

RELIGION AND PRACTICE (PH.D.)

Overview

This hybrid program offers both on-campus and online coursework.

For the present admission cycle (Fall 2024), admission to the Ph.D. in Religion and Practice has been suspended while changes to the program are considered.

This program aspires to develop researchers and educators into promoters of social justice who are equipped to responsibly relate religion and spirituality to the pressing issues of our day. The Ph.D. program offers students mentoring and rigorous study in practical theology and religious education, and also draws on the richness of other practice-intensive fields at Fordham, such as Christian spirituality and pastoral mental health counseling.

- The curriculum is 48 credits, for those who enter with an earned master's degree in a related field.
- The program includes a doctoral seminar, coursework, a proposal, and the writing and oral defense of a doctoral dissertation or substantial creative work.
- Students are required to attend the January session on campus during the first two years of enrollment in the program.
- Reading knowledge of languages other than English may be required if the scope and nature of the dissertation or substantial creative work warrant such knowledge.

Are you interested in attending the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education? Request more information or schedule an information session today.

CIP Code

39.0401 - Religious Education.

You can use the CIP code to learn more about career paths associated with this field of study and, for international students, possible post-graduation visa extensions. Learn more about CIP codes and other information resources.

Admissions

For the present admission cycle (Fall 2024), Admission to the Ph.D. in Religion and Practice has been suspended while changes to the program are considered.

Although the Ph.D. admissions committee invites those with a background from a variety of fields of study and work experience, applicants who are most successful in earning a place to study in our Ph.D. in religion and practice program have:

- an earned master's degree in practical theology, religious education, pastoral ministry, religious studies, or related field from an accredited educational institution

- a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or better in graduate studies (preferred)
- experience working in the field of religious education as a teacher, catechetical leader, youth minister, pastor, pastoral associate, diocesan leader, curriculum developer, etc.
- potential for making a strong contribution to the field of practical theology and religious education
- a clear career path forward after graduation
- strong writing and research capabilities

Requirements

Course Requirements

| Course | Title | Credits |
|---|--|-----------|
| Religious Education Core | | |
| REGR 8110 | Ph.D. Year 1 Doctoral Seminar (taken both semesters of the first year of studies, for 1.5 credits per semester) | 3 |
| REGR 8111 | Ph.D. Year 2 Doctoral Seminar (taken both semesters of the second year of studies, for 1.5 credits per semester) | 3 |
| REGR 8102 | Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Religious Education | 3 |
| REGR 8401 | Research Methods | 3 |
| PMGR 6650 | Ethics in Pastoral Ministry | 3 |
| PMGR 8628 | Pastoral and Practical Theology | 3 |
| Electives | | |
| <i>One course from the Fordham University Theology Department or the New York Theological Consortium</i> | | 3 |
| <i>Two general electives¹</i> | | 6 |
| <i>Two Religious Education electives²</i> | | 6 |
| <i>Three GRE electives from outside of the Religious Education area³</i> | | 9 |
| <i>Two Graduate School of Education electives⁴</i> | | 6 |
| Dissertation | | |
| Once coursework is complete, the student must enroll in Dissertation Direction (ZZGR 8090) each fall and spring until graduation. | | |
| ZZGR 8040 | Dissertation Qualifying Paper | 0 |
| ZZGR 8084 | Dissertation Format Review | 0 |
| Total Credits | | 48 |

¹ Students may take any non-restricted course at GRE numbered 6000-7999 as a general elective; if available, doctoral-level courses should be taken. A list of GRE courses can be found in our course listing page.

² Religious education electives are any course with the subject code REGR numbered 6000-9999, a list of which can be found on our course listing page. Courses which have an available doctoral level course number (7000 or higher) must be taken at the higher level.

³ Other area electives are courses with the subject codes PMGR, SPGR, PCGR, or RLGR numbered 6000-9999, a list of which can be found on our course listing page. Courses should be approved during advising with your faculty advisor.

⁴ GSE electives are all courses with the subject codes ASGE, CLGE, CTGE, EDGE, PSGE, and UEGE, numbered 6000-9999 (except assessment courses), a list of which can be found on the GSE course listing page.

Examples of GSE assessment courses include: CLGE 6380, CLGE 7150, CTGE 6012, CTGE 6014, CTGE 6326, CTGE 6504, CTGE 7204, EDGE 6703, PSGE 6401, PSGE 6417, PSGE 6607, PSGE 6609, PSGE 6641, PSGE 6642, PSGE 7412, PSGE 7413, PSGE 7418, PSGE 7422, PSGE 7424, PSGE 7427, PSGE 7429, PSGE 7508, PSGE 7609, and PSGE 7612.

Prerequisites

Students with insufficient background in theology or religious studies may be required to take additional courses, increasing the total number of required credits as necessary. An earned master's degree in a related subject at the time of admission or 24 additional credits of coursework are required to complete the program.

Dissertations and Creative Projects

Ph.D. dissertations and creative projects exemplify excellence in advancing an intellectual project in religion and practice that fulfills the goals of the program.

The dissertation is a literary work of 40,000-60,000 words involving original research according to a methodology, organized by chapters, taking its place amidst academic field-specific discourses while furthering practice in a community, place, or institution.

The creative project makes a unique contribution to practice, within or across situations and aesthetic genres. Its setting may range from public art to the arts of ministry. It may draw from any creative medium, such as writing, visual arts, or performance, and/or various arts of ministry, such as teaching, social action, pastoral care, preaching, worship, and more. Its public(s) must be clear. Students may only undertake creative projects when they have already demonstrated considerable documentable skill in the medium and/or arts of ministry. Creative projects must include a substantial scholarly commentary of 25,000 words on the work that situates it in relation to religion in practice including the fields of practical theology and religious education. Examples include designing a suite of social media materials for youth ministry, creating a curriculum for theological education in prison, or partnering with a community organization to create a permanent public mural. Such projects are viable insofar as they are planned with the approval of a doctoral committee, build on established artistic strengths of the student, are documentable for preservation, and are accompanied by a written scholarly commentary.

Mentor

Students choose dissertation mentors from among the core GRE practical theology and religious education faculty. In consultation with their mentors, they identify two proposed readers based on the topic and scope of their research.

Dissertation Committee

Students must submit the form "Proposed Members of the Dissertation Committee" (available in the Resources (p. 6) section), together with a dissertation thesis statement, and a brief rationale for the selection of mentors and readers. Committee approval requires a majority vote of the core religious education faculty.

Dissertation Proposal

The proposal is a formal document. It should be typed, double-spaced, and professional-looking.

The proposal should make clear exactly what it is the student proposes to do. In other words, it should answer the following questions: What is the issue to be studied? Why is it important to do so? How will it be studied? What contribution will such a study make to our knowledge and understanding of the field of religious education?

The proposal must demonstrate the use of a sound methodology, give evidence of a thorough study of a special field, and show how the researcher will make an original contribution to the field of religious education.

The proposal could be structured as follows:

- (1) **Introduction:** description of the problem, issue, or research question to be dealt with, why the student considers it important, what the student has to say that has not been stated by others, and how the student proposes to contribute to the solution or answer.
- (2) **Background:** why the student chose the problem, issue, or research questions, or the pastoral, historical, or social context of the problem, issue, or research questions, or both.
- (3) **Thesis Statement:** may take the form of hypotheses to be tested, questions to be answered, or objectives to be achieved
- (4) **Purpose and Significance:** topics to be explored in addressing the problem, issue or research questions, and how the research will contribute to scholarship, especially scholarship in religious education.
- (5) **Methodology:** how the student proposes to collect and analyze data, what the relevant sources of information are, and how they will be obtained.
- (6) **Design/Organization of the Study:** tentative chapter titles and summaries of the contents of each chapter.
- (7) **Bibliography:** a preliminary listing in the correct bibliographic form of books and articles relevant to the thesis.

A great deal of thinking, planning, and writing is advisable in the presentation of the dissertation proposal. A well-written proposal may, with some modification, serve as the first chapter of the dissertation.

Dissertation Proposal Hearing

A student's dissertation proposal must receive formal approval before the student undertakes the writing of her or her dissertation. Formal approval comes after an oral hearing of the proposal before the student's doctoral dissertation committee.

Scheduling Proposal Hearings

A student's dissertation committee must be approved by the religious education area and dean before the student's dissertation proposal hearing can be scheduled.

- Students' proposal hearings can be scheduled no earlier than their final semester of coursework.
- Proposal hearings are scheduled by mentors in consultation with the director.
- Public announcements of proposal hearings are made at least one week in advance of a hearing.

The mentor, in consultation with the director and the assistant dean, checks to ensure that all coursework requirements have been fulfilled before a proposal hearing is scheduled. Additionally, the proposal hearing may not be conducted until all grades of "Incomplete" are satisfied and all financial obligations have been met.

Fordham Institutional Review Board (IRB) Review

All Ph.D. dissertation research involving human subjects (including interviews, focus groups, and surveys) is subject to review and approval by the Fordham Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB strives to ensure that (1) subjects are not placed at undue risk; and (2) that subjects provide un-coerced, informed consent to participate in a research study. IRB review also helps to protect the validity of the researchers' findings. For current IRB policies, procedures, and submission deadlines, see http://www.fordham.edu/academics/office_of_research/institutional_review/

Students whose research involves human subjects submit their proposals for IRB review after their dissertation proposal hearings and the acceptance of their proposals by their committee.

Schedule for Submission of Materials

Once the dissertation committee has been established and the dissertation proposal is accepted, the student is to work out a schedule for the submission of materials in collaboration with the mentor and readers. This is to ensure that the mentor's and readers' availability is clearly agreed upon and that it takes into account faculty research leaves and summer schedules. Ordinarily, professors are not expected to be available during the summer months.

Roles and Responsibilities

While developing the proposal and conducting research, the doctoral student is responsible for meeting and working with their mentor and committee members on a regular basis.

Dissertation mentors and committee members are responsible for evaluating the readiness of draft versions of dissertations for format review and oral defense. Although this rigorous review will address issues of completeness, content quality, and basic style, mentors are not responsible for copy editing dissertation manuscripts. Spell-checking, copy editing, formatting, and the like are the responsibility of the dissertation's author.

Readers' primary responsibility is to assure the integrity of the dissertation. Readers' areas of expertise and experience enable them to critically follow the development of the candidate's project, from the formation of the research question and exploration of related literature and data to the design of the study, analyses of the data, and the development of conclusions. They provide guidance during the development of the research questions, literature review, design of the study, and selection of methods of analysis. Generally, readers also critically review the chapters of the dissertation as they are prepared and point out areas requiring additional attention.

Style Requirements

To ensure consistency of GRE dissertations, students must prepare their dissertations to conform to the guidelines outlined here.

1. Style Manual

The Chicago Manual of Style (most recent edition)

2. Format

TITLE PAGE: See the sample in the Resources (p. 6) section.

ABSTRACT: The abstract cannot exceed 350 words and should be listed on the table of contents without a page number.

VITA: See the sample in the Resources (p. 6) section. NOTE: The vita cannot exceed one page and should be listed on the table of contents without a page number.

PAPER: The paper must be a minimum of 20 lb. weight.

MARGINS: The top, right, and bottom margins should be one inch; the left margin should be 1 ½ inch to allow for binding. Any printing in the margins will count as a mistake. If the margin is exceeded by more than five characters, the dissertation will be rejected.

PAGINATION: Number the first page of any chapter in the center of the page a double space below the last line of text, approximately 5/8 to ¾ inch above the bottom. All other numbers are placed two lines (a double space) above the first line of printing and just inside the right margin; that is, approximately 5/8 to 3/4 inch from the top and one inch from the right side.

FONT: The point size of the font should be 12. If proportional spacing is used, the average number of characters per inch (CPI) should not exceed 15. No pencil marks are allowed. If special symbols are required, the symbols within a word processing package should be used. If the needed symbols are hand-lettered, black ink must be used. No press-on (transfer) letters are allowed.

PRINT: A laser printer should be used.

CORRECTIONS: Excess white-outs or corrections (erasures, etc.) are not allowed. Students should reprint the entire page.

3. Arrangement

1. Title Page
2. Dedication or Acknowledgements (if used)
3. Table of Contents
4. Preface (if used)
5. Introduction
6. Chapters
7. Conclusion
8. Bibliography
9. Appendices
10. Abstract (no pagination)
11. Vita (no pagination)

Guidelines for Graduation and Dissertation Defenses

1. A doctoral candidate planning to graduate in any given semester must register for graduation online by the date indicated in the academic calendar. If the candidate fails to register for graduation or fails to complete pending requirements, the degree will be awarded the following semester. In this case, the student must reapply for graduation in a timely way. If this occurs, the student must register

for Dissertation Mentoring for the semester directly preceding the conferral of the degree according to the continuous enrollment policy. Students who receive September degrees must be registered for the summer session immediately preceding the conferral of their degrees.

2. Candidates must be registered for Dissertation Mentoring during the semester in which they have their oral defense. Failure to register properly will delay approval for graduation.
3. When the dissertation is completed, one copy is given to each committee member for review. The dissertation committee will approve the dissertation when it meets all substantive standards established by the academic community and the format requirements of the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education.
4. When the committee members have approved the dissertation, each of them will sign an "Approval of Written Dissertation" form.
5. The "Approval of Written Dissertation" forms will be collected by the mentor and given to the director.
6. The director will notify the assistant dean that a candidate has completed their dissertation. The assistant dean will then check to make sure that the student's transcript, Degree Works graduation checklist, and financial account are up to date.
7. The candidate will submit one hard copy of the dissertation to the director and email a PDF of the dissertation to the assistant dean. The review cannot begin until the student is registered for dissertation format review and cleared by the assistant dean. The assistant dean will submit the copy of the dissertation to the format review editor. Format review assures that the document meets all formatting and stylistic requirements of the GRE and is ready for publication. During the format review, every page of the manuscript, including the introductory material and reference section, is reviewed thoroughly. If the review is returned as unacceptable, the student will have to resubmit for, register and pay for, and review once again. When the dissertation is returned from the format review editor, the assistant dean will notify the student by email. The student is responsible to retrieve the dissertation and complete all of the indicated corrections.
Because of the number of dissertations submitted each semester and the significant amount of time it takes to review each one, deadlines for submission and approval of dissertations by mentors and readers will be strictly adhered to; these deadlines are posted in the academic calendar each semester.
Dissertations are reviewed in the order in which they are received. The earlier a dissertation is submitted for review, the more likely a student will be approved for graduation. If a dissertation does not meet the standards of the GRE in the semester in which the oral defense was conducted, the candidate will incur additional charges to register for the next semester and will also need to register for the following graduation.
8. The director will make sure that the mentor has a Ph.D. Summary Sheet and a GRE Degree Certification Form. The mentor will complete these forms and submit them to the director. The director will keep copies of the forms for their files and submit copies to the assistant dean.

9. The director and mentor will work with the assistant dean to make sure that the completion of all degree requirements for the candidate is recorded in Degree Works.
10. Once the format review is complete, a check has been made to ensure that the student's financial account is up to date, and a check has been made to ensure that the student's Degree Works profile is complete, the Office of the Dean will be notified and the Office of the Dean will schedule the defense.
11. An announcement of the defense (including the time, place, and examiners) must be posted two weeks in advance of the defense.
12. Before the dissertation defense, the director will provide the mentor with the dissertation ballots and the materials the candidate will need to complete before presenting their dissertation to the dean. The defense will be chaired by the assistant dean or another designate of the dean. The chair of the oral defense, who is not on the committee, represents the University at this formal session. The chairperson is charged with protecting the candidate's rights to a fair and appropriate academic assessment and to protect the University's right to conduct a formal assessment of this major doctoral work. The chairperson facilitates the meeting and may participate in the questioning and discussion. However, neither the chairperson nor any other individuals outside the committee votes on the outcome of the defense.
13. The oral defense will focus chiefly on the dissertation research and its impact in the field in which the research was conducted. Immediately following the defense, the committee will evaluate the candidate's research and performance. The outcome of this evaluation will be one of four ratings: (1) Passed, (2) Passed contingent upon minor modifications of dissertation document, (3) Passed but with major revisions (e.g., content), (4) Not acceptable at this time. If changes are required, the candidate will be given a specific time frame in which to make the modifications and submit the revisions to the committee. Failure to meet that deadline may result in the requirement of registration for another semester.

After successful completion of the oral defense and final corrections are approved by mentors and the dean:

1. Email a PDF copy of your dissertation to the assistant dean.
2. Email an extra copy of the title page to the assistant dean.
3. Submit your thesis or project online in ProQuest following the instructions in the Clearance and Commencement section of the bulletin. Please copyright your work in ProQuest before completing the submission process.

Qualifying Papers

The purpose of the qualifying paper (QP) is to demonstrate the candidate's knowledge, aptitude, and readiness for doctoral research.

- The qualifying paper should demonstrate the necessary skills for conducting sustained research and writing at the professional level. In particular, a QP should (i) make plain the motivation for the choice of topic; (ii) show a thorough knowledge of the relevant literature and lines of argumentation; (iii) show an ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate positions and arguments and to formulate and defend

an original thesis; (iv) handle references in the style of any leading academic journal.

- Qualifying papers should give strong evidence that a student is willing and able to produce a publishable paper. This means that the paper could contribute to the ongoing literature on the topic covered. A contribution to the literature can be made, for example, by:
 - presenting an argument among several writers and entering the discussion with one's own view;
 - tracing historically some concept that is then modified or used to address a contemporary issue;
 - providing an illuminating account about a religious educator's arguments or contentions.
- Any paper written while its author was a student in the doctoral program may be submitted as a qualifying paper. The paper may be the result of reworking a research paper from a course. While a paper written for a course may be submitted as a qualifying paper, only rarely will an unrevised version be good enough to meet the standards the faculty applies in evaluating qualifying papers.

Length

Qualifying papers must be 4,500 to 5,000 words.

Formatting

Qualifying papers are to be typed and double-spaced according to the latest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style. Papers should be proofread before submission.

Schedule

A qualifying paper must be submitted and approved no later than the fifth semester of a student's program of study (excluding summer semesters).

Evaluation and Approval

To start the QP process, students should submit to the director of the Ph.D. program a petition to appoint a mentor and reader. A mentor must be a core member of the GRE religious education faculty. All GRE core faculty members may serve as a reader.

When the final paper is judged to be acceptable by both readers, it is approved.

- Those who fail to meet the qualifying paper requirement will be dismissed from the program.
- If the qualifying paper is approved, the student is required to submit a copy of the qualifying paper with a signed title page to the religious education area coordinator. A copy of the signed title page will be placed in the student's file.
- In all cases, the qualifying paper should be approved before the student's dissertation proposal hearing.

Qualifying papers cannot be accepted until all grades of Incomplete are removed and changed to a final grade.

Program Policies

Continuous Enrollment

The Ph.D. program in religious education has a continuous enrollment policy. This means that graduate students matriculated in the Ph.D.

program must register every fall and spring semester until graduation. Students are considered registered when enrolled for coursework or dissertation mentoring. The only exception to this policy is in the case of an approved leave of absence.

Special Registration

Regularly scheduled GRE courses will constitute the bulk of coursework for doctoral students. Other options for registration include courses offered at other Fordham graduate schools, courses at other schools within the New York Doctoral Consortium, and audits.

Satisfactory Academic Performance and Progress

Academic Performance

Students who do not meet the minimal standards for academic performance are on academic probation. Minimal satisfactory academic performance is defined as having a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.50 (B+ average). Any student receiving any University financial aid must maintain a 3.5 cumulative GPA as a minimal requirement for continuation of the aid. Administrative "Fs" are computed as "Fs" (0.00) for the purpose of determining the grade point average.

Students who are below the required grade point average may not submit qualifying papers without the dean's permission.

Academic Progress

Satisfactory academic progress is defined as completing at least one of the requirements each semester after the semester in which coursework is completed. Requirements include the qualifying paper, dissertation proposal, chapters of the dissertation, and the dissertation defense.

Unsatisfactory progress may include an excessive number of withdrawals, incompletes, leaves of absence, or other delays in meeting the requirements for the degree.

Students who do not complete one requirement each semester are on academic probation. These students have the next semester to complete the requirement and to file a mandatory timetable for completing all remaining requirements. The timetable must include at least one deadline per semester (e.g., "complete Chapter 1 to 3 of the dissertation in Fall semester"). If the requirement is unmet by the end of the semester, or if the timetable deadlines are missed, the dean, in consultation with the religious education area, will make a decision about whether or not to disenroll the student from the Ph.D. program.

Doctoral students who have not secured approval of their dissertation proposal five semesters before the expiration of their time limit are on academic probation. Such students have one semester to secure approval of the dissertation proposal and a timetable for completion of the dissertation. If they do not secure approval of the proposal and the timetable, the dean, in consultation with the religious education area, will make a decision about disenrollment from the Ph.D. program.

Please note that an individual student's requirements for academic progress may be affected by the time remaining until the student reaches the time limit for degree completion.

Notwithstanding their academic performance or the time remaining for completion of degree requirements, students who do not make satisfactory progress toward the degree may be disenrolled from the program.

The dean reserves the right to review doctoral students' work and to decide to disenroll those who are not making satisfactory academic progress.

Students who are below the required grade point average may not submit qualifying papers without the dean's permission.

Academic Advisement Procedure and Sequence

Upon acceptance each student is assigned an academic adviser. The adviser is to be consulted at each registration period. Each student is required to take a minimum of six credits per semester.

Requests for independent study courses and substitutions to required courses must be approved by a majority of the religious education faculty and the dean. See Independent Study Courses and Substitutions to Required Courses below for additional information.

Students are required to fulfill coursework requirements prior to taking the Dissertation Mentoring Seminar.

All students who have completed course work are required to enroll in the Dissertation Mentoring Seminar each semester until they defend their dissertation. Credits earned from taking the Dissertation Mentoring Seminar do not count toward the 48 credits needed to complete course work for the Ph.D. degree.

Once the student has chosen a dissertation mentor, academic advising is rendered by the mentor.

Independent Study Courses

Petitions from matriculated Ph.D. students for independent study can be presented in writing to the religious education area when and if they meet the following criteria: (1) a required course is not being offered in the given semester, or (2) the Independent Study will be taken in the last semester of the program of study.

Petitions must be reviewed and approved by a majority of the religious education faculty before they are sent to the dean for final approval.

Substitutions for Required Courses

Petitions from matriculated Ph.D. students for substitutions to required core courses must be presented in writing to the religious education area for review and approval in a timely manner before being sent to the dean for final approval. These requests should be submitted in the semester before the end of coursework, or before the semester in which the substituted course would be taken.

Commencement

Only doctoral students who have passed format review and successfully defended their dissertations may walk in the commencement procession, be seated on the dais, and have their names announced during the University commencement ceremony.

For more information refer to the Policies and Procedures section of the GRE Bulletin.

Resources Sample Documents

Sample of Vita

Sample Dissertation Title Page

Sample "Prepared Under My Direction" form

Forms

Proposed Dissertation Committee Form