



Lutheran School of
Theology *at* Chicago

ThM and PhD Program Manual

LSTC Advanced Studies Program

2026-27

Ecumenical DMin and ACTS DMin in Preaching program information &
manuals available at [LSTC.EDU](https://www.lstc.edu)

All-Students Handbook and Program Manuals are also posted online at

[MyLSTC](https://www.lstc.edu/mylstc)

This 2026-27 Advanced Studies Program Manual and the information herein supersedes and
replaces all earlier versions of the Program Manual. Rev August 2026

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Welcome from the Director

Welcome, or welcome back, to the Master of Theology (ThM) and the Doctor of Philosophy PhD) programs at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago! Together with the interschool Doctor of Ministry program (DMin), which we share with the Catholic Theological Union and McCormick Theological Seminary, these make up the Advanced Studies Program at LSTC.

After a long history at LSTC in which the ThM served mostly as a way station along the way to the PhD, the two degrees are now decoupled. We have re-established the ThM as an important degree with its own integrity. As a result of this decoupling, among our Advanced Studies students (in addition to DMin students) we find:

- ThM students who are working towards graduating with that degree, who can then bring their learnings and qualifications to a great variety of ministry settings – and perhaps, whether right away or after some years, to PhD studies at some institution other than LSTC.
- PhD students who have already been at LSTC for some years, many of whom are striving to complete their work and receive their degree in May 2027, while others seek this year to take their Field Examinations and achieve “ABD” (all but the dissertation) status, in order, we hope, to graduate in May 2028.

The 2026-2027 ThM and PhD Program Manual reflects this duality. For now, we will continue to issue this Manual as a single volume – but it must be noted that it is a Manual in two parts: for ThM students; and for finishing PhD students.

(Faculty conversations continue about the possibility of developing a renewed PhD program, one which could exist alongside the ThM program rather than as a second stage of studies after the first stage of the ThM. But I am not able at the time of this letter to make any announcements or promises.)

Some changes to note:

This Manual contains a new set of (provisional) Learning Outcomes for both ThM and PhD students, based on the Objectives and Outcomes of previous Manuals but rethought and brought into coherence with LSTC Learning Outcomes for other programs.

This iteration of the Manual formalizes changes many of you have already experienced with regard to how examinations and summative evaluations are carried out.

A ThM student can (in conversation with the Advisor) choose to write a ThM thesis or to take the ThM Comprehensive Examination. (a) The ThM thesis, once a rarity, is now an excellent opportunity to study a subject in some depth, as well as to provide the student with an artefact of their work to which they can point in future applications. (b) If the Comprehensive Examination is chosen, it can be designed – by the student and the Advisor in consultation with Division colleagues – in a great variety of ways, incorporating (for example) take-home essay assignments and/or pedagogical exercises as substitutes for the traditional method of writing several short essays under examination conditions.

Similarly, PhD students who have not yet taken the Field Examination may, in conversation with the Advisor and in consultation with Division colleagues, opt to write major essays on carefully crafted questions that (as we are discovering) serve to jump-start writing on the chapters of the dissertation, or to identify major issues concerning how the dissertation should be shaped.

With regard to all these possibilities: talk to your Advisor!

We pray for a good and fruitful AY 2026-2027. Please know that I am available, as is our Registrar and ASO Coordinator Mr. Bradley Arnette Erz, to help you with any questions you might have.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark N. Swanson" followed by a horizontal line.

The Rev. Dr. Mark N. Swanson
Director of Advanced Studies

Harold S. Vogelaar Professor of Christian-Muslim and Interfaith Studies
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Section 1- Advanced Studies Program Information

A. Governance of the Th.M. and Ph.D. Degree Programs

The Director of Advanced Studies (Director) is responsible for administering the Th.M. and Ph.D. degree programs in consultation with the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Division of Biblical Studies (Division I), the Division of History, Theology, Ethics, and World Christianity and Mission (Division II), the Division of Ministry Arts (Division III), and the LSTC faculty as a whole.

The Program Coordinator for the Advanced Studies Office facilitates and coordinates many aspects of the Th.M. and Ph.D. degree programs, in consultation with the Director.

The appropriate Division exercises oversight within particular subject areas. Divisions I, II, and III make admissions decisions, assign advisors, offer recommendations concerning LSTC tuition financial aid scholarships and fellowships, and monitor student progress in the Th.M. and Ph.D. degree programs. The Divisions ensure that Advanced Graduate Seminars and other necessary courses are regularly offered in the LSTC curriculum.

Divisions I, II, and III report their decisions and actions to the Director and the Coordinator, who inform the students concerned and take appropriate administrative measures.

B. Learning Outcomes of the Th.M. and Ph.D. Degree Programs

In the Spring of 2025, the LSTC faculty developed a new set of Learning Outcomes for the ThM and PhD programs to replace the dated Objectives and Outcomes of previous manuals. An early draft was accepted at the February 14, 2025 Faculty Meeting as a working document. The present draft formed part of the Report on the LSTC Advanced Studies Programs that was submitted to the Association of Theological Schools on March 31, 2025, and accepted on May 29, 2025.

Note that the following Learning Outcomes place those for the ThM and those for the PhD in alignment. While new admissions to the PhD program are closed in 2026-2027, we continue to work towards a redesigned PhD program and will use the following Learning Outcomes as a guide.

Key to the following charts:

In the left-hand column:

- references to the 2020 ATS standards
- reference to the ThM and PhD objectives in past versions of the ThM-PhD Manual
- a brief statement of where in the curriculum these outcomes might be covered.

The learning outcomes are presented on our usual LSTC 9-point continuum (as in the MDiv, MA, and MAM learning outcomes). The three descriptors in each row (labeled a, b, and c) can be thought of as:

- a: outcomes for ThM students in an introductory class or workshop
- b: good outcomes for ThM graduates
- c: strong outcomes for PhD graduates.

Some of these outcomes will be addressed especially in classes (e.g., a Learning, Research, and Writing Seminar or a Methodology Seminar). Some can be addressed through particular workshops and learning modules, or through a variety of learning experiences and activities that can be noted

Learning, Research, and Writing	Performance Levels								
	Beginning/Developing			Adequate/Good			Advanced/Exemplary		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

in a student dossier, to be periodically reviewed with the Advisor.

ATS Standards: 4.11, “scholarly research” → 5.13, “developing competence to engage in original research and writing that advances theological understanding for the academy and for communities of faith” Previous <i>Manuals</i>: ThM #2, “research methods, familiarity with resources, and competence in at least one language essential to scholarship ...”; #3, “formulate productive questions”; #6, “engage in critical scholarly discussions” → PhD #1, “sustained original research and writing” Where covered? A Graduate Seminar on Learning, Research, and Writing (or its equivalent) is important here. Continues in all classes.	1a: Summarizes reading assignments accurately and with understanding. Locates authors’ summaries (e.g., abstracts, conclusions) and indications of structure (e.g., Tables of Contents, introductions, subtitles). Outlines texts, displaying how their authors’ arguments are made.	1b: Integrates a range of reading skills into one’s work. Articulates strategies for navigating large bibliographies. Recognizes and examines different points of view; considers, contrasts, and brings them into conversation; and formulates and argues for one’s own judgments.	1c: Demonstrates (in written work and oral presentation) wide and insightful reading in one’s own and in other disciplines. Engages diverse content actively and creatively, with generosity and a critical mind.
	2a: Identifies and learns to use the wide range of information resources available in physical and online collections, including the help and counsel offered by librarians.	2b: Evaluates sources of information in library collections, both three-dimensional and virtual, demonstrating discernment in their selection and use (and utilizing the assistance of librarians and information specialists).	2c: Displays a high degree of information literacy, including a capacity for accessing state-of-the-field/art research. Collaborates collegially with librarians, information technologists, and archivists. Contributes to print and online resources.
	3a: Understands the importance of formulating good research questions. Distinguishes arguments from assertions and identifies what might serve arguments as appropriate evidence. Presents such arguments and listens to those of others, engaging one another in a respectful and fruitful way.	3b: Articulates the research questions that move the researcher from a general topic to a problem that guides meaningful research. Receives the critical feedback of others as opportunities to test and review one’s projects.	3c: Devises and conducts research projects that ask probing questions leading to results that are an advance in our knowledge in some field of significance. Discusses, defends, and revises these results through respectful scholarly debate.
	4a: Articulates one’s work orally and in writing, in a variety of settings, striving for a logical presentation and clarity of style that allows hearers and readers to engage one’s ideas. Engages with feedback from instructors and peers so as to improve one’s skills.	4b: Cultivates skills of oral and written presentation through summative projects (e.g. a thesis, or other projects), as well as opportunities that present themselves outside the classroom, at churches or conferences.	4c: Communicates with fluency, both orally and in writing, for various publics, honing these gifts for service in the church, the community, and the academy.
	5a: Understands that plagiarism (including uncredited use of text generated by AI) is not tolerated in theological/biblical studies. Practices skills of paraphrasing, summary, selective quotation, and careful citation.	5b: Develops and implements the skills listed in 5a, recognizing in plagiarism a violation of one’s own academic integrity. Uses AI tools selectively and judiciously, after critical examination with input from librarians/information specialists.	5c: Collaborates within a scholarly community to which one is deeply indebted, giving others credit for their work with generosity. Critically appraises developments in AI and adheres to high ethical standards in their use.

Deep study of a theologically related discipline	Performance Levels								
	Beginning/Developing			Adequate/Good			Advanced/Exemplary		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ATS Standards: 4.10, “to study more deeply a theologically related discipline” → 5.13, “gaining a comprehensive knowledge of the discipline(s) studied” 4.11, “language requirements ... appropriate to the field of specialization” → 5.14, “the ability to use languages germane to the specialization” Previous <i>Manuals</i>: ThM #1, “mastery of one area or discipline of theological study” → PhD #2, “broad grasp of the history of research and the current questions in a chosen area of Theological Studies” ThM #2, “competence in at least one language essential to scholarship in a focused area or discipline” → PhD #3, “gain competence in languages necessary for scholarly research in primary and secondary sources” Where covered? Coursework. A Graduate Methodology Seminar.	1a: Gains knowledge in one’s chosen discipline, including the use of its basic tools, through coursework, interaction with faculty and peers, attending lectures and conferences, and independent reading.			1b: Examines and interprets the history and current state of the discipline. Articulates important contested issues within the discipline and locates one’s own position with respect to them.			1c: Engages with others in church and academy in research projects that add to our knowledge in the discipline and that bring the discipline into conversation with others.		
	2a: Identifies and distinguishes between diverse approaches and methodologies within the discipline, interpreting their aims, their strengths, and their limits.			2b: Determines appropriate methodologies for the studies one wants to undertake. Implements the tools provided to arrive at clear and useful results.			2c: Improvises creatively in spaces between disciplines and methodologies, interrogating received orthodoxies, attending to suppressed voices, and weaving new, liberating discourse.		
	3a: Gains knowledge of the languages needed for reading primary and secondary sources in the discipline (academic English; Greek and Hebrew for biblical studies, German or Latin for Reformation studies, etc.). Languages vary according to discipline. If the student is keeping a dossier and checking off experiences, various activities in language acquisition and practice can be included.			3b: Displays one’s (growing) knowledge of some language/s in research papers, scholarly presentations, and summative projects. Takes advantage of opportunities to refresh and build on this knowledge.			3c: Integrates wide reading in the literature of the discipline, in its principal languages, into all one’s work. Seeks opportunities to enhance linguistic skills. Collaborates with scholars who possess complementary linguistic skills.		

Teaching and forming students	Performance Levels								
	Beginning/Developing			Adequate/Good			Advanced/Exemplary		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ATS standards: 5.14, “competence in teaching and forming students” Previous <i>Manuals</i>: ThM #1 “knowledge ... and insight ... sufficient to teach an introductory college course in the field of study” → PhD #4, “competence in teaching” See also “Learning, Research, and Writing” 4abc. Where covered? Various required and recommended workshops/trainings. Classes, TA experiences, etc. (to be recorded in the student’s dossier).	1a: Understands basic pedagogical models for lesson planning and course design. Begins to explore models in classroom exercises and external applications.			1b: Applies the pedagogical models one has learned to create lessons (or entire courses) for a variety learning environments (pedagogy workshops, class and congregational presentations, as a TA, in conferences, as part of a summative project).			1c: Facilitates learning, with awareness of contextualized use of pedagogical models to address diverse learning styles.		
	2a: Gains understanding of and familiarity with the use of technological tools for synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid learning. Articulates the importance of such tools for outreach and for connection with a broad network of partners and students.			2b: Experiments with and practices the construction of lessons (or entire courses) for synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid learning communities.			2c: Constructs and implements courses and individual lessons for a variety of academic and ecclesiastical settings, as well as for a wider public. Collaborates with others in curricular design. Follows recent research in pedagogical theories.		

The vocation of theological scholarship	Performance Levels								
	Beginning/Developing			Adequate/Good			Advanced/Exemplary		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ATS standard: 5.13, “demonstrating capacities for the vocation of theological scholarship” Previous <i>Manuals</i>: ThM #5 “that students grow in those qualities essential for the practice of scholarly ministry, such as emotional maturity, faith and integrity, and concern for justice” → PhD #6, “commitment to the vocation of theological scholarship in all of its dimensions”	1a: Recognizes the impact of difference (e.g., cultural values, identities, experiences) in the discipline of study and the life of the church and the academy (with particular attention to race, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability).			1b: Reflects critically on difference, synthesizing learnings from courses and extracurricular opportunities, and applies that reflection to contexts in the church and the academy.			1c: Invites and provides accountability in continued reflection and application of what one has learned, while engaging the impact of difference in contexts in the church and the academy.		
Where covered? Coursework, but also (and especially) various experiences that can be recorded in a student dossier. (Such experiences include many in the rich menu of opportunities that LSTC has to offer, beyond specific courses.)	2a: Recognizes that theological scholarship is a global enterprise. Seeks perspectives from outside the Western Christian tradition.			2b: Analyzes texts, studies, and bibliographies critically, with alertness to absent voices, lacunae, and attempts to privilege particular narratives.			2c: Participates in the building up of global and diverse networks of scholarship, where gifts (including that of critique) are received with gratitude and creative collaboration made possible.		
	3a: Expresses awareness of the multi-religious context in which we live, both globally and locally in the United States. Finds opportunities to learn about other faith traditions, and approaches people of other faiths with respect and a readiness for fruitful encounter.			3b: Articulates inter-religious histories, challenges, and possibilities for dialogue and intellectual and spiritual engagement in one’s chosen field – and gains experience of this engagement.			3c: Inhabits and invites others into spaces of inter-religious engagement, both in service to the wider community and in welcoming challenges to Christian theological articulation.		
	4a: Understands that scholarship is a communal enterprise that requires good citizenship of the individual scholar. Participates in the life of the school, beyond class participation and coursework.			4b: Exercises leadership in some aspects of the life of the school (e.g., student government, academic forums, leadership in various workshops, symposia, or Center activities, etc.), or of other communities and institutions.			4c: Embodies the vocation of the scholar in collaborative research, generous teaching, and service to the community and the academy.		

Section 2- Registration and Course Transfers

A. Continuing Relations Status

For both Th.M. and Ph.D. students, those who have completed all course work and need more time to prepare for and take the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination *or* to prepare and defend the Th.M. thesis, *or* to prepare for and take the Ph.D. Field Examination and then to research, write, and defend the Ph.D. dissertation, must register for Continuing Relations. That is to say, Th.M. and Ph.D. students who are continuing in the program but not enrolled in coursework must continue to register each semester for Continuing Relations with their advisor. At the end of every term the advisor will provide a P (Pass) or NC (No Credit) grade for the semester and will provide a statement regarding the student's progress.

Failure to properly register for Continuing Relations will affect student's ability to make progress in the degree program. Unregistered students cannot sit for exams, develop proposals with advisors, or pursue any other academic activities. Unregistered students also cannot access seminary services such as the Library, housing, etc.

i. Full-Time Continuing Relations

Continuing Relations is considered full-time. International students on F-1 visas¹ are required to be registered for Continuing Relations upon course completion. Students who are working full-time towards an exam, thesis, or dissertation should also register for Continuing Relations.

ii. Auditing a Course

Advanced PhD students registered for continuing relations are eligible to audit one course per term free of charge. Students interested in this option should consult with the professor teaching the course to confirm that space is available for an audit and to agree upon the terms of the audit. Students should then register for the course within the add/drop period (before the second week of classes).

B. Inactive Students (Leave of Absence)

Inactive Students are those who have petitioned the Director for "Leave of Absence" status from their degree program for a maximum of three years. Leave of Absence forms can be obtained from the Registrar's Office. Inactive Students remain on the Th.M. and Ph.D. degree program rosters despite the fact that they are not expected to make progress in their degree program for an extended period of time, due to medical, family, work, and personal circumstances. Inactive Students are not required to reapply for admission upon resuming an active status in the degree program when they register at the end of their Leave of Absence. There is no charge for Inactive Student status, but Inactive Students are not eligible to use the resources of the seminary for the duration of their Leave of Absence.

¹ F-1 students are required to maintain a full course of study throughout their program. Registering for Full-time Continuing Relations and making normal academic progress towards an exam or dissertation is acceptable. Please consult with the international student visa administrator with any concerns or questions.

C. Courses for the Th.M. and Ph.D. Degree Programs

Th.M. and Ph.D. students must complete the majority of their required coursework at LSTC. Within LSTC, courses numbered in the 600's are specifically intended for advanced graduate students and should be given first priority when designing a course schedule.

Students are encouraged to take 600 level graduate seminars scheduled by the Division faculty in their area. 500 level courses are also suitable, since they are designed for both Th.M. and Ph.D. students and advanced M.Div., M.A.T.S., and M.A.M. students who meet specific prerequisites.

Th.M. and Ph.D. students must obtain permission from their advisor, the Director, and the course instructor to enroll in certain 400 level courses. In these cases, the student and the instructor negotiate appropriate work at the Th.M. and Ph.D. level, through an enhanced syllabus. This work may involve a more substantial required bibliography, a seminar-quality paper, research in foreign languages, or some other extra components. The instructor should request that the Registrar note on the academic record that the course was taken at the advanced graduate level. Registration for such a course is done using the Independent Study form.

Th.M. and Ph.D. students may not enroll in or receive credit for any course at the 300 level. Exceptions to this rule may be made in certain cases, however, the Advanced Studies Office and the appropriate Division must approve all exceptions.

One of the major benefits of study in Hyde Park is the proximity of a wealth of academic resources. Students are encouraged to take courses at other member institutions of the Association of Chicago Theological Schools (ACTS) and the University of Chicago.

Other member institutions of ACTS that offer advanced graduate degrees routinely schedule courses appropriate for Th.M. and Ph.D. students. These include the Chicago Theological Seminary and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Courses taken through ACTS institutions by LSTC students are usually without extra charge; however, students should confirm this policy at the time of registration. Course information for ACTS schools is available through the LSTC website.

Graduate courses at the Divinity School and at other departments or divisions of the University of Chicago may also be taken at any time, although students may find them more appropriate and beneficial in the advanced stages of their program. The bi-registration plan with the University of Chicago permits students to take courses at the University of Chicago at the same tuition rate as courses at LSTC. Bi-registration tuition is approximately half of what courses normally cost for University of Chicago students.

Information on course offerings should be obtained from the particular school, department, or division of the university, or online at their website. The Registrar's Office at LSTC will be able to assist in directing inquiries concerning course offerings and bi-registration procedures at the University of Chicago.

As is the case with courses for the Th.M. and Ph.D. degree programs at LSTC, courses taken through ACTS and the University of Chicago must be at the advanced graduate level (at the equivalent of 600- or 500-level courses at LSTC, or at the equivalent of 400-level courses with additional assignments appropriate for advanced graduate students). Exceptions are made only with the approval of both the Advanced Studies Office and the appropriate Division.

Please see the All-Student Handbook for further information.

D. Advanced Standing with Credit and Transfer of Credits

Consideration is given to petitions for transfer of credits or for advanced standing with credit, submitted by students who have established a superior academic record through their coursework in the Th.M. and Ph.D. degree programs at LSTC. Students are to submit an Advanced Standing with Credit Petition to the Advanced Studies Office.

The normal procedure is for students to apply for advanced standing with credit. Advanced standing with credit refers to decisions about a student's competence based on submission of some combination of significant written work, transcripts, publications, and an account of relevant life experience. Such evidence must be submitted along with the petition for advanced standing.

A less common and more complex procedure involves transfer of credits for specific courses. Transfer of credits involves graduate courses taken for a grade at an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting body that are considered comparable in level to the advanced graduate seminars in the Th.M. and Ph.D. degree programs at LSTC. Transfer of credits is considered only for courses for which the student earned superior marks. A copy of the transcript from the student file in the Advanced Studies Office including the course or courses being considered for transfer of credits must accompany the petition for transfer of credits.

Students in the Th.M. degree program normally petition for transfer of credits or advanced standing after completion of three advanced graduate courses at LSTC. Students in the Ph.D. degree program normally petition for such decisions after the successful completion of the Doctoral Qualifying Examination.

No more than one semester course credit may be awarded through either transfer of credits or advanced standing into the Th.M. degree program at LSTC. For those already possessing a Th.M. or its equivalent, up to two semester course credits may be awarded through transfer of credits or advanced standing into the Ph.D. degree program at LSTC. For those admitted as special students at LSTC up to 4 courses can be awarded into their program of study after successfully applying for a degree program.

Students submit the petition to the Advanced Studies Office after receiving signed approval from their advisor. The Director of Advanced Studies forwards the petition with a recommendation to the appropriate division for its deliberation and approval or denial, which is recorded in the minutes and forwarded to the Advanced Studies Office and the Registrar.

Section 3- Timelines for Completing Degree Programs

A. Time Limits for Completion of Th.M. and Ph.D. Degree Programs

The Th.M. degree program is designed so that well-prepared students may complete the six required courses and all other requirements within two years (or less). Students may elect to extend their work within the Th.M. degree program beyond two years; four years is generally the maximum time limit.

The Ph.D. degree program (which includes the Th.M. degree requirements as the first stage) normally lasts 5 to 6 years. The outer time limit for completion of degree requirements for the Ph.D. degree program full time is 7 years or 9 years if part time.

Those unable to finish within these time limits may, upon written petition to the Director including a realistic schedule towards completing degree requirements, receive an extension of one year. In exceptional cases extensions may be granted for up to three years. Further extensions are subject to the decision of the faculty Division and the Advanced Studies Committee

B. Residency Requirement for the Ph.D. Degree

The term “residency” in this instance generally means that students in the Ph.D. program temporarily relinquish full-time employment to devote themselves to the pursuit of advanced graduate work on the LSTC campus, whether by taking a full load of advanced graduate level courses, studying intensively for examinations, or working full-time on dissertation research and writing. Residency provides the student with an opportunity to develop as a scholar by excluding many distractions and concentrating on academic work. Residency also allows a student to become intellectually shaped by the LSTC and greater Hyde Park academic environment through interactions with LSTC and other area faculty, student peers, and visiting scholars, and by attending lectures and conferences offered at LSTC, ACTS, and the University of Chicago.

There is no residency requirement for the Th.M. degree; however, Th.M. students are encouraged to undertake studies in-residence at LSTC if possible to receive the maximum benefit from the degree program and to move forward at a good pace.

For the Ph.D. degree there is a minimum one-year residency requirement. This requirement is generally fulfilled subsequent to the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination, whether or not a student has been previously in residence at LSTC. Although the minimum residency requirement for the Ph.D. degree program is one year, most students will find it advisable to plan on three to four years of residency at LSTC for optimal progress in the program. Questions of interpretation concerning the fulfillment of the residency requirement should be referred to the Director.

C. Examples of Timetables for Th.M. and Ph.D. Degree Programs

The hypothetical timetables presented illustrate different schedules for completing the Th.M. and Ph.D. degree program. The actual time required will depend on a number of factors, including the student’s level of academic preparation and facility, variables related to the demands of particular fields of study or research topics, competing demands of family and work responsibilities, and particularly in the case of some international students, the need to gain fluency in English and make other academic and cultural adjustments.

a. Th.M. Degree in One Year

The following timetable should be considered exceptional, representing the ideal situation of a full-time, resident Th.M. student who came to LSTC with excellent preparation and motivation for intensive study:

Fall Semester Year 1

- i. Language Requirement
- ii. 3 Seminars
- iii. Preparation for Th.M. Comprehensive Examination or Thesis

Spring Semester Year 1

- iv. 3 Seminars (or 2 with one course transferred)
- v. Comprehensive Examination or Thesis Colloquy
- vi. Graduation in May

b. Th.M. Degree in Two Years

The following timetable would be typical for a Th.M. student:

Fall Semester Year 1

- 2 Seminars
- Preparation for Language Requirement

Fall Semester Year 2 2 Seminars

Spring Semester Year 1

- 2 Seminars
- Language Requirement

Spring Semester Year 2

- Continuing Relations
- Comprehensive Examination or Thesis

c. Th.M. Degree in Four Years

The following extended timetable for part-time Th.M. students makes it possible to pace their academic program in consideration of full-time or part-time work, family responsibilities, and other considerations (note, however, that 1 course per semester is not considered full-time for visa purposes).

Year 1

- 2 Seminars or other courses at the advanced level (1 per semester)
- Language Study

Year 2

- 2 Seminars or other courses at the advanced level (1 per semester)
- Language Examination

Year 3

- 2 Seminars or other courses at the advanced level (1 per semester)
- Prepare for Th.M. Comprehensive Examination or Thesis

Year 4

- Complete Th.M. Comprehensive Examination or Thesis Colloquy
- Graduation in May

d. Ph.D. Degree in Five Years

The following timetable should be considered typical for a full-time, resident Ph.D. student who came to LSTC well prepared to enter graduate studies.

Fall Semester Year 1

- 2 or 3 Seminars
- Preparation for 1st Language Requirement

Spring Semester Year 1

- 2 or 3 Seminars
- 1st Language Requirement

Fall Semester Year 2

- 2 or 3 Seminars
- Prepare for Qualifying Exam

Fall Semester Year 3

- 2 or 3 Seminars
- Preparation for 2nd Language Requirement

Spring Semester Year 3

- Complete Coursework
- 2nd Language Requirement
- Prepare Dissertation/Field Exam Proposal

Year 4

- Continuing Relations both semesters
- Submit Dissertation Proposal
- Sit for Field Exams

Spring Semester Year 2

- Continuing Relations to prepare or an additional course (max of 8 before exams)
- Qualifying Examination
- Earn ThM

Year 5

- Complete Dissertation
- Dissertation Colloquy by April
- Graduation with Ph.D. in May

e. Ph.D. Degree in Six or Seven Years

The following timetable may be more realistic for many LSTC Ph.D. students, who need to pace their academic study due to family responsibilities, part-time or full-time work, and other considerations:

Year 1	Year 4
• 2-4 Seminars o(1-2 per semester) • 1st Language Examination	• Complete Coursework • Continuing Relations (for each semester after coursework is complete) • Prepare for Field Examinations and Dissertation Proposal
Year 2	Year 5
• 2-4 Seminars (1-2 per semester)	• Submit Dissertation Proposal • Sit for Field Examinations
Year 3	Year 6 or 7
• Continuing Relations (after 6 courses have been completed) • Preparation for the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam • Ph.D. Qualifying Exam • Graduate with Th.M.	• Complete Dissertation • Dissertation Colloquy • Graduation with Ph.D. in May
Year 3	
• 2-4 Seminars or other courses at the advanced level (2 per semester) • 2nd Language Examination	

f. Satisfactory Academic Progress

LSTC monitors satisfactory academic progress (SAP) with the goal to be both good stewards of financial aid and to protect academic integrity. Maintaining SAP is necessary both for continuance in a degree program and for eligibility to receive financial aid in the form of scholarships, grants and student loans. SAP is evaluated by both qualitative (GPA) and quantitative (progress towards degree completion) measures and is measured at the end of each semester. For more information on SAP, as well as notes on probation and reinstatement, please see the All-Student Handbook.

Section 4- Advisors

A. Advisors

Advisors are the main source of academic guidance for students in the Advanced Studies Th.M. and Ph.D. degree programs at LSTC. Advisors work closely with advanced graduate students through the various stages of their program to promote their development as scholars and to further their particular academic and vocational goals. Each student is assigned an advisor from the appropriate Division as part of the admissions process. In making these initial appointments, the Division attempts to match the interest of faculty advisors and new students. Practical issues such as faculty load and sabbatical schedules may also influence the assignment of advisors. The Director serves as advisor to Special Students interested in applying for admission into Th.M. degree program in the future.

If an advisor should become incapable of carrying out their duties, the Director will consult with the appropriate Division to seek a new advisor for the student. Advisors are responsible to make arrangements and inform advisees before sabbatical or other temporary absences. Advisors can choose to continue to serve as advisor while on leave and commit to being accessible to students. If an advisor is not willing or is unable to continue as advisor during leave the Director will be notified and seek to make necessary arrangements.

The Advanced Studies Office is the source for guidance on policy and procedure. Students and advisors should consult with the Director and Coordinator regularly. When requested, a planning conference can be scheduled with the student, the advisor, the Director, and Academic Dean. Examples of purposes that such a conference might serve include assisting students to crystallize a direction, negotiating conflicting expectations, and establishing appropriate deadlines. Students, advisors, or the Director will make a record of the proceedings and distribute copies to all concerned parties.

i. Role of Advisor

The role of the advisor should be a partner in scholarship with the student. The advisor should be competent in the area of study the student is pursuing, commit to become competent, or work with outside faculty from the area.

Advisors need to work diligently with students to ensure the student moves through the program of study in a timely fashion.

Changing Advisors

Students may request a change of advisor in exceptional circumstances after becoming further acquainted with the faculty and programs at LSTC, or after discerning a new direction in their scholarly interests. A change of advisers can occur no sooner than the completion of 3 courses. See **Petition A: Change of Advisors**. The petition should not be signed and submitted to the ASO (and from there to the Division for its approval) before the current and possible future advisors have discussed and agreed upon the change.

Section 5- Examination Policies and Procedures

A. Submitting Examination Applications

Examinations and oral colloquies are normally scheduled to take place during the academic year (August 15-April 15). Under special circumstances and at the discretion of the Director will exceptions be considered.

One of the most complex and time-consuming tasks of the Advanced Studies Office is scheduling and coordinating examinations and oral colloquies. Students are advised to confirm availability of dates with committee members and keep in close contact with the Advanced Studies Office and to initiate plans for taking examinations as early as possible. Deadlines for submitting materials to the Advanced Studies Office are outlined on the [Advanced Studies Calendar](#). Late submissions risk not being sent to the Division for approval- students and advisors need to plan accordingly.

All Examination Applications can be found on MyLSTC.

All exam applications and/or petitions must be approved and signed by the advisor before submitting to the Advanced Studies Office. The student is responsible for submitting completed forms with all approvals, including email approvals.

i. Division Approval Deadlines

Students are required to submit all materials for Division review by the Tuesday of the week before the Division meeting. The tentative examination date should be set no earlier than 2 weeks after the Division meeting. Please see deadlines listed on the [Advanced Studies Calendar](#).

ii. Examination Application Submission (*Th.M. Comprehensive, Ph.D. Field Exams*)

Requirements

- All applications, proposals, and required papers are to be submitted to the Advanced Studies Office electronically (advancedstudies@lstc.edu) Please send all required paperwork in 1 email.
- All submitted documents should be in PDF or Word format.
- If utilizing an email sign off please forward email with advisor's approval of proposal/examination/ etc.

Process

- Student submits application and all required paperwork to advanced studies office by deadline.
- Comprehensive and Field Examination proposals are reviewed by Division at meeting
- Student informed of decision by ASO
- Exam date is confirmed by Coordinator

ii. Language Exam Application Submission

- The student, in consultation with the advisor, is expected to identify examiner and arrange a tentative date for exam.
- The application should be submitted to the Advanced Studies Office at least two weeks before the exam is tentatively scheduled.
- Coordinator will consult with student and examiner to confirm the date.

iii. Th.M. Thesis Colloquy Application Submission

- The application should be submitted to the Advanced Studies Office at least two weeks before colloquy is tentatively scheduled.
 - Students wishing to hold the colloquy in the spring semester should contact the Advanced Studies Office as early as January to set a tentative date for colloquy, as the calendar fills up quickly.
- Coordinator will consult with student, advisor, other reader(s), and director to confirm the date.

B. Advisor's Role in Preparing Examinations

The student's advisor takes the initiative in the construction of the written examinations, working with other members of the Faculty Examining Committee, with the goal of creating examinations that will be pedagogically significant experiences for students.

In the past, examinations consisted of six- to eight-hour sittings (two sittings for Th.M. Comprehensive or Ph.D. Qualifying Examinations, and four for Ph.D. Field Examinations) in which students normally made a selection from questions about which to write essays under time pressure and proctored conditions. While such a model is still available to faculty advisors, in recent years we have been moving away from it towards other models:

- for the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination, mixed models that may include Greek and Hebrew language exercises, short-answer sections, take-home essays on carefully crafted questions, or class design and/or a sample class presentation. The goal is to encourage language and pedagogical learning, as well as to encourage the creation of an artefact that might serve the student as part of a later Ph.D. application.
- for the Ph.D. Field Examinations, a model that features four very carefully crafted questions on which students write papers as take-home open-book assignments, with up to a week allowed per essay. The goal is to identify issues that need to be addressed in the dissertation research, or even to produce first sketches of dissertation chapters.

These models call for greater collaboration between the student and the advisor than has been the case in the past, in order that the examinations serve the students' educational goals and their next steps, whether for the career of the Th.M. graduate or the dissertation of the Ph.D. candidate.

Advisors should have all examinations to the Coordinator no later than the day before the examination is to take place.

C. Oral Colloquies

Oral Colloquies are important components of the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination and the Ph.D. Field Examination. These two-hour long sessions are usually chaired by the Advanced Studies Director, who with the advisor and other faculty members make up the Examination Committee. (See Forms D and G for the composition of these committees. Note that the Field Examination Faculty Committee often includes an examiner from outside LSTC who may agree to serve on the PhD Dissertation Colloquy as well.)

Ideally, the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination Oral Colloquy will be a celebratory event, the culmination of the student's journey towards being awarded the Th.M. degree. The Ph.D. Field Examination Oral Colloquy seeks to provide wise guidance: it is often the last best opportunity for a faculty committee to review the student's dissertation plans, ensuring that the dissertation proposal is sufficiently focused, that the student's questions are incisive, and that the research methodology is adequate to the task.

In LSTC practice, these colloquies are normally private events: the student meets alone with the Committee. Other rules apply for the Ph.D. *Dissertation* Oral Colloquy, in which LSTC faculty members are invited to attend or even participate in the discussion (if they have read the dissertation), and to which the student may opt to invite guests.

After the Colloquy, the Advanced Studies Director will prepare a report which will be shared with others on the Examining Committee for comment and revision. This report will then be submitted to the respective faculty division for its reception.

Appeals to the Recommendations of the Examining Committee

Students are able to appeal recommendations made by the Examining Committee by consulting their advisor and submitting a petition to the Director. The Director will then consult with the student, advisor, other members of the examining committee, and Academic Dean as necessary. The Director will submit a recommendation along with the student's petition to the Division for a final decision on the student's appeal.

Section 6 -Examination Summaries

A. Language Examination

For Th.M. students, the first language requirement (which includes both Greek and Hebrew for students in Bible) is to be completed through examination before the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination or Thesis Colloquy.

For Ph.D. students, a second language requirement is to be completed before the Field Examination. It is to the student's advantage to complete the requirements earlier, however, so that the languages of scholarship can serve more fully as research tools. Also, with language requirements satisfied, the student will be able to devote more time to substantive studies in the later stages of the Th.M. or Ph.D. degree programs.

Students whose primary language is other than English may petition to have advanced academic English considered as a research language. (In these cases, a written certification from an English-language instructor is required). The language requirements for the several fields and degrees are stated in the Division Program Requirements. In cases where there is a choice, the student's advisor will be their chief source of guidance as to which languages are most appropriate, bearing the student's research intentions in mind.

If a student's transcript from previous academic work documents recent study of a language, an interview with an LSTC faculty member may suffice to establish that the language is in fact a working tool. In such cases, the faculty member will validate the language competency in writing to the Advanced Studies Office.

Preparation for language examinations is the student's responsibility, although in some instances LSTC faculty members may be able to be of assistance through tutorial sessions. The Advanced Studies Office will assist in locating language learning opportunities.

With some exceptions, language courses cannot be counted toward the basic six and twelve course requirements for the Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees respectively. An exception to this would be, for example, the case of a student in the biblical field who took Ugaritic or Syriac in addition to the languages normally required.

i. Language Examiner's Role

The faculty or outside language examiner will meet with the student, with facilitation from the Advanced Studies Director if needed, to establish the text and other expectations for the examination such as quality of translation, the use of dictionary or any other resources, date and time for his/her submission of performance assessment of the candidate to the Advanced Studies Office. After the meeting, the examiner (or the Director) will convey this information to the Coordinator to make the proper arrangements for the examination to take place.

If the student is allowed the use of any resources, a notation of acceptable resources on the examination needs to be included.

As soon as examinations are completed the examiner is responsible for reporting results to the Advanced Studies Office to be included in student transcripts; a “Grading Scale for Language Examinations” report form will be provided. Results will also be incorporated in the student's’ file.

B. Th.M. Comprehensive Examination

The Th.M. Comprehensive Examination, which follows the completion of six courses and the Th.M. language requirement, consists of two written examinations followed by an oral examination. As noted above, these two written examinations can take a variety of forms, to be worked out between the student and the advisor with consultation from the Examining Committee or even the faculty division.

In addition to the exam application (see Form B), the student should submit two seminar or course papers, not written especially for the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination but selected from among the best of those written by the student while in coursework at LSTC. These papers, approximately 20 pages but no more than 40 pages, should be submitted in their original form, complete with the instructor's comments and grade. Discussion of these papers may be part of the oral component of the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination.

i. Written Examinations

The general areas to be covered in the written examinations are stipulated for each field of study in the division program requirements. The student should meet with the advisor to develop the topics and bibliography for the two written examinations and to agree on the information included on Exam Application to be submitted for approval. This application should include short written rationales for the selection of the topics and full bibliographies.

ii. Oral Examination

The oral examination is based in part on questions arising from the written examinations and in part on the two written seminar papers submitted by the student. The oral examination is normally chaired by the Director and attended by the advisor and other members of the Faculty Examining Committee with expertise in the areas covered in the written examinations. The Faculty Examining Committee will first meet in closed session

to prepare for the oral examination. The student's advisor generally takes the lead in the first period of questioning and then passes the line of conversation to the other faculty members in turn. The oral examination lasts approximately two hours.

iii. Assessment

The student's performance in both the written and oral components will be evaluated based upon the Learning Outcomes of the Th.M. Degree Program. An assessment of the student's work is normally rendered at the conclusion of the oral examination. A written report and recommendation from the Faculty Examining Committee concerning the student's performance and the outcome of the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination will be sent to the appropriate Division for its reception and placed in the student's file.

iv. Th.M. Thesis Option

As the LSTC Th.M. degree matures as a degree in its own right, more and more students are writing a Th.M. Thesis instead of the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination as the final requirement for the degree. The Th.M. student should consult with the advisor and a second reader in developing the Th.M. Thesis project and bibliography.

A typical length for the Th.M. Thesis is fifty to eighty pages.

A Th.M. Thesis Colloquy is scheduled by submitting the completed Th.M. Thesis and a Th.M. Thesis Application to the Advanced Studies Office (see Form C). The colloquy provides an opportunity for the advisor and the second reader who together form the Th.M. Thesis Reading Committee to engage in dialogue with the student. The colloquy generally lasts approximately two hours. At the conclusion of the colloquy, the Th.M. Thesis Reading Committee determines whether the Th.M. Thesis fulfils the requirement for the degree or whether additional work of a substantive or editorial nature is required. A written report and recommendation from the Th.M. Thesis Reading Committee concerning the outcome of the Th.M. Thesis Colloquy will be sent to the appropriate Division for its reception and placed in the student's file.

C. Ph.D. Qualifying Examination

[As the LSTC faculty works towards winding down the LSTC Ph.D. Program in its present form (with the goal of fashioning a new, more streamlined program), with the expectation that the majority of our present Ph.D. Students will complete their studies by May 2027 or May 2028, we believe that we have now phased out the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination. For now, students who are completing the Th.M. degree and feel called to doctoral studies should look — with the advice and good wishes of their advisors and other faculty members — to doctoral programs outside LSTC.

Details about the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination, if needed, may be found in the 2025-2026 ThM-PhD Manual.]

D. Ph.D. Field Examination

The Ph.D. Field Examination is integrally related to preparation for research and writing of the dissertation, and therefore broadly includes these three related elements:

- Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal
- Ph.D. Field Examination
- Public Presentation of the Dissertation Project (Recommended)

i. Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal

The Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal must be approved by the advisor and then formally accepted by the entire faculty of the appropriate Division before the Ph.D. Field

Prerequisites

- ☐ 12 Courses
- ☐ All Language Requirements
- ☐ Qualifying Exam Submission Requirements
- ☐ Dissertation Proposal Application
- ☐ Dissertation Proposal
- ☐ Field Exam Application
- ☐ Exam Proposal

Examination Plan may be considered. Frequently, students submit the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal (with Form F) together with the Application for the Ph.D. Field Examination (with Form G). In these instances, the Division must first approve the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal, before considering the Ph.D. Field Examination Plan at the same meeting.

The Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal is pivotal because it sets forth the major scholarly project that the Ph.D. student will undertake in consultation with the advisor and other faculty members while at LSTC. Researching and writing the dissertation is often transformative, as the doctoral student is challenged and supported in emerging as an independent and creative scholar, expected to make an original contribution in a particular academic field. The articulation of a worthy and manageable topic is therefore a critical first step. In quality, the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal should be comparable to the finest seminar paper that the candidate has presented during the Ph.D. degree program.

The Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal should demonstrate that considerable research and analytical thought has already been devoted to the selected subject area. The proposal should show evidence of a solid grasp of the history of scholarship, the relevant primary and secondary literature, the methods to be employed, and the nature of possible conclusions. It is a matter of judgment how far the proposal needs to go in setting forth the actual conclusions of the dissertation. It should be borne in mind that honest research may disprove even the most elegant hypotheses.

The bibliographical section of the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal is extremely important, as it signals the depth of the student's awareness of the history of scholarship and of the available primary and secondary resources. Ph.D. students should work closely with the advisor and other faculty members with expertise in the dissertation area in developing the bibliography.

The Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal may be viewed as a kind of contract, in which the faculty formally endorses the student's envisioned scholarly project as worthy and realistic. Changes in the dissertation project after the Ph.D. Field Examination should be made only in consultation with the advisor. While details of content, organization, and conclusions may naturally evolve over the course of researching and writing a dissertation, the faculty has the right to receive notification and explanation of major deviations from the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal.

Depending on the degree of alteration, the Director in consultation with the advisor and other faculty members may determine that a revised Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal must be submitted to the Division for approval.

The Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal includes the nomination of two or more faculty members to serve, in addition to the advisor, on the Dissertation Reading Committee. Generally, these same faculty members serve as the Faculty Examining Committee for the Ph.D. Field Examinations. At least half of the faculty members on the Dissertation Reading Committee must be from LSTC. Ideally, there will be at least one external member serving on the Dissertation Reading Committee, from the neighboring ACTS institutions, from the University of Chicago, or from other universities and academic programs. One of the readers should normally be from a field other than that of the candidate's specialization.

Judicious selection of members on the Dissertation Reading Committee will ensure representation of ecumenical and interdisciplinary perspectives.

The Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal figures significantly in planning for the areas to be covered in the Ph.D. Field Examination. Generally, one written examination is focused directly on the subject area of the dissertation topic itself. The other written examinations and bibliographies are also usually formulated with the dissertation in mind. These written examinations may serve to establish competency within the wider contexts of scholarship, relevant primary and secondary literature, selected scholarly methods, and related academic fields. The Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal usually constitutes a significant topic of discussion during the oral component of the Ph.D. Field Examination.

This proposal should not exceed twenty-five pages in length and should include the following:

- A statement of the proposed area of investigation justifying the significance of the topic, establishing the need for such an investigation, and showing how the dissertation will be a contribution to the field of studies
- An explanation of and justification for the method(s) to be applied in the research and writing of the dissertation,
- A short description of the research languages required by the dissertation topic,
- A clear thesis statement,
- A summary of the proposed chapters of the dissertation and of the anticipated conclusions,
- An extensive (but not exhaustive) bibliography, identifying crucial primary and secondary sources, and not hesitating to include titles in other languages needed for the research.

ii. Ph.D. Field Examination

The Field Examination Application must be submitted to the Advanced Studies Office by the Division review deadline. Before considering the Ph.D. Field Examination Application, the Division must first approve the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal whether at a previous Division meeting or earlier in the same meeting.

In consultation with the advisor and the Director, the student is encouraged to request a professor from outside of LSTC (or, in exceptional cases, two outside professors as long as half of the committee members are LSTC faculty). This means that the candidate should be prepared to deal with the subject matter from both an ecumenical and an interdisciplinary perspective.

The Ph.D. Field Examination is the culmination of the student's academic career at the pivotal moment before launching fully into the dissertation project. The duration of the Ph.D. Field Examination may vary, depending on the nature of the exam (see above). When the written exam has been completed, adequate time should be allowed for the Examining Committee to read the materials carefully.

The Field Exam Application will include:

- An identification of the examination topics,
- A list of the examiners,
- Rationale statements for each examination topic,
- A bibliography of primary and secondary sources that will serve as the basis for the examination questions.

a. Written Exam

The topics and scope of the four written examinations will be agreed upon beforehand by the candidate, the advisor and other members of the Faculty Examining Committee, and the appropriate Division, as recorded on the Ph.D. Field Examination Application. An approved bibliography preceded by a short written rationale for each selected topic must be submitted for each examination. The student and the Faculty Examining Committee are held accountable to working with the agreed upon topics and bibliographies. The main purpose of the Ph.D. Field Examination is to provide a collaborative and critical academic context out of which the dissertation may emerge.

b. Oral Exam

The oral examination usually lasts approximately two hours. Generally, the oral examination opens with questions arising from the written examinations, before moving to issues directly related to the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal. The second part of the oral examination may therefore be considered as a seminar on the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal. Although at this point the proposal will have already received preliminary approval from the Division, it will now be explored further as to the student's command of the pertinent materials, the most compelling organization, the methods employed, and the conclusions that might arise. On the basis of the oral examination, the candidate may be asked to rewrite the proposal, and an additional colloquy may be required.

c. Assessment

The student's performance in both the written and oral components of the Ph.D. Field Examination will be assessed at the conclusion of the oral examination.

A written report and recommendation from the Faculty Examining Committee concerning the student's performance and the outcome of the Ph.D. Examination will be sent to the appropriate Division for its reception and placed in the student's file at the Advanced Studies Office.

In a few cases, the student may be judged to have passed some but not all sections of the Ph.D. Field Examination. The Faculty Examining Committee will inform the student of its recommendation to the Division concerning whether or not to grant permission to re-take certain sections. The appropriate Division evaluates this recommendation and makes a final decision about the conditions for the student's continuation in the dissertation stage of the Ph.D. degree program.

iii. Public Presentation of the Dissertation Project

Students are encouraged to conduct a public presentation of their dissertation project. The timing of this public presentation may be either as they near completion of their Dissertation or shortly after passing the Ph.D. Field Examination. This presentation will take place at LSTC and may be scheduled as part of an event sponsored by the Advanced Studies Office and Graduate Student Association, or as an independently organized occasion to which students and faculty are invited.

While a variety of formats are possible, generally the student presents the project's thesis orally for thirty minutes. One or two peer respondents in the same field will be chosen in consultation with the student's advisor to give formal twenty-minute responses, followed by general discussion. The public presentation of the dissertation project serves to sharpen the student's skills in making their argument before their peers and professors, to create a deeper community of scholarship among advanced graduate students and faculty at LSTC, and to keep the doctoral program before the eyes of the entire LSTC community.

Upon completion of the Public Presentation of the Dissertation Project, the student will submit a short letter, e-mail, or other documentation to the Director and the Advanced Studies Office describing the date, the context, and the participants. The Coordinator will then note the completion of this on the student's academic record.

Section 7- PhD Dissertation Policies and Procedures

A. Dissertation Process Flowchart



B. Dissertation Deadlines

February 15	Submission of Dissertation Manuscript for Editor-This submission begins the official process of scheduling colloquy and completing the dissertation. The manuscript submitted should be ready for defense in the student's and advisor's opinion. Student should contact Reading Committee to set a tentative date for colloquy.
March 15	Application for Dissertation Colloquy- After receiving the dissertation back from the editor, the student submits the manuscript ready for colloquy. The Advanced Studies Office confirms the tentative date for colloquy and distributes electronic copies to the reading committee. The student is responsible for providing hard copies to reading committee members if requested.
2 weeks before Colloquy	Précis and CV- The student is responsible for submitting these at least 2 weeks before the colloquy is to be held. These will be distributed to the faculty with the colloquy announcement.
April 9	Latest Date for Colloquy to be held
April 15	Submission of Dissertation Manuscript for Editor (Final Review) - The Dissertation Editor reviews the dissertation a final time before it is printed and submitted to the Library
April 23	Submission of Ph.D. Dissertation to Library-After receiving the final dissertation back from the Dissertation Editor students are required to submit a printed and electronic copy to the Library.

Ph.D. students who are researching and writing their dissertations should keep in mind the following deadlines for each step in the final process leading up to the Ph.D. Dissertation Colloquy and the awarding of the Ph.D. degree at the annual commencement ceremonies in May.

To ensure a margin of safety and to prevent all Ph.D. Dissertation Colloquies from being crowded into the same time period, it is important for students to begin the planning and scheduling process as early as possible. The student should keep the Coordinator informed of the progress being made on the dissertation so that an orderly schedule may be established for the reading of the dissertation and for the Ph.D. Dissertation Colloquy. The Advanced Studies Office will give scheduling priority to those first submissions of the "colloquy version" of their dissertation.

C. General Considerations

The following guidelines may be of assistance for the Ph.D. student and the advisor in researching and writing the doctoral dissertation:

- a. It should be kept in mind that the dissertation is an argument and in this way similar to a lawyer's brief. It does not simply summarize past research, brilliant as that summary may be; rather, it takes a position and argues a thesis based on well-gathered research.

- b. The dissertation shall deal with a significant topic, so defined as to permit adequate treatment of the subject matter. A student should make a thorough search of pertinent secondary literature to ensure that her or his topic is original and worth studying.
- c. It should include an introductory section, a clear statement of the significance of the investigation, the hypothesis or the claim to be established, the source material, and the method to be employed.
- d. It should demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the scholarly literature in the area of the topic, including literature in languages other than English.
- e. It should reflect a fair and open-minded presentation of a subject and its problems.
- f. It should show the candidate's capacity to think independently, to organize concepts and materials, and to express her or his thoughts in a scholarly fashion.
- g. It should give evidence of the candidate's ability to draw pertinent conclusions and to present them in a coherent and relevant manner.
- h. It should reflect awareness of the implications for related fields and of remaining unsolved problems in certain areas.
- i. It should exhibit adequate documentation from primary and secondary sources in footnotes, and all sources consulted should be listed in correct form in an appended bibliography.
- j. The dissertation should conform to the scholarly conventions set forth in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 9th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), and, where applicable, *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, 2nd ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2014). The dissertation must incorporate all editorial and formatting suggestions made by the dissertation editor. Questions regarding format may be addressed to the advisor, the Dissertation Editor, and the Library staff. Copies of Turabian, *Manual for Writers*, and the *SBL Handbook* are available the Reference Section of the Library.
- k. Generally doctoral dissertations should be approximately 200 pages in length, and generally not longer than 250 pages.

i. Relation of the Ph.D. Student to the Advisor and Dissertation Reading Committee Editor

Ph.D. students bear special responsibility to those serving as advisor and other readers on the Dissertation Reading Committee. The scope of the task requires that Ph.D. students take the initiative to inform the advisor and other readers of their progress, to discuss problem areas with them, and to be sensitive to the committee members' expectations for the process. It is the student's responsibility to ascertain the advisor's style of supervision, as well as the level of involvement desired by the other readers, and to submit sections and drafts of the dissertation to these parties accordingly. Students bear the consequences of failing to maintain contact with the advisor and the other members of the Dissertation Reading Committee during the process of research and writing.

The student should understand that after submission of the complete draft of the dissertation a considerable amount of time may elapse until the advisor can give the dissertation the careful reading it deserves. As a rule of thumb, advisors should be able to respond within a month after receiving the manuscript. The advisor usually decides on the readiness of the completed manuscript for submission to the entire Dissertation Reading Committee, unless other arrangements have been made.

ii. Dissertation Editor

The advisor and other readers are concerned primarily with matters of scholarly content, not with style and format. The candidate should monitor the style and format of the dissertation manuscript, to ensure that it conforms to Turabian, *Manual for Writers*, and the *SBL Handbook*. In order to ensure proper style and format are used the Advanced Studies office requires that all dissertations are reviewed by a Dissertation Editor before colloquy and a second time before the final draft is submitted to the library. The expense of the editor is covered by the Advanced Studies Office.

The Dissertation Editor is concerned with how the material is presented in the manuscript not what it says. The Dissertation Editor reviews the use of the Turabian style, citations, table of contents, footnotes, bibliography, and page set-up. The Dissertation Editor is not a copy editor and will not be looking closely at the content of the dissertation. During AY 2026-2027 please contact the Director if help is needed in polishing the dissertation.

The Dissertation Editor, working in consultation with the Director, is the final arbiter on matters regarding the format, style, and mechanics of the dissertation. The student should also consult and follow the standards for submission to the Library, posted on the Library website.

Once the advisor has signaled that the dissertation is ready for colloquy the student should submit a copy of the *complete* dissertation manuscript to the Advanced Studies Office to be shared with the Dissertation Editor. The copy sent to the editor should be complete and in the student's and advisor's opinion ready for colloquy. Students must submit Form H with the final dissertation copy.

After colloquy is completed and recommended edits/changes have been made to the manuscript and the dissertation is ready to be printed it needs a final review by the Dissertation Editor. This final overview is to ensure that in the process of the last edits the formatting remains intact and that the dissertation is indeed ready for printing. This final review can take up to 5 business days, please plan accordingly.

D. Submitting the Précis and Curriculum Vitae

The student should submit a five to ten page summary of the dissertation, known as the *Précis*, to the Advanced Studies Office at least 2 weeks prior to the Dissertation Colloquy. A *Précis* Title Page and Curriculum Vitae need to accompany the *Précis*. Samples can be requested from the Coordinator.

Approximately two weeks before the Ph.D. Dissertation Colloquy, an announcement of the date, time, and place of the Ph.D. Dissertation Colloquy will be sent to all LSTC faculty members, accompanied by the *Précis* with the *Précis* Title Page and the *Curriculum Vitae*.

E. The Dissertation Colloquy

The Ph.D. Dissertation Colloquy normally lasts about two hours. All members of the LSTC faculty have the right to attend the Dissertation Colloquy, although only those who have read the entire dissertation may actively participate in the discussion, direct questions, and vote on the recommendation to the Division and entire LSTC faculty.

The Director will chair the colloquy or appoint another faculty member to serve in that capacity. Usually the candidate's advisor initiates discussion with opening questions. The other faculty members on the Dissertation Reading Committee follow in turn. Questions may relate to any of the

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criteria listed in this manual, or to any other matters deemed appropriate by the members of the Dissertation Reading Committee.

At the conclusion of the colloquy, the Dissertation Reading Committee and any other faculty who have read the entire dissertation determine by vote whether to recommend to the Division and to the entire LSTC faculty that the Ph.D. degree be awarded. The faculty may accept the dissertation as is, or they may require minor or major revisions before the Ph.D. degree may be awarded. It is at this same time that in exceptional cases the faculty may decide to initiate the process to award the Ph.D. “with distinction,” outlined in this manual.

i. Guidelines for Granting the Ph.D. “with Distinction”

The Ph.D. degree may be awarded “with distinction” through a process that begins with the unanimous recommendation for this honor by the advisor and other members of the Dissertation Reading Committee, as well as any additional faculty members voting at the Ph.D. Dissertation Colloquy. The Dissertation Reading Committee and other faculty members take into consideration the dissertation and the oral defense, as well as the candidate’s overall performance during the entire Ph.D. program when they recommend granting this recognition to the appropriate Division. Following approval from the Division, an appointed faculty member (usually the student’s advisor) will compose a written nomination for awarding the Ph.D. “with distinction” to be considered by the entire LSTC faculty. This document will include the following:

- An affirmation of the total academic record of the student.
- A one-page abstract of the dissertation.
- A report of the Ph.D. Dissertation Colloquy.
- A motion to award the Ph.D. degree “with distinction” from the Dissertation Reading Committee.

Upon the affirmation of the LSTC faculty, the student receives a letter of notification that the faculty have granted the Ph.D. “with distinction” from the Dean of Academic Affairs and it is noted on the student’s official transcripts.

F. Submission to the Library

The process for [submitting](#) both an electronic and print copy of the dissertation to the Library can be found on the Library website, www.jkmlibrary.org. Go to the Policies tab and then the PhD Dissertation Standards tab. You will also find guidelines for formatting your dissertation and standards for paper at this tab.

G. Commencement

Degrees are awarded only at the commencement ceremonies held at the conclusion of the regular academic year (usually the second or third Sunday in May). The deadline for completing all requirements for graduation, including the Th.M. Comprehensive Examination or thesis for the Th.M. and the submission of the dissertation for the Ph.D., is April 20. Candidates completing the requirements after that date risk receiving the degree the following May.

Students planning to graduate should be in communication with the Advanced Studies Office and the Registrar’s Office in the fall semester. Details concerning the graduation ceremony, including procedures for securing cap and gown, will be sent by the Registrar to those indicating their

intention to graduate. Candidates wishing to purchase LSTC doctoral gowns should place their orders with the Registrar at least 90 days prior to commencement.

Degree candidates are encouraged to be present for this celebrative occasion, although degrees may be awarded *in absentia* when circumstances prevent attendance. Candidates for graduation who must be absent should inform the Registrar of LSTC in writing prior to April 1st of the year in which the degree is awarded.

Appendix I- Advanced Studies 2026-27 Calendar

FALL SEMESTER

August

- 17- First Day for ASO Examinations
- 31- Sept 4 Orientation and Welcome Back

September

- 1 – Materials Due for Division Review
- 8- Fall term begins
- 11 – Division Meeting
- 22- Materials due for October Division Review

October

- 2- Division Meeting
- 20-23- Reading Week
- 27- Materials Due for Nov Division Review

November

- 6- Division Meeting
- 17 – Feb 1 Spring Online Registration
- 23-27 Thanksgiving Recess
- 24- Materials Due for Dec Division Review

December

- 4- Division Meeting
- 11- Fall Semester Ends
- 18- Last Day for Examinations

January

- 26- Materials Due for February Division Review

**** No January Division Meeting!! ****

SPRING SEMESTER

February

- 1 - Spring Semester Begins
- 5 – Division Meeting
- 15- Last Day to Submit Dissertation to Editor
- 23- Materials Due for March Division Review
(Last approval for examinations before May graduation)

March

- 1- Advanced Standing Petitions Due
- 5- Division Meeting
- 15-19 Reading Week
- 15- Application for Dissertation Colloquy Due
- 22 – 26 Holy Week Recess (No Classes)
- 23- Materials Due for April Division Review

April

- 2- Division Meeting
- 9- Last day for Colloquies
- 15- Last day to Submit Dissertation to Editor for Final Review
- 16- Last day for Examinations for May Graduation

- 20- Fall Online Registration Opens
- 23- Library Submission Deadline
- 20- Materials due for May Division Review
(exams to be scheduled in August/September 2027)

- 30- Division Meeting (May Meeting)

May

- 7- Last Day of Classes
- 14 – Baccalaureate
- 15- Commencement

Appendix II- Bylaws of the Graduate Students Association of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Adopted April 7, 2000

Revised March 20, 2015

Article I - Name

1. The name of the Association shall be the Graduate Students Association (GSA) of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Article II - Purpose

1. The purpose of GSA shall be to support the academic pursuits of ThM and PhD students, facilitate collaboration and fellowship among students, help new students acclimate to the program, represent PhD and ThM students to the administration of LSTC, work with the administration to maintain and improve the quality of the graduate programs, elevate the visibility of the graduate program, and encourage collaboration with students at other area schools.

Article III - Membership and Dues

1. The membership in GSA shall consist of students currently enrolled in Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) or Master of Theology (Th.M.) degrees at LSTC.
2. Any student currently enrolled in a Ph.D. or Th.M. degree program at LSTC upon payment of her or his dues automatically becomes a member of GSA with the right to vote. Dues consist of the activity fee automatically charged to student accounts each semester.
3. GSA, after a majority vote by the membership, may request that the amount of the dues be changed by contacting the Director of Advanced Studies who will bring it to consideration by the appropriate parties. Note that all fee changes must be approved by the LSTC Board of Directors; usually this is done for the next academic year at their November meeting.
4. Membership in GSA ends when for any reason a member ceases to be student in a Ph.D. or Th.M. degree program at LSTC. GSA shall maintain a good and constructive relationship with all its former members.

Article IV - Leadership Structure

1. The leadership of GSA shall consist of a three-member Executive Committee (EC), Coordinators assigned to particular areas or tasks, and members appointed to serve on LSTC Committees.
2. The Executive Committee shall consist of a president, a secretary, and a treasurer, who shall be considered equals.

Article V - Leadership Responsibilities

1. The duties of the Executive Committee shall be to carry out the business of the GSA between meetings; appoint Coordinators; present an annual budget; speak on behalf of the GSA; advise the

Faculty, Administration, and the Board of LSTC; provide general supervision of the business of the GSA; and advocate for the interests of GSA members.

2. The Treasurer, working with the LSTC Finance Office, shall maintain accurate financial records, handle all financial transactions, and ensure that spending is kept within the bounds of the annual budget.
3. The Secretary shall take minutes at all membership and EC meetings and makes the minutes available to the membership.
4. The EC shall meet regularly during the academic term. Any member of the EC can call for the meeting of the EC.
5. The EC shall determine the number and nature of Coordinator positions. Possibilities include: Social Events Coordinator, Colloquy Coordinator, Library Coordinator, Coordinator for International Students, Technology Coordinator, Study Room Coordinator, and Publicity Coordinator.
6. Each Coordinator may solicit volunteers for an ad hoc committee to help fulfill their duties.
7. The Coordinators shall meet as needed with the EC during the academic term.

Article VI - Election of Executive Committee

1. The three members of the Executive Committee shall be elected by the membership at the last meeting of each academic year.
2. Nominations for the EC shall be accepted both before and at the meeting at which the election is held. All members are entitled to vote by secret ballot for up to three candidates. The three individuals with the most votes shall comprise the EC. After the election, the members of the EC decide among themselves who will be President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Their one-year terms shall begin the day after graduation. EC members may be re-elected for additional terms.
3. In the event that a position on the EC becomes vacant mid-term, a special election shall be held at the next membership meeting. In the event that the office of the President becomes vacant in mid-term, the Secretary shall assume the function of the office of President until a new member of the EC is elected. Once that takes place, the members of the EC may reassess among themselves who will hold each office within the EC.

Article VII - Appointment of Coordinators

1. The Coordinators shall be appointed by the Executive Committee.
2. Coordinators shall serve for one academic year. They may be reappointed for additional terms.
3. In the event that a coordinator position becomes vacant mid-term, the EC may immediately appoint a replacement, who will complete the term.

Article VIII - Selection of Committee Representatives

1. GSA representatives to LSTC committees shall be selected by the Executive Committee and approved by voice vote of the membership.
2. Committee members shall serve for one academic year. They may be reappointed for additional terms.
3. Any LSTC committee may request that GSA appoint students to serve as members.⁵

Article IX - Election of a Representative to the LSTC Board of Directors

1. GSA shall elect from its membership a non-voting, advisory member to the LSTC Board of Directors. All GSA members shall be eligible, including those already serving GSA in leadership positions.
2. Nominations for the advisory member shall be accepted both before and at the meeting at which the election is held, generally the first meeting of the academic year. The vote shall be conducted by secret ballot.
3. The advisory member shall be elected to a term of two academic years.
4. In the event that the position becomes vacant mid-term, a special election shall be held at the next membership meeting. If a Board of Directors meeting will take place before a special election can be held, the EC may choose one of its own members to attend the meeting.

Article X - Meetings

1. The GSA shall normally hold a regular meeting in each month when classes are in session on every first Friday of the month or another day as determined by the Executive Committee.
2. The regular May meeting shall be known as the annual meeting and shall be for the purposes of electing a new executive committee, receiving reports of officers, and for any other business that may arise.
3. Special meetings of the GSA may be called by the President or by the Executive Committee. A special meeting of the GSA shall also be called upon the request of four regular members of the GSA. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in the call. At least seven days' notice shall be posted for all meetings.
4. A quorum of six members is required for resolutions to be passed or elections held. If quorum is not met, the assembled members will constitute a Committee to the Whole and contact other members to meet until a quorum is met.

⁵ As of this writing, GSA appoints one domestic and one international student to the Community Life Committee and one domestic and one international student to the Advanced Studies Committee.

5. The annual budget of the GSA shall be prepared by the Treasurer and must be approved by a simple majority at the first meeting of the academic term.
6. The following matters must be approved by a simple majority of those present and voting: financial obligations beyond those covered by the annual budget, contractual obligations, and formal resolutions.

Article XI - Resolutions

1. Resolutions reached by the simple majority on any regular meetings of GSA shall govern any issue not mentioned in these bylaws.

Article XII - Amendment of Bylaws

1. These bylaws may be amended by a simple majority vote at any regular meeting of the Association, or a meeting specially called for that purpose.
2. Amendments to the bylaws may be proposed by the EC or by any four members. Proposed amendments must be distributed in writing to the regular membership at least seven days before the vote.

Appendix III- Advanced Studies Program Checklist

The following is a checklist of the general requirements and process for the ThM program and the PhD program. During the course of the program students, advisors, and the director should be in regular contact to ensure that the student is making normal academic progress and is meeting all the requirements. Note that requirements are different for each concentration, please refer to program requirements for a more detailed description.

ThM Program

- ☐ 6 Advanced Courses/Seminars as Outlined in Degree Program Requirements
- ☐ Language Exam
 - ☐ Non-native English Speakers may use English
 - ☐ Bible students are required to show proficiency in Greek and Hebrew
- ☐ Comprehensive Exam or Thesis

PhD Program

- ☐ 6 Advanced Courses/Seminars as Outlined in Degree Program Requirements
- ☐ 1st Language Exam
 - ☐ Non-native English Speakers may use English
 - ☐ Bible students are required to show proficiency in Greek and Hebrew
- ☐ Qualifying Examination
- ☐ Graduate with ThM Degree
- ☐ 6 Additional Courses/Seminars as Outlined in Degree Program Requirements
- ☐ 2nd Language Examination
- ☐ Dissertation Proposal Submitted to Division
- ☐ Field Exams
- ☐ Dissertation Colloquy

Appendix IV- Advanced Studies Team

Program Director

Dr. Mark Swanson

mswanson@lstc.edu

Office Hours Via Zoom

Program Coordinator

Bradley Arnette Erz

advancedstudies@lstc.edu 773-256-0737

- Administration of Advanced Studies Program
- Relates to Dean and Divisions
- Develops Policy and Procedure

- Daily Support for Students
- Policy and Procedure Questions
- Coordinate Exams

Advisor

- Main Source of Academic Guidance
- Partner in Scholarship
- Student Advocate

Division- Bible, Theology, and Ministry

- Admission Recommendations
- Approval of Exam Proposals, Petitions, and Requests

Financial Aid Office

financialaid@lstc.edu

- Award Financial Aid
- All questions related to financial aid, scholarships, and holds.
- All questions related to taxes.
- For ELCA GM ILP fellows, financial aid scholarship questions. For example: reimbursements, allowances, and stipends.

Graduate Student Association

- Encourage Cooperation among Students
- Elevate Visibility of Program
- Share Student Concerns with ASO, Faculty, Library, and Community

Student Success Counselor

- Primary Source of Support and Hospitality for Students Outside of Classroom
- Current Primary Contact for International Student Needs
- Advocate for Students

International Student Visa Administrator

Bradley Arnette Erz

bradley.erz@lstc.edu

- Support Immigration Status and Visa Needs for International Students
- Maintain SEVIS Records and Update I-20 Documents

