

The PhD Handbook¹

The Laurier-Waterloo PhD in Religion, Culture, and Society

Guide for Doctoral Students

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¹ The [PhD Handbook](#) contains useful materials for doctoral students and candidates in the Laurier-Waterloo PhD in Religion, Culture, and Society program. As much as possible, the requirements and policies in this *Handbook* reflect the most up-to-date requirements and policies at each institution (Laurier (WLU) and Waterloo (UW)). In instances where the *Handbook* differs from university policies, the official requirements and policies of the student's institution will take precedence. Please report suggestions and errors to the Joint Program Director.

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History and Structure of the Program

The Joint Laurier-Waterloo PhD Program in Religion, Culture, and Society (hereafter, the Program) leads to the Doctor of Philosophy degree. This strongly interdisciplinary joint program draws on the combined resources of the Department of Religion and Culture at Wilfrid Laurier University (Laurier) and the Area of Religion, Culture, and Spirituality at the University of Waterloo (Waterloo), as well as numerous adjunct and associated faculty in different departments and programs (including Anthropology, Global Studies, History, Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology) at both institutions.

Proposed departmentally and ratified institutionally in 2002, the Program was approved in May 2003 by the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies, with the first student intake in September 2004. For the first 20 years, the Program was known for its field of Religious Diversity of North America. Program alumni have specialized in an array of subject areas, including migration and diasporic communities, social movements, food and religion, extremism and radicalization, religion and politics, ritual spaces, social entrepreneurship, environmental activism, secularity, mysticism, gender and sexuality.

During the 2025–26 academic year, faculty members put forward major curriculum modifications, which were approved by both universities. In Fall 2026, the renewed Program included a new title (“PhD in Religion, Culture, and Society”); new core courses focusing on theories, methods, and case studies; and a new examination structure. These changes reflect the expanded scope of the Program while enabling students to pursue their specific research interests. To celebrate the Program’s renewal, in November 2025 Laurier hosted the 20th anniversary celebration event for the Joint PhD Program, which brought together over 50 alumni, founders, faculty, administrators, and current graduate students.

The Program follows a traditional format in terms of its pedagogical delivery. In their first year, students complete their required course work, establish their supervisory committees, and begin the initial discussion of their dissertation proposal. In their second year, students prepare for and complete their comprehensive examinations and refine their dissertation proposals. Also, during their second year, students make a public presentation of their dissertation proposal to faculty and students in the Program. The third and fourth years of the Program are devoted to researching, writing, and defending the dissertation. As the Dissertation Defence nears, students are also required to present their research to a public audience – part of the Program’s commitment to the public intelligibility of scholarship (see below). All students must also demonstrate competency in a second research language and any primary languages required for their dissertation research.

The Joint Committee

The Joint Committee is the coordinating and initial governing body of the Laurier-Waterloo PhD in Religion, Culture, and Society. The directorship rotates between the two universities on a three-year cycle. The Director is usually jointly selected by the department at Laurier or by Program faculty at Waterloo; if there is a dispute, the Joint Committee elects the Director. Although each university and academic unit retains its legal autonomy, the Joint Program is administered through the cooperative efforts of the Joint Committee. The membership of the Joint Committee consists of the PhD Director; the University of Waterloo Area Head of Religion, Culture, and Spirituality; a second Waterloo faculty member; the Chair of the Laurier Religion and Culture Department; and the Graduate Coordinator of the Laurier Religion and Culture Department. The Joint Committee oversees, among other things, the following: admission, core courses, the general examination, the supervisory structure, language requirements, the dissertation, and the oral presentation processes.

Supervisory Committees

The role of the Supervisory Committee is to provide expertise in the student's area of research, write and evaluate the field exam, offer guidance and feedback to the student, and assist the student in achieving timely completion of degree requirements. Supervisory Committees are approved by the Joint Committee, who may be contacted by the PhD Director for any questions connected to the supervisory process.

Supervisory Committees typically consist of at least three (3) members of the Faculty from both universities (please see the list of Graduate Faculty members below) and need to be formed by the end of the first academic year of the Program. The final Defence will also include a Reader from another department at one of the two universities (also known as an Internal Examiner) and an appropriate External Examiner from a third university. A change in membership can be initiated by the Supervisor, Committee Member, Student, or Director. When entering the Program, students are connected to a potential supervisor.

Supervisory Committees may be convened as needed but must meet at least once a year. Supervisors and doctoral students typically meet more frequently.

Graduate Faculty

University of Waterloo

John Abraham

Academic Dean, Associate Professor, United College
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Areas of interest:

Issues of political economy, religion and nationalism, environmental conservation and social innovation

Alicia Batten

Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies, Conrad Grebel University College
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Areas of interest:

The Letter of James, social history of Christian origins and early Christianity, dress in Mediterranean antiquity, history of biblical interpretation

Jeremy M. Bergen

Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies
Dean, Conrad Grebel University College
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Areas of interest:

Contemporary Christian theology, Anabaptist theology, ecclesiology, ecumenism, Holy Spirit, church apologies, martyrdom

Seçil Dağtas

Associate Professor, Anthropology
Co-Facilitator, *Migrations, Mobilities, and Social Politics Cluster*, Balsillie School of Int'l Affairs
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Areas of interest:

Secularism and religious difference; displacement, borders, and asylum; minority lives and archives; gender ideologies; Muslim lifeworlds; anthropology of Turkey, Cyprus, the Middle East

James Diamond

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Areas of interest:

Jewish thought, Jewish Biblical Interpretation

Wendy Fletcher

Professor, Culture and Language Studies, Renison University College
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Areas of interest:

History of race and racism in Canada, the intersection of culture and Christianity in the 20th century

Scott Kline

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Areas of interest:

Religious ethics and politics, Christian ethics, religion and armed conflict, Catholic social teaching, religion and healthcare

David A. Seljak

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Areas of interest:

Religion, multiculturalism, and identity; sociology of Religion

W. Derek Suderman

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Areas of interest:

Psalms, lament, prophets, wisdom literature, violence and the Bible, and the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament

Cristina Vanin

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Areas of interest:

Theology, ethics, ecology, women and Christianity

Galen Watts

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Areas of interest:

Social theory, culture, religion, morality, inequality, solidarity, political philosophy

Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme

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Areas of interest:

Religion, attitudes and social behaviour, secularization, non-religion and non-belief, social change, Immigration and ethnicity, political sociology

Jeff Wilson

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Areas of interest:

Japanese religions, Buddhism, religion in North America

Wilfrid Laurier University

Ehaab Abdou

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Areas of interest:

Education and curriculum studies, social entrepreneurship and innovation, critical discourse analysis

Abderrahman Beggar

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Areas of interest:

Muslim minorities, immigration and mobility, penal colonies and colonial history, literature and religion, life stories and oral narratives, transcultural memory and identity

Alexandra Boutros

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Areas of interest:

Critical Race Theory, cultural studies and popular culture, religion and media, social movements and alternative media, alternative health

Kevin Burrell

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Areas of interest:

Ethnicity and identity in biblical literature and archaeology, Cushite ethnic identity in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East, legacies of the Bible: Christian colonization, slavery and racism, Black identity movements

Carol Duncan

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Areas of interest:

Sociology of religion, religion and popular culture, Caribbean and African diaspora studies

Erich Fox Tree

Associate Professor, Religion and Culture

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Areas of interest:

Colonial mythologies about Indigenous peoples, Native American social and religious activism, Mesoamerican cultural and linguistic history, political ecology of language, Barbology and popular culture, Indigenous sign language

Dejan Guzina

Associate Professor, Political Science

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Areas of interest:

Nationalism, citizenship and minority rights, comparative democratization, populism and competitive authoritarianism, politics of the Western Balkans

Ashley Lebner

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Areas of interest:

Religious and scientific knowledge; colonization and decolonization; secularity; Christianity; Afro-Brazilian religions; friendship and politics; Amazonia, Brazil, and their connections to the United States, France, and Portugal

Jason Neelis

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Areas of interest:

South Asian religions, history, literature, and languages; Buddhist transmission across Asia; Gandharan manuscripts; epigraphy and archaeology; Upper Indus inscriptions and petroglyphs in Northern Pakistan

Ashwani Peetush

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Areas of interest:

Legal and political philosophy; human rights and global justice; ethics; race and culture; educational rights; disability; Indian philosophies

Edmund Pries

Professor, Global Studies, Religion and Culture

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Areas of interest:

Oaths, philosophies of war and peace, disarmament and international humanitarian law, social entrepreneurship, Mennonites, peace and conflict, history of Christianity

Meena Sharify-Funk

Professor, Religion and Culture

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Areas of interest:

Contemporary Islamic thought and identity, women and Islam, Sufism/Islamic mysticism, Middle Eastern culture and history

Stacey Wilson-Forsberg

Professor, Human Rights; School of International Policy & Governance (SIPG), Balsillie School of International Affairs

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Areas of interest:

Immigration; immigrant and refugee youth transitions to postsecondary education & labour market; intercultural learning in higher education in Canada, Latin America, Africa, Nordic Region

Ali Zaidi

Associate Professor, Global Studies, Religion and Culture

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Areas of interest:

Islam and modernity, religion and secularism, cultural globalization and tourism in Pakistan, hermeneutics and interpretive methods, comparative social theory

Jasmin Zine

Professor, Sociology, Religion and Culture

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Areas of interest:

Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism, race and racism, education and social justice

PhD Program Timeline

The following yearly schedule is a guideline. It is expected that a doctoral student and their supervisor will work together to ensure that Program milestones are reached in a timely manner.

Year 1

Coursework

In the first year of the Program, students are expected to complete two required courses: (RE740/RS740 and RE750/RS750). RE740/RS740 is *Theories and Methods in Religion, Culture, and Society*, which is normally offered in the Fall term.² RE750/RS750 is *Case Studies in Religion, Culture, and Society*, which is normally offered in the Winter term.³

Students also are expected to complete two (2) elective courses of their choosing. These courses may be taken from a variety of graduate programs in the Faculty of Arts at both institutions. For one of the electives, students may develop (with a faculty member) a Directed Studies course. If interested in this option, the student will need to work with the faculty member and complete the appropriate forms at their home university. At Laurier, the form for Directed Studies may be found on the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS) [Frequently Used Forms for Graduate Students](#).

² [RE740](#): This course explores theories and methods in the study of religion, culture, and society. Emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary approaches, contexts, and critiques.

³ [RE750](#): Case studies focused on lived religions in their cultural settings.

Details about marking for PhD courses and other Program milestones are outlined in the table below:

Marking for PhD Courses and Other Program Milestones

Laurier course code	Waterloo course code	Credits	Course Title	Required (R) or Optional (O)	How mark is recorded at Laurier	How mark is recorded at Waterloo
RE740	RS740	0.5	Theories and Methods of Religion, Culture, and Society	R	Letter	%
RE750	RS750	0.5	Case Studies in Religion, Culture, and Society	R	Letter	%
		0.5	First Course Elective	R	Letter	%
		0.5	Second Course Elective	R	Letter	%
RE702	Milestone ⁴		Language Requirements	R	P/F	CR/NCR
RE800	Milestone		General Exam	R	P/F	CR/NCR
RE801	Milestone		Field Exam	R	P/F	CR/NCR
	Milestone		Oral Presentation of Dissertation Proposal	R	P/F	CR/NCR
	Milestone		Dissertation Proposal accepted by Joint Committee	R	P/F	CR/NCR
RE898	Milestone		Public Presentation	R	P/F	CR/NCR
RE899	Milestone		Dissertation	R	CPL	ACC/NACC
RE6XX	RS6XX	0.5	[Other Electives]	O	Letter	%

⁴ At Laurier, a doctoral program milestone is defined as "an official, mandatory requirement or phase within a PhD program that marks a student's progression. Achieving these milestones – such as comprehensive exams, research proposals, and the final dissertation defence – is necessary to maintain active candidacy and graduate" (refer to [progress issues](#)).

Year 2

In the second year of the Program, students are required to complete two Comprehensive Examinations: The General Examination (RE800 at Laurier) and the Field Examination (RE801 at Laurier). Together, these exams are designed to assess the breadth and depth of a student's knowledge in relevant disciplines and in specific fields within the academic study of religion.

General Examination

The General Examination is based on a bibliography that ensures a student has doctoral-level knowledge of, and facility in, specific disciplines relevant to the academic study of religion (e.g., religious studies, anthropology, sociology, history, and/or similar disciplines). The bibliography is assembled by the student and endorsed by the student's Committee. The Joint Committee approves the bibliography and format. The student's Supervisory Committee sets the date for the exam (in the Fall term of the second year), establishes the format and instructions, writes the questions, and marks the student's answers. The General Examination ensures that a student has demonstrated a high level of competence in relevant disciplinary areas prior to embarking on original research at the dissertation stage.

Field Examination

The Field Examination concentrates on a topic of specialization for the student's forthcoming research (e.g., Christianity in colonial North America, urban vs. rural Buddhism, pop culture usage of religious imagery by spiritual-but-not-religious youth, etc.). The bibliography for the Field Examination is assembled by the student and endorsed by the student's Supervisory Committee. The Joint Committee approves the Field Examination bibliography and format. The student's Supervisory Committee sets the date for the exam (most likely, in the Winter or Spring/Summer term of the second year), establishes the format and instructions, writes the questions, and marks the student's answers. The Field Examination ensures that a student has demonstrated a doctoral-level mastery of a field of study within the academic study of religion before proceeding to original research in the doctoral dissertation.

Evaluation and Criteria

The General and Field Examinations are evaluated as follows:

Letter	%	Meaning
A+	90-100	Exceptional
A	85-89	Excellent
A-	80-84	Very good
B+	77-79	Acceptable
F	0-76	Failing (a student has only two opportunities)

A mark of 77%, that is, B+, is the minimum passing grade for both the General and Field Examinations. Laurier transcripts record a "pass" or "fail." Waterloo transcripts record a "completion" (or not). The Joint Program retains percentage marks on file for future use, for example, when faculty are writing recommendations. Bibliographies, exam questions, answers written by students, preliminary marks, and final marks become part of the Joint Program's record for a student.

Criteria used in evaluating exams include:

1. QUESTION, TOPIC

Do the answers respond directly to the questions? Do they stay on topic? Do they answer every part of every question?

2. QUALITY OF WRITING AND PRESENTATION

Are grammar, spelling, and sentence construction well handled? Are the answers well organized, clear, readable, and logically coherent?

3. BASIC IDEAS, DEFINITIONS, THEORIES, METHODS

Do the answers demonstrate comprehension of the readings? Do the answers handle these materials analytically and reflectively rather than naively?

4. CONCRETENESS, DETAIL

Do the answers root generalizations in concrete examples and specific illustrations? Do the answers show a grasp of relevant details? Are they persuasive?

5. ORIGINALITY

Does the exam exhibit originality of thought and/or independent thinking? Do the answers demonstrate an ability to synthesize, apply, critique, or in some other way go beyond mere summaries of readings?

6. SELECTION AND HANDLING OF SOURCES

Do the answers systematically and clearly distinguish the writer's contributions from the ideas of others?

Format

The format of the Comprehensive Examinations is established by the Student's Supervisory Committee and approved by the Joint Committee.

Normally, the examinations are written in-person, on-campus, and under the supervision of the student's Supervisory Committee. Written exams may have a secondary oral component. All take-home exams must have an in-person oral component. Oral exams without a written component are possible; in such cases, the student's Supervisory Committee must provide a justification to the Joint Committee for an exclusively oral examination. All oral components of a comprehensive exam will be recorded. All written and oral components will be retained as part of the student's file.

Timing

Both the General and the Field exams should be completed by the end of the student's second year in the doctoral program. The exact timing of each exam is scheduled by the student's Supervisory Committee. To be permitted to extend the examination period beyond the second year, a student must submit a petition to the Joint Committee through the Program Director. A student may petition only once for an extension. The Joint Committee may grant an extension of up to six months.

Completion

A student completes the Comprehensive Examinations once the minimum mark has been obtained for each examination.

Exam Re-takes: Over the course of taking the Comprehensive Examinations, a student may re-take only one exam in which they failed to achieve a mark of 77% (a B+) or higher. This means that a student has only two opportunities to complete the General Examination successfully. Failing the exam twice results in an expulsion from the Program. Additionally, a student who does not achieve a 77% (B+) or higher on the Field Examination will have an opportunity to re-take the Field Examination only if that student successfully completed the General Examination on the first attempt.

Language Requirements

Academic scholars should be competent in languages other than their own primary languages. This expectation has emerged out of a widespread understanding that knowing languages other than their primary languages is crucial not only to scholars' collection and analysis of some types of data, but also to the mobilization of data, conclusions, and knowledge more generally. For example, collection and analysis of ethnographic data from living people or textual information from written documents and scholarly texts normally requires competence of the languages used by those people or texts. Competence in multiple languages is also essential to analysis in the light of *different* traditions of learning, as well as to the preservation, teaching, translation, and transmission of new knowledge to students, other scholars, and wider publics. Competence in multiple languages also facilitates knowledge mobilization at conferences and talks, in publications, and, crucially, in reciprocal conversations and exchanges with groups that provided data.

Keeping with this timeworn scholarly tradition, students in the Program are required to demonstrate competence in at least one scholarly language other than their own primary language. This scholarly language should be relevant to the student's proposed program of research. This requirement must be fulfilled before the student advances to doctoral candidacy (i.e., before the student's third year of the Program) and begins undertaking focused doctoral research and writing for their individually approved doctoral project.

Please refer to **Appendix D** for an example of, and requirements for, the Language-Requirement Proposal.

Scholarly Languages

The Program defines a "scholarly language" as a language in which scholars have published a significant body of scholarly literature related to the general field of religious studies or related social sciences and humanities disciplines.

"Scholarly languages" are generally oral-auditory (i.e., "spoken") languages that have an established and continuing tradition of academic writing. "Scholarly languages" also include signed or spatio-visual (i.e., "signed") languages in which a significant and growing corpus of scholarly research is recorded on video.

Pro forma, the student must explain the relevance of the selected language on a "Language-Requirement Proposal," and have this proposal approved *before* the student submits their dissertation proposal, so that the student's doctoral Supervisory Committee and the Joint Committee can properly evaluate the dissertation proposal. On that form, a student may petition the committees to approve a "field language" other than the student's primary language (in which the student is already competent) to be counted *in place of* a scholarly language. In such cases, the test for demonstrating one's proficiency in the field language may be crafted for the specific language and project.

Field Languages

A "field language" is a language used for research *in the field*, whether in the context of ethnographic fieldwork, in person-interviews, or research conducted in a library, laboratory, museum, or archive. A field language may be written or unwritten; it may be living or extinct; it may be a standardized language or a non-standard variant; and it may or may not be the medium of established academic scholarship.

Different doctoral projects may require different degrees of proficiency in field languages, and sometimes, the process of acquiring a field language while in the field might be an important part of the research itself. Before students undertake focused doctoral research on their individualized projects, students' individual Supervisory Committees are responsible for encouraging students to either acquire proficiency in field languages that their research will require or develop a plan for obtaining the necessary proficiency in the field.

Proficiency in one or more field languages is not a requirement of the Program if a student has met the requirement of demonstrating proficiency in a "scholarly language" that is not the student's first language. Insufficient competency in a field language alone is not enough for a student's Supervisory Committee or the Joint Committee to stop a student from advancing to candidacy. Nonetheless, Supervisory Committees may consider the potential effects of insufficient competency in a field language as a factor when evaluating when to approve a doctoral dissertation or doctoral defence.

Demonstration (or Testing) of Proficiency

Regardless of how the requirement is satisfied, a student's language competence must be at a sufficiently high level that it is adequate to the tasks of scholarly research. Ordinarily, for textual research, advanced reading knowledge is expected; for field research, intermediate speaking knowledge is the norm.

Competence can be assessed in a variety of ways. The three most common ways are:

- Course work;
- Departmental testing;
- Standardized testing.

Normally, a minimum of two years (4 terms) of university-level study of the proposed language or in the proposed language, with a minimum of B+ average, is required for the Joint Committee to consider that coursework proves competency in a research language. The reason for doing so is that courses may or may not teach the appropriate skills needed for the proposed research.

Although the forms and lengths vary, a typical departmental exam of a student's written language competence of a "scholarly language" takes two hours and requires a translation, with a printed dictionary, of a scholarly passage of approximately 500 words. Testing for a signed / spatio-visual "scholarly language" might consist of a written translation of a signed academic monologue of 3 to 5 minutes.

Students may re-take a language exam up to two times. If the student fails to demonstrate proficiency after the second assessment, the student will be expelled from the Program. Students wishing to re-take the exam must file a petition for re-examination with the Program Director. To re-take the exam, the petition must be approved by both the student's Supervisory Committee and the Joint Committee.

When students use standardized language tests to fulfill the language requirement of the Program, the testing agency should ideally be regularly used by one or both universities participating in the Program to evaluate the language ability of students and job applicants. Nonetheless, both the Supervisory Committee of each doctoral student and the Joint Committee reserve the power to determine whether a proposed standardized exam agency, exam, and score are acceptable for demonstrating competence.

In certain cases, undergraduate language training may be taken free of charge, but students should check their university's regulations concerning the limitations on, and payments for, undergraduate language courses. In general, the departments and universities assume no financial responsibility for either language training or language testing; these costs must be borne by the student. Language requirements must be proposed to the Joint Committee by the student, with the approval of all members of the Supervisory Committee. Although the proposal may be submitted earlier, it must be fulfilled by the end of the student's third year in the Program.

Year 3

By the beginning of their third year of the Program, the student will need to publicly present their Dissertation Proposal. Students are also expected to submit a final written dissertation proposal no later than the end of the Fall term of their third year of the Program. The doctoral dissertation process involves the following parts:

1. Dissertation Project Proposal (presented no later than the beginning of third year),
2. Final Dissertation Proposal (submitted, reviewed, and approved by the end of Fall term of third year),
3. Doctoral Dissertation,
4. Public Presentation of the research project, and
5. Oral Defence of the dissertation.

Dissertation Project Proposal

The purpose of the Dissertation Project Proposal is to ensure that the student's project is feasible and represents an **original and important contribution to knowledge**. A well-developed proposal helps the student to clarify the project in their own mind, as well as to create a common set of expectations among their Supervisory Committee members.

Dissertation Project Proposal Process

The process for successfully completing the Dissertation Project Proposal is as follows:

1. **Preliminary Dissertation Project Proposal** (developed in conversation with Supervisor and Supervisory Committee)
2. After completing the Field Exam, the student **presents the Proposal** at an event organized by the PhD Director (see below).
3. The student then submits a complete **draft of the written** Proposal to the Supervisory Committee, which will approve or reject the Proposal. If the Committee rejects the Proposal, the student has the opportunity to revise and resubmit it.
4. Once approved by the Supervisory Committee, the student then submits a **complete draft of the written Proposal** (approved by their Supervisory Committee) **to the Program Director** for the Joint Committee's approval.
5. Once the Proposal has been approved by the Joint Committee, the student may then begin actively researching and writing the Dissertation, while working to meet other remaining program milestones.

Criteria for Crafting a Successful Proposal

While there is no template for the Dissertation Project Proposal, the student may refer to the [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council](#) (SSHRC) criteria for a successful proposal.

Any proposal must answer four questions:

- 1. What are you going to study?**

SSHRC criteria: "You should have a specific, focused, and feasible research question" (or questions) and objective(s).

- 2. How are you going to do it?**

SSHRC criteria: "You should offer a clear description of the proposed methodology."

- 3. What is the significance of your project?**

SSHRC criteria: "Explain the significance and expected contributions to research."

- 4. How are you positioned to undertake this project?**

SSHRC criteria: "Describe your relevant training, such as academic training, lived experience or traditional teachings."

Examining these questions in detail will help the Supervisory and Joint Committees make decisions about the clarity, viability, and value of your project.

1. What are you going to study?

The criterion for a successful dissertation is **an original and important contribution to knowledge**.

A guiding question. What is the question your thesis will answer? A dissertation must have one—and only one—topic that can be summed up in a guiding question. Developing a guiding question will allow you to define the scope of your project with sufficient precision to avoid being overwhelmed. It allows you to decide what to study and what to ignore.

Originality. Your dissertation must be original. That means it cannot simply summarize scholarship to date. There are a variety of ways one can be original:

1. Find a new source of data.
2. Develop or correct a theory (use new data to develop a new explanation or correct an old one).
3. Apply a theory to a new or unexplored phenomenon.
4. Apply a theory from a different discipline to a religious phenomenon (e.g., apply theories of how social movements grow from sociology to a new religious movement).

The point is that you must find something that has not been done before.

Importance. To be considered “important,” your project must be substantial and rigorous, displaying a high level of research and writing. Your project must also be of scholarly interest. You might ask the question, “*Important to whom?*” This is why a dissertation project begins with a literature review. You must discover who your audience might be, what the state of the question is among those scholars, and what has been done (and left undone) by researchers working in that area. The best ways to be original and important are to:

1. **Fill a gap** (address a topic that other scholars have overlooked).
2. **Critically address an existing concept(s)** (challenge a widely held belief/theory).
3. **Break new ground** (i.e., focus on an under-researched group or apply innovative theoretical frameworks).

You may find other methods to explain the contribution your dissertation will make. This highlights the necessity of a literature review to contextualize your thesis project in ongoing academic and public debates and ensure your work is **original and important**.

2. How are you going to study it?

The proposal should include a detailed discussion of theory, method, and “data set” or source of information (e.g., interviews of a specific population, primary source material, printed matter, web sites, or creative material such as films, TV shows, and art works).

Consider: What about each of the following elements makes your approach **valuable** and **innovative**?

Theory. Theory provides explanation. Theory moves your project beyond description to analysis and critique. You may find that your topic is best understood using a variety of theories. In any case, you will need to outline a clear theoretical framework and demonstrate the explanatory value of that framework.

Method. Describe your method. Outline the steps you will take to answer your question in clear and simple terms.

- How will you gather your data (e.g., interviews, archival research, surveys, online searches, viewing films, etc.)?
- What method(s) will you use to analyze your data (e.g., statistical analysis, coding, discourse analysis, etc.)?
- Show that your method is appropriate both to your chosen theoretical framework and to the goals of the dissertation.

Data set. Your proposal should include a detailed description of your data set (what exactly you will look at).

- If you are doing content analysis: What books or journals will you read?
- If you are doing historical research: What archives will you visit?
- If you plan to interview or survey people:
 - How will you choose your participants?
 - What kind of interviews or surveys will you use?

- How many participants will you interview or survey?
 - What kind of questions will you ask?
 - How will you gain access to members of a religious community?
- Explain the benefits of using this particular data set over others.

Your Supervisory Committee, as well as the Joint Committee, will be asking whether your data set is appropriate. Will the data you seek to collect help you answer the core question of your dissertation project?

Connecting theory, method, and data set. In the theory and method sections, explain how the application of your theoretical framework and method to your data set serves the goals of your project. Each section will need to address the most important and up-to-date scholarly works, including critique(s) of your selected theoretical framework and method so that you can discuss limitations and shortcomings.

Ethics. You must also consider the ethical issues in conducting and disseminating your research.

- Is there potential for harm?
- How will you protect the agency and dignity of participants?
- Does your research meet the criteria set out in the latest Tri-Council Policy Statement on research involving humans?
- What obstacles might you face in receiving ethics clearance from your institution?
- Who will benefit from your study and how?

3. Why is it significant? (So what?)

Why should people care about the work into which you have put so much time and energy? This is a question that is best answered in clear and direct terms, rather than vague assertions of importance.

Audience. In order to explain the significance of your project, you must first imagine an audience for your scholarship.

- Who would benefit from reading your research: Which scholars? Educators? Community members? Stakeholders? Policy makers? Individuals?
- Why would it matter to your audience?
- How might your audience use your insights?
- To whom is your work "important"?
- Which scholars will want to read your dissertation or the publications that derive from it?
- What does your research add to ongoing debates among scholars?
- Are you filling a gap, challenging a concept, being innovative?
- How will your project open new avenues of research?
- How will it contribute to other members of society, including the community that you are studying?

4. How are you positioned to answer this important question?

Scholarly experience and qualifications

Identify your particular skills, experiences, and resources that will help you to answer your dissertation's question.

You may wish to highlight:

- Any academic training (specialized courses or specific professors) that will help you conduct this research;
- Any non-academic experience that qualifies you for the project;
- Language skills;
- Special access to resources (e.g., as an insider, you might have access to data that outsiders are not allowed to see);
- Any other skills, experience, or access to resources that would make you a "good fit" for this study.

Positionality

Finally, you should address the issue of "positionality" in your proposed project:

- What challenges and opportunities does your position in society present for your ability to conduct this research?
- In terms of the community you wish to study, are you an "insider" or "outsider"?
- What impact will that have on your project?
- Will identity markers affect how you will conduct this research?
- Are there unequal power dynamics that may challenge the ethical or scholarly integrity of your study?

Concluding remarks. Put in a solid conclusion summarizing your intended research focus.

Proposal Requirements Checklist

Submission Requirements	Basic Elements to include
Cover sheets are signed and dated by the student and all members of the proposed Supervisory Committee	Title (invites engagement and is clear about the nature of the project; often a subtitle explains the project more precisely)
The student has submitted the Proposal to the PhD Director before the deadline set by the Joint Committee	Abstract (about 150 words)
The Proposal is 4,000-5,000 words, plus a bibliography	Table of Contents (includes clear chapter titles)
The Proposal follows a proper academic style guide	Timeline (how the student and Supervisory Committee envision the project developing)
	Language Skills (outline language skills required for your project and your progress to date in developing those skills)
	Bibliography (about 30 sources that relate to the project)

Dissertation Proposal Presentation

The PhD Director organizes and usually moderates the presentation of dissertation proposals for students who have passed both of their Comprehensive Exams.

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an occasion for reflection and feedback about the dissertation project proposal before it is submitted for approval by the Supervisory and Joint Committees. It is recommended that first-year doctoral students attend the oral presentations.

Students will be allotted 20-30 minutes to present their proposal, followed by discussion from audience members who may question any part of the project (theory, method, data set, guiding questions, ethics, feasibility, etc.). The spirit of the discussion period is one of positive critique and helpful suggestions. *This is not an examination.*

The Presentation of the Dissertation Project Proposal should address what question you will answer, how you will answer it, why the answer matters, and how you are qualified to answer that question (see guidelines in previous section). The Presentation should be prepared in close consultation with the Supervisor and other Supervisory Committee members.

- The Presentation of the Dissertation Project Proposal is not graded, not even on a pass/fail basis. However, in making its decision on whether to approve the final Dissertation Project Proposal, the Joint Committee may consider if the student has responded effectively to criticisms and comments made at the oral presentation event.

Ethics Approval Process

Primary research means studying and gathering information from people through interviews, surveys, observation, and other modes. This is a great way to obtain specific data for your research project. It can be especially helpful if the topic you wish to write about does not have a lot of existing scholarship.

If you wish to conduct primary research for your dissertation, you will need to complete a research ethics application at the appropriate university.

All dissertation projects are subject to research ethics protocols as specified by the policies set out by the university where they are registered:

[Laurier Research Ethics](#)

[Waterloo Research Ethics](#)

At **Laurier**, the student will complete an application with Laurier's Research Ethics Board (REB) and will use Romeo, the REB application platform. Students also will need to maintain their REB approval by filing the required REB reports.

The following resources may be helpful as you complete the ethics approval process:

[Romeo Research Portal](#)

[REB Application Companion Guide](#)

[Panel on Research Ethics TCPS: CORE-2022 \(Course on Research Ethics\)](#)

All applications at Laurier require that the student take the TCPS 2 Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE). When the student completes the course, they will be provided with a certificate which they upload to the ROMEEO portal. The Student's Supervisor will also upload their TCPS 2: CORE Certificate. The first steps of the ethics application should be completing the TCPS 2: CORE Certificate and creating an account on ROMEEO. This application process takes time. **Please allow at least four weeks after submission for revisions and REB approval.**

As of Summer 2026, **Waterloo** is undergoing changes in their Research Ethics process, so this information will be added in the Fall 2026 term.

Year 4

By the fourth year of the Program, the student will have completed / be completing their fieldwork and will be in the stage of writing their dissertation chapters. Most students by the end of their fourth year are expected to complete their Public Presentation and Dissertation Defence.

Doctoral Dissertation

Dissertations submitted for a PhD in Religion, Culture, and Society are typically structured as a monograph that makes an original and important contribution to their field. They have **at least four or five main chapters**, which together **address a central question**, providing answers to that question (i.e., sustaining an argument) by drawing on evidence collected through original research. The monograph format also requires an **introduction and conclusion**, as well as **conventional formatting** (title page, abstract, citations, and reference list following a proper academic style).

These are guidelines and not requirements. Students are expected to consult with their supervisors, committee members, and graduate coordinators in preparing for and writing their dissertations.

The student must defend the dissertation orally after it has been approved for a formal Defence by the student's Supervisory Committee and PhD Director.

For more information, please consult the general dissertation guidelines of your university:

[Doctoral Dissertation Guidelines \(Laurier\)](#)

[Thesis and Defence \(Waterloo\)](#)

You may refer to examples of dissertations completed by graduates from Laurier and Waterloo at:

[Religion and Culture Theses and Dissertations](#) database
(part of Scholars Common @ Laurier)

[Completed PhD Dissertations](#) archive
(part of UWSpace Repository)

Public Presentation

Two of the founding values of the Program are **civic responsibility** and **public intelligibility**. Scholarship should, in some way, be of value to society and be presented in a manner that a non-specialist, educated audience could understand. Rendering scholarship accessible to a non-specialist audience serves the purpose of promoting interdisciplinary research.

The Public Presentation is an opportunity to present your work in an accessible way. The purpose of this exercise is to offer substantial and serious scholarship to a public audience. This is not a dissertation defence.

Benefits of the Public Presentation

- Allows students to contribute to public debates on religion, culture and society;
- Promotes connection between scholarship and civic responsibility;
- Provides education opportunities for specific groups and communities;
- Trains students for public policy work or other work in public fields;
- Sharpens communication and teaching skills.

Timing of the Public Presentation

Since you are presenting *your* research, the presentation should happen near to the end of your research. It must be completed by the final term of your studies (at the very latest), before you graduate.

It is up to the Supervisor to decide if a student is ready to address this milestone.

Presenting at an *earlier time* has the advantage that feedback from the public could direct the student to new sources of information or could add a new perspective.

Presenting at a *later stage* in the research has the advantage of giving the student more material to present and more confidence in their conclusions.

Organizing the Public Presentation

- The student is responsible for organizing the public presentation.
- Engage a broad *public* audience. Avoid inviting only fellow scholars and specialists.
- Hold the event off-campus—or at least at a publicly accessible place on campus.
- Schedule it for a time when the public may be available.
- Provide a welcoming environment.
- Publicize effectively through social media and other forums at least six (6) weeks in advance.
- Invite students and faculty in the Program and related fields.

Requirements of the Public Presentation

The student must approach the Supervisor with a plan to make a Public Presentation.

The Supervisor decides that the student is at an appropriate stage in their research to deliver a Public Presentation.

The student must organize the venue, publicity, audio-visual equipment (if any), etc. in consultation with their Supervisor and the Joint Committee.

Evaluation of the Public Presentation

- The Supervisor and Supervisory Committee Members must attend the public event and should offer feedback to the student afterwards.

Evaluation is made by the Supervisory Committee, and it is on a Pass/Fail basis.

Criteria for evaluation are as follows:

- Was it a large/appropriate audience?
- Was it a *public* rather than *specialist* audience?
- Was the presented material appropriate?
- Was the research solid?
- Was the presentation accessible?
- Was the audience engaged?

After the Presentation, the Supervisor reports to the PhD Director that the milestone has been reached.

Laurier students must register for RE898 for the term in which they are giving the Public Presentation. University of Waterloo students will follow the procedure to record this as a program milestone.

Oral Dissertation Defence

Laurier students, please refer to resources on [Doctoral Studies](#), including the oral defence.

Waterloo students, please refer to resources on [Preparing for your thesis defence](#).

Student Funding and Grant Opportunities

Internal Funding

Each institution provides funding for its registered students for up to four years. For information about internal scholarships and awards, please refer to your respective university's graduate studies department, and consult with the Graduate Studies Director or Coordinator in your department.

[\(Laurier\) Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies \(FGPS\)](#)

[\(Waterloo\) Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs](#)

External Funding

Students are expected to apply for external funding for the first four years of the Program.

Some faculty may also provide additional funding to PhD students through Tri-Council funding and research projects.

For information about external awards and scholarships, please refer to the following resources:

[Laurier Graduate Financial Aid and Awards Office – External Funding and Awards](#)

[Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council \(SSHRC\)](#)
[Canada Graduate Research Scholarship – Doctoral Program](#)

[Ontario Graduate Scholarship \(OGS\) Program](#)

Teaching Assistantships and Instructor Opportunities

Students normally serve at least two years as Teaching Assistants for their respective university.

At the beginning of their program, incoming doctoral students should attend orientation sessions for TAs and abide by Laurier and Waterloo guidelines, which are typically outlined in each university's TA collective agreement.

Both universities offer substantial resources to assist Teaching Assistants, and to support students preparing for careers in university teaching.

Students may hold TA and RA positions at the same time so long as the workloads are in accord with the maximum allowable by the student's home university.

Students at any stage in the Program may apply for various research positions, open teaching assistant positions, and contract teaching (sessional) positions (all in compliance with applicable collective agreements).

If interested in teaching a course, Laurier students are encouraged to approach the Religion & Culture Department Chair in their second or third year to teach a course in their third or fourth year, depending on their Supervisor's approval. Waterloo students are encouraged to approach the Religious Studies Area Head (Assistant Director, RS) about teaching opportunities.

Doctoral students at **Laurier** who work as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are represented by the **Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Local 902**. Please refer to the [collective agreement](#) for more information including the union membership.

Doctoral students at **Waterloo** who work as **Graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs)** are represented by the **Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 5524**. Please refer to the [collective agreement](#) for more information including the union membership.

Students are advised that while teaching assistantships and teaching are valuable educational experiences, timely completion of one's doctoral dissertation is a far more valuable and marketable achievement.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Links to Important Forms

Laurier students, please refer to the "**PhD Student Forms**" on the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' ["Frequently Used Forms for Graduate Students"](#) webpage.

Waterloo students, please refer to the [Graduate Studies forms](#) webpage, maintained by The Centre on behalf of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs.

APPENDIX B: Annual PhD Progress Report

NOTE: Laurier students, please refer to the information outlined on the [Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#) webpage and fill out form **FC21** to complete the report.

Waterloo students, please check the [Graduate Studies forms](#) webpage, maintained by The Centre on behalf of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- It is the student's responsibility to ensure that this report reaches the director on time and that the appropriate signatures are included.
- No later than April 15, each PhD student completes parts A1–A6 electronically and then submits this report to the supervisor.
- The supervisor completes parts B1–B7 and then submits the entire report to the other committee members for comment and evaluation (C1). If a supervisor has not yet been established, the director or graduate officer must complete Part B.
- No later than the end of May, the supervisor and committee meet to review and sign the full report with the student (Part C).
- The supervisor forwards the fully reviewed and signed report to the director for signature (Part C).
- The director provides a copy of the full report to the student and the supervisor, retains a copy for the departmental file, and files the full, original report with the Office of Graduate Studies.

*Late submission of this progress report may result in a delay of the student's financial support.

PART A: STUDENT REPORT (to be completed by the student)

Student:

ID #:

Dept.:

Date of entry into program:

Respond to the following questions and then forward this report to your supervisor:

A1. Details of progress made since the last report (or toward meeting degree requirements since beginning the program if this is the first report), e.g., courses completed; comprehensive examination preparation, writing, or oral defense; thesis proposal, research, chapters written or revised.

A2. Indicate all scholarships that you have applied for and those you've been awarded since last May 1 (or since entry into program, if this is your first progress report). Differentiate between "applied for" and "awarded," and provide dollar values for those awarded.

A3. List any conference presentations and publications you have made since last May 1 (or since entry into program, if this is your first progress report). Differentiate between "refereed" and "nonrefereed," also between "invited," "contributed," etc.

A4. Indicate your teaching responsibilities since last May 1 and comment on the progress you've made in your development as a teacher.

A5. List your specific goals for the next year (e.g., program requirements, courses, comprehensive examination, thesis, etc.). Indicate the expected dates for their completion.

A6. What is the anticipated date (month/year) for the completion of degree requirements?

PART B: SUPERVISOR'S REPORT (to be completed by the student's supervisor).
Complete each section that is *relevant to the student's stage in the doctoral program*.

B1. How often did you, as supervisor, meet with the student over the last reporting period: ☐ monthly ☐ once per term ☐ once per year ☐ other (specify):

B2. How often did the supervisory committee as a whole (if established) meet with the student over the last reporting period:
☐ monthly ☐ once per term ☐ once per year ☐ other (specify):

B3. The comprehensive requirement was completed on (date):
OR I have discussed the comprehensive exams with my student and they are expected to complete this requirement by (date):

B4. The language requirement was completed on (date):
OR I have discussed the language requirement with my student and they expect to complete this requirement by (date):

B5. The public presentation requirement was completed on (date);
OR, I have discussed the public presentation requirement with my student and they expect to complete this requirement by (date):

In the comments section (**B10**), please justify, if necessary, any expected date of completion that exceeds the deadline for your program.

B6. Supervisors should respond to a draft of the PhD thesis in a timely fashion. Please answer the following *only* if draft research was submitted by the student during the year.

B7. Comment on progress made in accomplishing goals set out in last report (or toward meeting degree requirements since beginning the program if this is the first report). Refer to the attached student report.

B8. Comment on specific goals for the next interval of ____ months:

B9. Anticipated date for the completion of degree requirements (mo./yr.):

B10. Additional Comments:

PART C: OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS (to be completed by full supervisory committee)

C1. Evaluation of overall progress since last report:

[S] Satisfactory [M] Marginal* [U] Unsatisfactory*

Position	Name	Evaluation	Signature	Date
Supervisor				

2 nd Member				
3 rd Member				
4 th Member (if any)				

**If progress is deemed marginal or unsatisfactory, include here a detailed explanation of what must be accomplished over the next 6 months in order to remedy the situation.*

C2. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This completed report has been seen by me and (check one:) ☐ I see no need to append additional comments.

☐ I am appending additional comments (as section D).

Student's Signature:

Date:

Area Head Signature:

Date:

Joint PhD Director's Signature:

Date:

The Director files the report with the Office of Graduate Studies, ensuring that a copy of the full report is sent to the student, supervisor, and departmental file

APPENDIX C: Program Requirement Checklist

WLU-UW PhD in Religion, Culture, and Society	
STUDENT NAME:	
DATE OF PROGRAM ENTRY:	
SUPERVISOR:	
HOME INSTITUTION: WLU OR UW	
COURSE WORK AND EXAMS	
COURSE/EXAM	COMPLETION DATE
RE/RS 740	
RE/RS 750	
AT LEAST 2 ELECTIVES:	
1.	
2.	
GENERAL EXAM	
FIELD EXAM	
LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT	
☐ Language Requirement Proposal on File	
☐ RE702 Milestone	----- Date Completed
DISSERTATION	
☐ Oral Presentation	----- Date Completed
☐ Proposal Accepted by Joint Committee	----- Date Completed
☐ Dissertation Defended/Accepted	----- Date Completed

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

☐ Presentation Completed

Date Completed

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS

20___ 20___ 20___ 20___ 20___ 20___

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Email: -----

Phone: -----

APPENDIX D: Language-Requirement Proposal

Name of applicant:

Date:

Names of Supervisor and Supervisory Committee members:

1. What is your primary language?
2. At what level were your most recent semesters of study of your primary language?
3. With what language(s) do you propose to pass the PhD requirement of a scholarly language?
4. What level (none, beginning, intermediate, advanced) and type (reading, listening, speaking) of competence in your proposed scholarly language(s) do you possess [or propose to demonstrate]?
5. Explain your reasons for proposing this language. To what scholarly uses will you put this linguistic competence?
6. If you are not currently competent in the language, how (course work, independent study, tutor, etc.) will you gain the proposed type and level of competence?
7. How do you propose to demonstrate this competence?

Signatures

Student:

Date:

I consider the above proposal appropriate for this student's PhD program, including the dissertation project.

Supervisor:

Date:

Committee member # 1:

Date:

Committee member # 2:

Date:

APPENDIX E: Dissertation Project Proposal Cover Sheet

[Dissertation Title]

[Personal Data]

Student's name (printed)

email address

I approve this proposal and recommend its acceptance by the Joint Committee, thus authorizing the commencement of dissertation research and writing.

Signatures and dates of the supervisory committee:

Faculty Name (printed)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX F: Standard Timeline

(for completion of the PhD in four years)

Year 1	Fall	• Courses: RE/RS740 + elective(s) • In consultation with Supervisor, work on dissertation project proposal in order to apply for external funding. Applications for external funding are required in order to retain internal scholarships. • Develop Supervisory Committee • Language(s) study • TA
	Winter	• Courses: RE/RS750 + elective(s) • In consultation with Supervisory Committee, develop and refine dissertation project proposal in connection to RE/RS750 • Language(s) study • TA • File PhD Progress Report by April 15 • Study for General Comprehensive Exam
	Spring / Summer	• If necessary, continue coursework • Discuss preliminary draft of dissertation project proposal, along with the language proposal, with Supervisory Committee and PhD Director • Language(s) study and/or exam • Develop Proposal and Study for General Comprehensive Exam
Year 2	Fall	• Study for General Comprehensive Exam • Take General Comprehensive Exam (approximate date: November–January)

		• (LAURIER STUDENTS: Register for RE800 until you pass the General Exam) • Language(s) study, if necessary • TA
	Winter	• Develop Proposal and Study for Field Exam • (LAURIER STUDENTS: Register for RE801 until you pass the Field Exam) • TA • File PhD Progress Report by April 15 to Supervisor • Consult with Supervisory Committee regarding dissertation proposal
	Spring / Summer	• Take Field Comp Exam (approximate completion date: May–June) • Oral presentation of dissertation proposal (approximate date: September)
Year 3	Fall	• Submit final draft of written dissertation project and language proposal by Fall term • Submit fieldwork component of research project to university ethics committee, if necessary to begin dissertation research in the Fall • Dissertation research • Coursework, language examinations, comprehensives, oral presentation of the dissertation proposal, and final dissertation approval must be completed successfully before dissertation writing will be authorized • (LAURIER STUDENTS: Register for RE899 (Doctoral Dissertation) each semester until graduation) • TA (unless away engaged in field research) • Take non-credit course in teaching (optional)

	Winter	• Dissertation research • (LAURIER STUDENTS: Register for RE899 (Doctoral Dissertation) each semester until graduation) • TA (unless away engaged in field research) • Take non-credit course in teaching (optional) • File PhD Progress Report by April 15 to Supervisor; consult with Supervisory Committee
	Spring / Summer	• Dissertation research and writing
Year 4	Fall	• Dissertation writing • TA or part-time teaching of one course (expected but not required) • Public presentation (as scheduled by the director). You may do the public presentation at any time towards the end of your program. It must be completed at the very latest by the end of the term in which you defend your dissertation. • (LAURIER STUDENTS: Register for RE898)
	Winter	• Dissertation writing • TA or part-time teaching of one course (expected but not required) • If not graduating, file PhD Progress Report by April 15 and meet with Supervisory Committee by end of May
	Spring / Summer	• Dissertation Defence (as scheduled by Graduate Studies) • Graduation (June, as scheduled by Registrar)

APPENDIX G: Tips for Graduate Students

Laurier students may refer to resources on academic success and well-being from the [Graduate Students' Association \(GSA\)](#).

Waterloo students may refer to resources from the [Graduate Student Association \(GSA-UW\)](#).

Being in grad school is a huge commitment and investment: of money, time, mind, heart, and body. Make sure you honour your commitment and treat graduate school like a full-time job.

Mastering organization and time management skills will support success in grad school. Be sure to use a planner or some form of organization to track your weekly readings, assignments, and commitments.

Take care of your physical and mental health! The practice of self-care is essential to any graduate student experience. Physical movement, contemplative practices, etc. are all examples of personal care.

Staying balanced and finding a good daily rhythm and routine helps one to manage the challenges and stressors that come with graduate studies and keeps things in proportion.

Communication is key! Be in communication with your professors, supervisor, resources, and mentors. You are not alone! Laurier and Waterloo have lots of centres and resources to offer you.

Make an effort to engage with the graduate student and faculty community! Lean on your peers and support each other however you can. You are resources to one another. Be empowered by your own authentic self and share your insights, interests, talents, experiences, etc. with others while appreciating and benefitting from the unique contributions and inspirations of others. (Don't isolate yourself. Remember that you belong here and contribute to the larger experience.)

Question the questions! Be critical and curious. Care to know diverse perspectives and question the subject matter from all different perspectives. You are becoming part of larger scholarly conversations. Seek out opportunities to participate in epistemic communities, nationally and internationally.

Make it your own! Every student's journey is different. Enjoy!