

Facoltà di Teologia

Procedures for the Third Cycle and the Doctoral Dissertation

This document is based on the general description of the STD program provided in the *Handbook of Studies*. All the rules provided in this document are obligatory for the STD students at PUST.

I. ADMISSION:

1. Students with the STL from PUST are admitted if they have achieved an 8,5/10 average (1) in their courses, as well as an 8.5/10 both for (2) their dissertation and (3) for the oral examination (*lectio coram*).
2. Candidates who earned their STL from a different university must meet the criteria specified by that university for those who want to apply for the STD program. In case the institution in question does not offer the STD program, the rules stated in I.1 apply. The Dean's office establishes the rules concerning correspondence of grades in case the institution that granted the STL degree uses a different scale of grades.
3. The candidate must meet the general language requirements specified for all PUST student applicants (the rules can be found in *The Handbook of Studies*). In addition, the candidate should prove his/her skills in all languages that will be necessary for his/her research.
4. As part of the process of admission, the prospective STD student must present his/her suggestion concerning the field of research and a tentative topic to the Head of the Section to ensure that the Faculty has a professor who can serve as Moderator of the dissertation. The lack of an appropriate expert in a given field of theology or a lack of the professor who can direct a dissertation in a proposed language (other than English and Italian) may lead to the rejection of the application.
5. The Head of the Section fills out the admission form (provided by the Dean's Office) and communicates his/her approval to the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program who approves – on behalf of the Dean – the admission of the STD candidate.
6. All students admitted to the STD program should be aware that the formal, written Doctoral Proposal will serve as an evaluation of the student's ability to pursue an autonomous and meaningful academic research and to complete the doctorate. If (and only if) the Doctoral Proposal is accepted by the Proposal Commission (according to the procedure described in points IV.1.2-3 below), will the student be permitted to continue the STD program at the PUST. If the Doctoral Proposal is not approved, the student will be asked to withdraw from the university and the student will not be permitted to continue STD studies at the PUST.

II. PROGRAM:

(A) *Students in this cycle who did not complete the two-year licentiate program in the Faculty of Theology at PUST are required to:*

1. Register for two "obligatory" courses from the STL program (in their section) and two additional courses of their choice from the area of their specialization. In order to continue in

the program, the student must receive minimum 8,5/10 for each of those courses. Those whose STL is not specialized or who wish to change their area of specialization will be required to follow a special study program established by the Vice Dean.

2. Register for (a) the Theological Writing Seminar (STD), and (b) the Seminar for Doctoral Students. Depending on their former education, students may be exempted from (a). In order to continue in the STD program, the student must receive minimum 8,5/10 for both (a) and (b).
3. Present their dissertation proposal and have it approved no later than 3 semesters from their enrolment to the STD program. An exception may be granted for students who are required to take any additional courses. If this requirement is not met, CPD is convoked to decide whether the student can continue in the STD program (see section V below).
4. After the STD student has had their dissertation proposal approved, the student is obliged to accomplish at least one of the following tasks: (1) write one research paper and have it accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal in their field of study; (2) participate in the doctoral “Laboratory” for at least one year and make at least one presentation in it; (3) fulfill an equivalent of (1), or (2), approved by their advisor (in communication with the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program). If this requirement is not met, CPD is convoked to decide whether the student can continue in the STD program (see section V below).
5. Continuing STD students need to submit at least one chapter of their dissertation before the end of the second year of their studies (after the approval of their proposal). The draft needs to be accepted by the Moderator. If this requirement is not met, CPD is convoked to decide whether the student can continue in the STD program (see section V below).
6. The STD program requires in presence participation in seminars and courses specified in II.A.1 and II.A.2. The program envisions 2 years of the regular status of an STD student at PUST, followed by up to 5 years of the status “fuori corso.” Any extension of this limit needs to be approved in writing by the Dean of the Faculty and requires developing and submitting a new dissertation proposal.
7. Continuing students who have the status “fuori corso” are obliged to send to the Secretary of the Faculty a report at the end of each academic year (before July 1).
 - a. The report should provide answers to the following questions: (1) What is the progress of the dissertation since the last report? (2) Is the student in touch with the Moderator? How many times did they meet (in person, online) over the last academic year? (3) What are the plans/prospectus for the upcoming academic year? (4) What is the expected time for submitting the completed draft of the dissertation? (5) What are the difficulties (if any) encountered by the student?
 - b. The content of points (2) and (3) should be confirmed by the Moderator via email (sent by the Moderator to the Dean’s office, at the request of the student).
 - c. If this requirement is not met, CPD is convoked to decide whether the student can continue in the STD program (see section V below).

(B) Students in this cycle who completed the two-year licentiate program in the Faculty of Theology at PUST are required to:

1. Register for the doctoral seminar and receive the grade of minimum 8,5/10 to continue in the program. If the candidate wishes to change their area of specialization, a special study program will be established by the Vice Dean.
2. Present their dissertation proposal and have it approved no later than 2 semesters from their enrolment to the STD program. Exception can be made (1) for students who have to take the doctoral seminar in the second semester after the enrolment, and (2) for students who are required to take any additional courses. In those cases, the deadline is extended to 3

semesters. If the requirement stated in this point is not met, CPD is convoked to decide whether the student can continue in the STD program (see section V below).

3. After the STD student has had their dissertation proposal approved, the student is obliged to accomplish at least one of the following tasks: (1) write one research paper and have it accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal in their field of study; (2) participate in the doctoral “Laboratory” for at least one year and make at least one presentation in it; (3) fulfill an equivalent of (1), or (2), approved by their advisor (in communication with the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program). If this requirement is not met, CPD is convoked to decide whether the student can continue in the STD program (see section V below).
4. Continuing STD students need to submit at least one chapter of their dissertation before the end of the second year of their work (after the approval of their proposal). The draft needs to be accepted by the Moderator. If this requirement is not met, CPD is convoked to decide whether the student can continue in the STD program (see section V below).
5. The STD program requires in presence participation in the doctoral seminar (one semester). The program envisions 2 years of the regular status of an STD student at PUST, followed by up to 5 years of the status “fuori corso.” Any extension of this limit needs to be approved in writing by the Dean of the Faculty and requires developing and submitting a new dissertation proposal.
6. Continuing students who have the status “fuori corso” are obliged to send to the Secretary of the Faculty a report at the end of each academic year (before July 1).
 - a. The report should provide answers to the following questions: (1) What is the progress of the dissertation since the last report? (2) Is the student in touch with the Moderator? How many times did they meet (in person, online) over the last academic year? (3) What are the plans/prospectus for the upcoming academic year? (4) What is the expected time for submitting the completed draft of the dissertation? (5) What are the difficulties (if any) encountered by the student?
 - b. The content of points (2) and (3) should be confirmed by the Moderator via email (sent by the Moderator to the Dean’s office, at the request of the student).
 - c. If this requirement is not met, CPD is convoked to decide whether the student can continue in the STD program (see section V below).

III. SELECTION OF MODERATOR AND SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL

1. The preliminary suggestion concerning the area of research, tentative project, and possible moderator – specified during the admission process – is further verified during the first semester of the STD program. If the student needs assistance finding a moderator, he/she must contact the Head of the Section. Once the professor has agreed to serve as the student’s moderator, both the Moderator and the student must both sign a written document (provided by the Dean’s Office), which is then delivered to the Secretary of the Faculty and needs to be approved by the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program.
2. Doctoral Students are required to work with a Moderator from their specialization (i.e., their section—Morals, Spirituality, etc.) who is a professor at PUST (the professor must have the rank of *Incaricato* or higher).
3. Exceptions from III.2 must be approved by the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program. The procedure includes:
 - a. In case of a PUST professor that does not have a rank *Incaricato* – an official written request sent to the Vice Dean from the student.
 - b. In case of the professor from a different section – an official written request sent to

the Vice Dean from the student. The request must be signed also by the Heads of the sections (the one student belongs to and the one the prospective Moderator belongs to).

- c. In case of an external moderator – an official written request sent to the Vice Dean from the student and an official letter from the prospective moderator in which he/she (i) accepts the proposal, (ii) specifies the method of work (the form and frequency of meetings with the student), and (iii) consents to the requirement of the personal presence at the defense of the dissertation (PUST does not cover the traveling costs for external moderators).
4. The student may write his/her dissertation proposal and the dissertation in Italian or in English. Other languages are allowed only with the permission of the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program who must ensure that there are Professors on the Faculty who could serve as Censors. A formal letter of request is required.
 5. The Moderator guides the student in the development of a proposal which follows STD Proposal Guidelines (stated in a separate document) and includes the following:
 - a. Written text (@ 7-10 pages) that includes (1) the tentative title, (2) *status quaestionis*, (3) thesis statement, (4) indications of originality, (5) methodology, (6) statement of the plan of the development of the argument.
 - b. Bibliography, demonstrating knowledge of primary sources in the original language as well as secondary sources.
 - c. Tentative schema indicating proposed parts, chapters, sections, and subsections.
 6. The student may begin to work on a proposal as soon as he/she has the agreement of a Moderator concerning the topic, but the proposal cannot be submitted until the student has successfully completed the Doctoral Seminar and any other courses / seminars required for their program of studies (see II.A.1-2-3 / II.B.1 above).
 7. Once the Moderator approves the proposal, the student submits (a) a hard copy and a PDF copy to the secretary of the Faculty, with (b) the appropriate proposal form (provided by the Dean's Office) completed by the student and signed by the Moderator, and (c) a signed dissertation proposal Plagiarism and AI Disclaimer (provided by the Dean's Office).

IV. EVALUATION AND APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSAL

1. The Dean's Office checks the proposal for plagiarism and the use of AI, using the software currently approved by the University. If any significant part of a Doctoral Proposal is found to be plagiarized, the proposal will be rejected with no possibility to submit another proposal in the same Faculty. This decision will be communicated to the Moderator and to the student by the Dean.

(A significant part of a proposal is more than three sentences, including partial sentences that constitute different portions of an outline.)
2. The proposal must be approved by the Proposal Commission¹ composed of (1) the Moderator of the dissertation, (2) the Head of the Section (or a Professor designated by the Head of the Section), and (3) the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program (or a Professor designated by the Vice Dean). If the Vice Dean or Head of the Section is the Moderator, the Dean will nominate a Professor from the appropriate section.

¹ Regolamento per il Dottorato, approvato dal Senato Accademico il 3/5/1994, n. 1.

3. The regular procedure of the proposal evaluation is as follows: (1) The proposal accepted by the Moderator is sent to the Head of the Section who either serves as censor or assigns a censor from his/her section; (2) After the first censor's approval, the proposal is sent to the Vice Dean who either serves as the second censor or assigns another professor from the Faculty to evaluate the proposal; (3) The proposal needs to be approved by all three professors (Moderator and both censors).
4. Each member of the Proposal Commission is responsible for ensuring that the proposal includes the points noted in III.5 above. They have 2 weeks to submit their opinion, using the STD Proposal Evaluation Form (provided by the Dean's Office).
5. Each member of the Proposal Commission either approves the proposal indicated by a signature on the appropriate form, *or* disapproves the proposal with written comments submitted to Secretary of the Faculty.
6. At all stages of the evaluation process the Dean's Office communicates the results to the Moderator (who in turn communicates them to the student) and to other members of the Proposal Commission.
7. If – at any stage of the process – the proposal is rejected twice, the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program may ask Dean to convoke CPD to decide whether the student should be notified that he/she cannot continue with a doctorate at PUST, or whether there is sufficient reason to allow the student to submit the proposal a third and last time.
8. In addition, being responsible for the quality of the doctoral projects, the Vice Dean may convoke the meeting of the Proposal Commission at any stage of the process. The Proposal Commission may prepare an opinion on the quality of the Student's proposal that is shared with Dean of the Faculty.
9. Once the proposal is accepted by the Proposal Commission, the student proceeds to work with the Moderator on the dissertation, following the rules concerning formatting and length.

V. COMMISSIONE PER IL DOTTORATO (CPD)

1. The CPD is composed of (1) the Dean, (2) the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program, (3) the Professor who directed the Doctoral Seminar attended by the student (if the professor still teaches at PUST and can attend the meeting), (4) the Head of the Section to which the student belongs, and (5) the Moderator of the dissertation. At the invitation of the Dean, any other Professor of the Faculty may also take part.
2. The CPD is convoked by the Dean, (a) on his/her initiative or at the request of the Vice Dean responsible for the STD program, (b) at the request of the Professor overseeing the Doctoral Seminar, or (c) at the request of the Moderator – whenever there is a reasonable doubt as to (1) the effective capacity of the student to complete the Doctorate or (2) the effectiveness of the procedures applied in the verification of the quality of student's work.
3. The CPD can be convoked in the following situations: (a) student's failure in presenting a proposal and having it accepted within the time limits specified in II.A.4 and II.B.2; (b) two failed attempts at an STD dissertation proposal; (c) student's failure to provide a chapter of the STD dissertation within two years after the dissertation proposal was accepted; (d) student's failure to fulfill the requirement specified in II.A.5 or II.B.3; (e) continuing student's ("fuori corso") failure to submit an annual report.
4. In evaluating whether the student should be permitted to continue the Doctoral program, the CPD must consider the following elements:
 - a. The student's capacity for scientific work;
 - b. Autonomy in pursuing scientific work related to STD dissertation;
 - c. Orthodoxy;

- d. Sufficient knowledge of languages (classic or modern) necessary for accomplishing the project of STD dissertation. If there exist any doubt of the effective linguistic competency of the student, the Dean may ask the student to undergo a language test(s).

VI. SUBMISSION OF THE FIRST DRAFT OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Once accepted, the topic and the plan of the doctoral dissertation should not be changed. Any exception requires the approval of the Vice Dean responsible for STD.
2. Once the dissertation is completed and has received the Moderator's approval, the student should present (a) a complete draft (one hard copy and a PDF file), with (b) a signed Dissertation Plagiarism and AI Disclaimer to the Dean's Office.
3. The Dean's Office checks the submitted draft for plagiarism and the use of AI, using the software currently approved by the University. If any significant part of the document is found to be plagiarized, the entire dissertation will be rejected, with no possibility to submit another dissertation in the same Faculty. This decision will be communicated to the Moderator and the student by the Dean. (A significant part of a dissertation is more than three paragraphs.)
4. The Dean's council (Dean and two Vice Deans) designates the Censor to examine the doctoral dissertation prior to the definitive draft of the text, in consultation with the Moderator and the Head of the Section, recognizing that the principal responsibility rests with the Moderator.
5. The Censor has one month (Easter, Christmas, and summer breaks are not included) to read the dissertation and to provide a statement of approval or rejection (with rationale) to the Dean's Office. For that purpose, the Censor should use the STD Dissertation Evaluation Form (provided by the Dean's Office).
6. If the Censor requests changes prior to acceptance, these are communicated to the Moderator who in turn communicates the results to the student. The Moderator may put the student in direct contact with the Censor if he/she thinks this is in the best interests of the student.
7. The student must make the necessary changes and resubmit the text for the approval of both Moderator and Censor. They in turn communicate in writing to the Dean's Office as to approval or rejection.

VII. SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Once the first (or the second) draft of the dissertation is accepted by both the Moderator and the Censor, the student prepares the final draft, following the norms concerning formatting provided by the Faculty/University.
2. The student asks the Moderator and Censor to sign modulo "Approvazione Tesi di Dottorato" requesting the defense. The student presents (1) modulo "Domanda Esame di Dottorato" (permission from superior/bishop), (2) modulo "Approvazione Tesi di Dottorato", (3) three bound copies and a PDF copy of the approved draft, and (4) one printed copy and a pdf copy of the abstract of the dissertation (500-600 words) and the table of contents, to the Dean's Office (the abstract and the table of contents will be made public). At least two weeks are required for scheduling the defense.
3. The PUST policy on the payment of the "fuori corso" fee for students enrolled in the third cycle (Doctorate) states that the student does not have to pay the fee if he has delivered the final version of the dissertation by 28 February for the first semester and by 31 July for the second semester, regardless of the date of defense. By "final version" we mean the version approved by the moderator and censor, which is ready for the doctoral defense. Together with the dissertation, the student needs to submit the appropriate form (provided by the Dean's Office).

VIII. DOCTORAL DEFENSE

1. The Doctoral Commission is composed of the Moderator, the Censor, and the President.
2. The Defense lasts from 60-90 minutes and is composed of:
 - a. Presentation: by the student (20 minutes) (the student can use power point);
 - b. Questions/Comments by Moderator (20 minutes), then questions/comments by the Censor (20 min.), then questions/comments by the President if he/she wishes;
 - c. The President may open the floor to the audience;
 - d. The Commission leaves to deliberate as to the grade;
 - e. The Commission returns and the President announces whether the student has passed;
 - f. The President informs the student that they will not receive the doctorate until *after* publication. The student is told to schedule an appointment with the Secretary-General within three working days to receive indications for publishing and to learn about the grade for his/her doctoral defense.

IX. GRADE AND CONCLUDING STEPS

1. The Moderator and Censor assign the grade for the dissertation: 10 points each (20 total).
2. The Moderator, Censor, and President assign the grade for the defense: 10 points each (30 total).
3. Any *required* changes or restrictions as to publication are written on the back of *both copies* of the dissertation grade sheet and signed by the President.
4. At the end of the defense the Moderator and Censor provide a signed written statement for the President (1-2 pages), justifying the grade.

IX. PUBLISHING

1. The Secretary General directs the student as to the requirements for publication.
2. All modifications and subsequent corrections are overseen by the Secretary General of the University, who submits a draft to the Moderator (and Censor if changes were required) for approval, prior to pursuing the publication of the dissertation.