent research, to think critically, and to communicate effectively.
- Completion of all requirements for the degree within seven years of matriculation, or completion of additional program requirements as outlined under Statute of Limitations and Program Continuation.
- Settlement of all financial obligations to Trinity and any other ACTS seminaries with the Office of Student Financial Services.

Statute of Limitations and Program Continuation

All program requirements (coursework and dissertation) for the degree are to be completed within seven years from matriculation.

Extension beyond seven years is contingent upon the approval of the program director, the Dissertation Mentor, and the Academic Doctoral Committee. Participants who are convinced that they will be unable to finish in seven years may apply in writing prior to the end of the seventh year for a program extension, which will give up to a maximum of three more years for degree completion. Ordinarily, program extensions will be granted only to students who have attained candidacy. Such an extension must be approved by the Academic Doctoral Committee and will be granted only if the program director and Dissertation Mentor (where applicable) agree that the participant is making appropriate progress toward degree completion and that the area of research remains viable. In addition, the program director and mentor may make the extension contingent on meeting specific goals such as completed proposal revisions, completed dissertation chapters, chapter revisions, etc.

Failure to complete any of the assigned further academic work by the deadline(s) set by the program director and mentor will result in immediate and automatic expulsion from the program.

Continuation fees are assessed to PhD/THS students for each semester of Dissertation Extension, Private Study, or for failure to enroll in course work (excluding summer).

Program Withdrawal

In the rare occurrence of a doctoral student finding it necessary to withdraw from the degree program, the student must notify both the Program Office and Records Office in writing of the desired change in program status. All fees accrued prior to formal notification of program withdrawal are still payable in full.

Program of Study

The PhD/THS is structured to provide course offerings that will allow flexibility in the light of each student's theological concentration. Students are expected to plan course selection with their faculty advisor.

Advanced Electives

Students are strongly encouraged to pursue elective studies in their department of concentration. (The taking of some advanced level research seminars by non-majors, especially those seminars making advanced use of the biblical languages, may require instructor approval.)

Comprehensive Examination and Proposal Preparation Courses

One or two semesters of THS 975 are used to prepare for the Comprehensive examination.

PhD Colloquia

Attendance is required at a minimum of four non-credit PhD academic gatherings intended specifically for all PhD/THS students. Applicable PhD colloquia are announced by the Academic Doctoral Office and offered each semester, excluding the summer.

Dissertation Research

Students take between two and six semesters of THS 991, with no more than 4 units in a semester.

PhD/THS Program Minors

Qualified students in the PhD/THS program will be permitted to take an 8-unit minor in one of the other two doctoral programs (EDS or ICS). Qualified participants should:

- Demonstrate strong master's level preparation in their primary field of study.
- Secure permission for the minor and the courses to be applied toward the minor from their program director and from the director of the program in which they wish to do a minor.

PhD/THS program participants electing to complete a minor should be aware that this may lengthen their program of study (i.e., minors are taken in lieu of dissertation proposal and comprehensive exam preparation courses whose content must then be completed independently).

Code	Title	Units
Theology		**8**
BNT 880	New Testament Use of the Old Testament	3
THS 880	Reading Scripture Theologically	3
THS 910	The Theological Scholar	2
THS	4 semesters of THS Seminar	0
Electives		**15**
EMS 800+	EMS Elective	3
BNT/BOT/HIS/THS 800+	Concentration Electives	12
Independent Study		**21**
THS 941	Proposal Study I	3
THS 942	Proposal Study II	3
THS 943	Proposal Study III	3
THS 944	Proposal Study IV	3
THS 975	Comprehensive Exam Prep	3
THS 991 & 991	Dissertation Research and Dissertation Research	6
Practicum		**1**
THS 925	Professional Development Practicum	1
Total Units		**45**