DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

IN

PASTORAL COUNSELING

(Th. D)

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Advanced Degree program offered by the Atlanta Theological Association

Candler School of Theology
Columbia Theological Seminary
The Interdenominational Theological Center

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DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY IN PASTORAL COUNSELING  
(Th.D)

This handbook is intended to aid students and faculty involved in the Doctor of Theology in Pastoral Counseling program of the Atlanta Theological Association (A.T.A.), whether they are registered through the Candler School of Theology, Columbia Theological Seminary or the Interdenominational Theological Center. Further information pertaining to the regulations of each participating School is available through the catalogs and Student Handbooks of each School.

PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

The purpose of the degree of Doctor of Theology in Pastoral Counseling is to prepare persons for the specialized ministry of pastoral counseling at the doctoral level of competence by combining rigorous academic and theological work with supervised clinical practice. The degree is equivalent to the Ph.D. and is designed for those whose interest in pastoral counseling is primarily professional. The supervision in pastoral counseling, which is an integral part of the degree program, is provided according to the standards of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (A.A.P.C.). It may therefore be used to meet the supervisory hour’s requirement for A.A.P.C. membership.

REGISTRATION

Participation in the Th.D. program begins with registration for the first courses to be taken. These are, normally, the core seminar sequence and the pastoral counseling practicum. Registration for these courses as well as for each succeeding component of the program is the responsibility of the student, and it must be accomplished according to instructions issued by the school in which the student is registered. The curriculum is designed so that at least 1/3 of the student’s total coursework is taken through the student’s school of enrollment.

Th.D. students have access to ThD and advanced Master’s level courses in any of the A.T.A. member institutions through a cross-registration procedure, which can be explained at the time of registration by the registrar or advanced studies office of the school through which the student registers. Registration procedures of Candler, Columbia, and I.T.C. differ from one another, and each student must be careful to follow the instruction of his/her "home" registrar upon each occasion for registration. Normally, course registration follows consultation with the student's advisor, who is assigned upon admission from the faculty of the school in which the student in enrolled.

Although students are expected to make primary use of the library of their school of registration, the Inter-Library Use Card, issued by the reference librarian of the student's school of registration will admit students to the libraries at Candler, Columbia and I.T.C.
All Th.D. students must be continuously registered in each semester of the academic year, excluding summer (with the exception of the first year summer practicum), beginning at their point of entry and continuing to the completion of their programs. Students who have completed all coursework should register for ATA 497 (Comprehensive Examinations) or ATA 499 (Dissertation), described below. Failure to maintain continuous registration will result in the student's automatic suspension from the Th.D. program. Reinstatement as a student may be granted by the Th.D. Committee upon request from the student and at the recommendation of his/her advisor and with the approval of the Dean or other designated authority of the student's school of enrollment.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Students whose life circumstances require a leave of absence from the Th.D. program for a semester or an academic year should petition the Th.D. Committee in writing prior to November 1st for a leave beginning in the Spring semester or April 1st for a leave beginning in the Fall semester.

**SUMMER ENROLLMENT**

Except for the enrollment in the pastoral counseling practicum at the end of the first year, which is required in order to maintain continuity in supervision and responsibility to the student's clients, and the required course on Ethics (offered every other summer), registration for courses taught in the summer term is optional. The first year summer practicum is a three credit hour requirement fees for which are paid directly to the training center. Seminary faculty members are not normally or routinely available for advising or conducting exams during the summer, although individual arrangements can be requested and accommodated according to faculty willingness and availability.

**FEES, Housing and Student services**

All fees, other than the application fee and fees for the summer practicum are paid to the student's school of registration and not directly to the A.T.A. Matters concerning housing, finances, and other student services are also handled directly by the student's school of registration.

**PROGRAM PROCEDURES**

(a) Advising
When a student is admitted to the Th.D. program, a pastoral counseling faculty member of the school in which the student is enrolled will be assigned as the student's initial academic advisor. The advisor will assist the student in planning his/her program of studies. The student's primary link with the school in which he/she is enrolled is the advisor. The student is required to consult the advisor at least once each semester for approval of course selection and to discuss progress in the program, any questions or difficulties the student has with the program and his/her anticipations and plans for continuation and completion of the program.

The advisor will serve in a consultative manner throughout the student's time in the program, giving help regarding course selection, scheduling, and progress along the way—normally in response to the student's initiative. He or she will be invited to participate in practicum evaluation sessions and to confer, as needed, with the practicum faculty concerning the student's progress. The advisor is not expected to seek the student out to check on progress or to initiate meetings or conferences. Rather, the student is expected to initiate conferences with the advisor or Th.D. Director, as such conferences may be needed.

Following completion of the first two semesters of study but before the student makes plans for the qualifying examinations; the student will secure a final academic advisor. The final advisor should be one whose interests and competencies are in the area of the student's intended dissertation research. This person, who may or may not be the same person as the initial, temporary advisor will assume all advisory functions for the student. In selecting his/her final advisor, the student should consult with the Th.D. Program Director and the Advanced Studies Director of the school in which he or she is enrolled. When the chosen faculty member has agreed to serve, the student shall report the faculty person's acceptance on the appropriate form to the Th.D. Program Director and the Director of Advanced Studies of the school in which the student is enrolled.

Students should be aware that most faculty members work on nine or ten month contracts and may not be available for consultation during two or three of the summer months, and/or during sabbatical leave. The student should be careful to arrive at a clear understanding with his/her advisor regarding such circumstances.

The student's advisor serves as chair of the student's advisory committee and presides over the process of formulating, administering, and evaluating both the academic and clinical parts of the qualifying Examination, the design and execution of the student's research, and the writing of the dissertation.

(b) The Advisory Committee

The advisory committee consists of three persons, two of whom are ordinarily from the school in which the student is enrolled. The student's advisor serves as the committee chairperson. Where possible, a third member of the committee will be
selected from the faculties of one of the A.T.A. schools other than that in which the student is enrolled. In addition to these regular committee members, with the approval of the chair of the advisory committee, the student may invite other persons to serve as consultants to the student's research in order to give attention to certain perspectives not well represented by the expertise of the regular committee members. Consultants must agree to serve without financial remuneration, except in instances where the student is able and willing to provide such remuneration.

The advisory committee is recommended by the student in consultation with her/his advisor and approved by the chair of the advisory committee. When committee members from non-ATA schools are used, approval of the Th.D. committee is required. The advisory committee must be selected and approved before preparation may be made for the field examinations. The advisory committee is responsible for preparing the examinations for the student. The advisor will inform the Th.D. committee when the qualifying examinations have been satisfactorily completed, or the advisory committee will make other appropriate recommendation when they have not been satisfactorily completed.

(c) Grading

Students must complete the overall program of study with an average grade of "B" or better. A grade below B- in any of the core courses of the program will be a signal to the Th.D. committee to review and take action with respect to the student’s continuance in the program. When assigned work is not completed during the prescribed period, a grade of "incomplete" may be given by the professor. The procedure of the school where the course is taught will be followed in removing the incomplete grade from the student's record. The grades of "S" for satisfactory and "U" for unsatisfactory work are used in evaluating the concluding doctoral dissertation.

(d) Transfer of Credit

In planning the student’s program with her/his adviser or ThD program director, a student may request credit for work done prior to entry under the following guidelines:
Credit for prior academic and/or clinical training must be approved by the ThD Committee, in conversation office of academic affairs at Columbia. All transfer credit must have been done at a PhD or ThD level and a grade of B or better must have been given for the prior coursework. The student must be able to show that the work is relevant to the ThD program. **The course work normally can be no older than five years old.** No more than 12 credit hours may be transferred from either an earned degree or from other course work. All classroom work transferred in will be counted as elective credit. In the case of clinical practicum work, a student may receive advanced standing with credit for practicum work that was done in conjunction with licensure, clinical work for another degree, or prior enrollment at the Care and Counseling Center of Georgia’s practicum program. No more than 8 credit hours will be awarded for this work and will be credited toward the basic practicum requirement. The student would be enrolled for the remaining 9 hours of practicum work at the advanced residency level.

- Credit for work done after entry into the program at schools and agencies not related to the ATA may be transferred to fulfill requirements for the ThD degree under the following guidelines:
  - Prior to registration for a course for which credit is to be transferred, the student must have written permission of his/her adviser or the ThD program director and the office of academic affairs at the student’s school of enrollment.
  - The student pays his/her own fees to the school where such work is done at institutions not related to the ATA. The number of credits to be allowed within this limitation is, in each instance, subject to the approval of the respective ATA school.
- A limit of 12 semester hours is placed upon any work done at institutions not related to the ATA whether earned prior to enrollment or during enrollment in the program. All work transferred in will be credited as elective courses.

### (e) Guidelines for Progress in the Program

There is a time limit of nine years for completion of the Th.D. program. It is theoretically possible to complete the program within four years if a student can devote full-time to it. Due to other demands upon their time, however, most students complete the program in four to six years. During the first two years the minimum registration for each semester is for one full-time core course, a year-long clinical theory course (ATA473a & b Theory & Practice in the first year, and ATA484a & b Intercultural Competence in the second year), and the pastoral counseling practicum, unless granted an exception by the Th.D. Committee. The normal sequencing of the ThD courses to be offered is shown in Appendix A.

The following represent the expected benchmarks of a student's progress through the Th.D. program:

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1 Updated at the May 14, 2010 meeting of the ThD Committee.
Students must complete their Performance Exam at the end of their 2nd year in the program (normally to coincide with conclusion of coursework).

- Comprehensive exams must be completed within 2 years of completion of coursework.
- Upon successful completion of all coursework, performance exam, and comprehensive exams (written and oral), a student is advanced to Candidacy in the ThD program.
- It is recommended that the dissertation proposal be completed within 2 years of completing comprehensive exams.
- The entire ThD program must be completed by the end of 9 years from initial enrollment (consistent with Emory’s PhD program.)
- Students must enroll in either ATA 497 (ThD Comprehensive Exams) or ATA 499 (ThD Dissertation Research) every semester following the completion of their first 2 years of coursework.
- To remain in good standing in the program, every student must write an annual report of his/her progress, to be submitted to the ThD Director and his/her Advisor on April 1. These reports will be reviewed as part of the ThD Committee’s Annual Review of Students in April. (This can be completed by filling in the relevant portions of the Form “ThD Plan of Study,” Appendix B.

Any exceptions to the above benchmarks require that the student petition in writing (to the ThD Director(s) and his/her Advisor) for an extension.

An extension of one year for completion of the program may be granted when, in the judgment of the student's advisor and the Th.D. committee, unavoidable circumstances have impeded the student's progress and there is a realistic and likely prospect of completing the degree within the additional year. Students must have completed a satisfactory first draft of a significant portion of their dissertation in order to be considered for an extension of the program deadline.

Students whose progress in the degree program is reviewed by the Th.D. committee and found to be unsatisfactory according to the minimum expectations noted above, with the concurrence of the student's advisor and the Th.D. director, may be recommended for termination to the Dean and/or other designated authorities at the school in which they are enrolled. The student’s school of enrollment will make the final decision on the termination of any student. When progress is not satisfactory but termination is not immediately recommended, the student must, upon recommendation of the advisor, secure from the Th.D. committee approval of a plan for remedial work sufficient to meet the minimum expectations stipulated for the following year.

**COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM**

**Fifty-one (50) semester hours** of academic and clinical work are required for the Doctor of Theology degree. There are **seven (7) basic components** to the program:
1. **Seven Core Seminars**, carrying a total of 21 semester hours of credit, plus a non-credit requirement to attend Fall and Spring Colloquia, as offered.

2. **Pastoral Counseling Practicum**, carrying a total of 17 semester hours of credit.

3. **Elective courses** totaling a minimum of 12 semester hours of credit

4. **A clinical practice exam (normally at the end of the second year)**

5. Comprehensive (field) examinations, including 5 written exams and an oral exam with the student’s Advisory Committee. While a student is preparing for and completing these exams, s/he is enrolled in ATA 497 Comprehensive Examination (a non-credit degree requirement), and is considered to be a full-time student.

6. ThD Dissertation proposal, with oral defense. While a student is preparing for and completing the dissertation proposal and dissertation research, s/he is enrolled in ATA 499 ThD Dissertation (a non-credit degree requirement), and is considered to be a full-time student. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is expected as part of the proposal review process and must be completed prior to the student conducting any dissertation research.

7. ThD Dissertation completed, with oral defense.

**PROGRAM OF STUDIES**

The normal sequencing of required, elective, and practicum courses is outlined in Appendix A. The program of studies is intended to assist the student:

- To gain an advanced understanding of theological and theoretical concepts appropriate to pastoral counseling as a specialized form of ministry;

- To learn under qualified supervision the practice of these concepts in pastoral counseling

- To promote professional integration of theory and practice;

- To design and execute a research dissertation appropriate to his/her professional practice, which will give evidence of his/her creative ability to contribute to his/her practice of pastoral counseling, and provide knowledge or understanding useful to the field of pastoral counseling in general.
(a) Core Courses

The core courses provide a foundational study of psychological and theological understandings of the human person and processes of counseling. They are intended to provide a method and direction for study in the major areas of the field (comprehensive) examinations.

Ordinarily, the courses are offered on one day a week in three-hour sessions. Although the scheduling of courses can often be on the same days as the pastoral counseling practicum, this is not always possible. Each student’s participation in the class sessions, as well as final papers, will be assessed in determining the grade. A letter grade will be assigned.

(b) The Practicum

The Pastoral Counseling Practicum is designed to offer the student supervised experience in the practice of pastoral counseling and a basic theoretical understanding of the specialized ministry of pastoral counseling. The practicum involves both experiential and didactic learning. The student receives both individual and group supervision on a weekly basis as well as the experience of participation and presentation in an interdisciplinary staff conference. Essentially there are three elements to the Practicum as follows:

**Individual Supervision**  (One credit hour per semester)
**Group Supervision**  (One credit hour per semester)
**Case Conference**  (1.5 credit hours per semester).

The Summer Practicum is a three credit hour required practicum course taken in the summer between the first and second years of the program.

Clients are assigned to a student on the basis of his/her readiness and the needs of the particular counselee. An effort is made to provide the student with a variety of counseling experiences during the four-semester sequence. In most cases, this includes work with individuals, couples, and some opportunity for co-leadership of group counseling and family counseling. Students are given letter grades for their work in the practicum. Criteria-Based Assessment for Basic Residents including Training Competencies and Performance Standards is included as Appendix C.

(c.) Elective courses
The 12 semester hours of elective courses are designed to enable the student to deepen his/her theological education to doctoral level competence. Elective courses should be selected in consultation with the student's advisor.

With the exception of occasional seminars scheduled in the summer, tuition for courses taken at A.T.A. schools other than the one in which the student is enrolled is paid directly to the student's own school. If a particular course needed for a student's projected program is not available in any of the A.T.A. schools, or to assist a student who lives at some distance from Atlanta, permission may be given to enroll in a class offered at the graduate level by a college or seminary which is not a part of the A.T.A. consortium. An alternative to taking class work at another institution is registering for directed study with one of the A.T.A. faculty members. Faculty time available for directed study courses is quite limited and such work is possible only with those faculty members with whom the student has had previous course work or with those who have a particular interest in an area in which the student proposes to be engaged.

(d.) Non-ThD Students

Non-ThD students may occasionally be permitted to enroll in doctoral-level courses, by permission of the instructor. In no case may the ratio of non-ThD students exceed 20% of total enrollment in a course.

Qualifying Examinations

(a) Clinical Practice (Performance) Examination

The Clinical Practice (also known as ‘Performance’) examination is normally scheduled to take place during the student’s fourth semester in the program. The Examination consists of FOUR (4) areas as follows:-

I. (A) The submission of a complete clinical write-up of a counselee seen during Basic Residency or under approved supervisory circumstances. The write-up, including the genogram, must be a minimum of ten and no longer than fifteen pages. The presentation should use an enhanced case conference style that includes but may not be limited to:
   (a) Identifying Information  
   (b) Presenting Problem  
   (c) Personal History –  
      i. Family/Social  (Include a genogram)  
      ii. Educational  
      iii. Vocational  
      iv. Medical and Psychiatric  
      v. Religious  
      vi. Cultural
(d) MSE (mental status exam)
(e) DSM Axis Diagnosis
(f) Treatment Plan
(g) Analysis of Transference and Countertransference
(h) Reflection upon issues of ‘Powers and Principalities’
(i) Pastoral and Clinical Assessment and Discussion.

(B) The review of a tape recording of a counseling session with the presented counselee. Students will come to their Exam prepared to play a portion of tape that demonstrates a representative sample of their best therapeutic work. This tape is not presented to the committee until the time of the Exam.

II. A written response to a supervisory generated question drawing upon the clinical criteria and competencies used throughout the 21 months of Basic Residency.

III. A written response to a committee generated question that will ask the student to integrate and apply specific theological and psychological theories to their clinical work. The question may also draw from recognized research interests of the student.

IV. The oral presentation of the student before the committee at the scheduled time of the exam including responses to questions posed by members of the examining panel.

Instructions for preparation and conduct of the ‘Performance’ Examination

1. The time for the performance Exam is scheduled by the student in consultation with their academic advisor and with two clinical supervisors who know the student’s work at the Counseling training center.
2. The student ensures through coordination with the front desk at the Counseling center that room space is available at the time required.
3. The Student’s Academic Advisor shall chair the Examination.
4. Six (6) weeks before the date of the Exam, the student shall submit to their Academic Advisor a one-page clinical bibliography that notes key psychological theorists who inform their counseling work together with select texts referencing a key theologian or theological perspective that enlightens their clinical pastoral understanding.
5. Four (4) weeks before the date of the Exam the student will receive TWO questions to respond to. The response to each question must be a minimum of eight and no longer than ten pages, double spaced with standard margins. These responses are in addition to the complete clinical write-up of the
counselee referred to above. The questions to be answered shall be emailed to
the student by 9:00 am on the designated day.

6. **One (1) week** before the Exam, the student shall submit written responses to
the questions along with the clinical case write-up, to their examining panel.
These written materials are due by 5:00 pm on the designated day.

7. **On the day** of the Exam the student attends the exam with personal copies of
all written material. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the tape
(whether audio or video) which she or he shall use to play a portion of their
clinical work with the designated client, can be easily heard and understood
by the examining panel.

**Grading of the Performance Examination**

3 options exist for Grades on the Performance Exam as follows:

1. **PASS.** For this option to be assigned all work submitted in written or oral form
during the examination is assessed at B+ level or above.

2. **PROVISIONAL PASS.** For this option to be assigned TWO of the THREE
written areas of the Examination are assessed at B+ level or above. The oral
presentation is also considered adequate. Students may rewrite the question that
is not at a passing level. No additional oral examination is required unless it is the
clinical write-up that needs to be resubmitted. In such cases, students may be
asked to schedule a second oral examination and to present a second taped
session of their clinical work. The scheduling of any such additional work is at
the discretion of the examining panel.

3. **FAIL.** This option is assigned when there is failure in two or more of the written
assignments and inadequacy in the oral presentation. Basic clinical competencies
are not demonstrated. In such cases, students may petition the ThD committee
and the clinical supervisory faculty to be admitted to an additional term or terms
of the Basic residency. The decision of the ThD Committee on such matters shall
be final.

**Comprehensive (Field) Examinations**

Comprehensive (field) examinations occur after the completion of all course work and
after successful passing of the clinical practice exam. The "passing" of these
examinations admits the student to candidacy status and officially qualifies him/her
to work on the doctoral dissertation.

The content areas in which the student shall be examined include:
a. **Personal and Interpersonal Dimensions of Pastoral Counseling**

   **Exam 1.** Therapeutic relationship and process in relation to personality, developmental theories, psychopathology, and the psychological understanding of religion.

   **Exam 2.** Marriage and family theory and therapy plus one of the following: (1) social psychological understandings of therapeutic process, (2) theory of group process and leadership, (3) theory and practice of pastoral consultation and supervision.

   **Exam 3.** Pastoral theological methodology, theological anthropology and related theological issues, and the relation of theology to the human sciences.

b. **Sociocultural Dimensions of Pastoral Counseling**

   **Exam 4.** Pastoral counseling as a profession in relation to other professions; its relation to class, race, and gender; its relation to contemporary family, work, and religion; its participation in the larger cultural and religious traditions understood through such disciplines as cultural anthropology, cultural criticism, and feminist theory.

c. **Ecclesiological and Ethical Dimension of Pastoral Counseling**

   **Exam 5.** Pastoral counseling as a specialized form of the church's ministry in relation to: (1) the history of pastoral care and counseling, (2) theological understandings of the church and its mission (ecclesiology), (3) ethical dimensions of pastoral counseling as a professional practice.

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**(c) Procedures for Comprehensive Field Examinations**

Four of the five field examinations shall be taken by the student during a two-week period at times designated by the student in consultation with her/his advisor. The other exam is both written and oral. The student chooses a topic that falls within the subject matter of exam areas 3, 4, or 5, and writes a paper of 15-20 doubled-spaced pages upon which she/he will be examined. Prior to the beginning of the first written exam on the other four areas, the student will provide the examining committee with a full draft of the paper which is to be the focus of the oral exam. The oral exam may also include questions from the committee about other exam areas in which there were deficiencies. In addition to
the advisory committee, the examining committee must include at least one of the student's former counseling supervisors.

All of the pastoral care faculty members of the Atlanta A.T.A. schools and members of the Th.D. committee will be invited to participate in the oral exam and to be voting members of the examining committee. Students in the Th.D. program and consultants may also be invited to the exam, but will not have a vote. Other faculty invited to the exam and Th.D. students will, at the same time, be provided with a one-page abstract of the paper.

Students normally write their exams on a computer (which may be their own) at an appropriate place of their own choosing (which may be their own home), within the time period arranged in advance with the student’s examining committee. The exams are “closed book,” meaning that students may not consult other persons or notes of any kind during the writing and revising of their manuscripts, including electronic notes on computer disks, hard drives, CD’s, or tapes. Students for whom English is the first language have a total of eight (8) hours in which to prepare their exams. Students whose first language is other than English may consult their chairperson about the possibility of arranging extra time, though in no instance may the total allotted time exceed ten (10) hours. Students are encouraged to take time for meals and breaks within the allotted time. A rule of thumb is that the time devoted to the writing of a first draft, including time for thinking and planning, should be about six (6) hours. The final version must be carefully written, proofread, and printed in Times New Roman or similar standard typeface, using double spacing, standard one-inch margins, and 12-point type.

Exam questions will normally be emailed to students (as attachments) at the hour arranged for each exam. At the end of the specified period, students may submit their proofread answers, together with a copy of the questions, either by email attachment to their chairperson, or by hard copy. The normal procedure is the use of email attachments. However, if a student submits hard copies, he or she should provide the chairperson with enough copies for each member of the examining committee, and should submit them at a place and by an hour arranged in advance with the chairperson, usually within an hour of the official end of the examining period, subject to negotiation with the chairperson in view of particular circumstances.

Responsibility for seeing that questions are emailed to the student at the time arranged for the exam and for monitoring the timely arrival of the student’s answers lies with the examining committee’s chairperson. In the exceptional event that questions are either not emailed or not opened at the designated time, the eight-hour time frame will commence from the hour that the student opens them. If the student has a lengthy delay in opening the attachment for any reason, he or she will promptly inform the chairperson. The chairperson and each
member of the examining committee will be responsible for individually downloading examinations submitted in the form of email attachments.

Members of the student's committee may ask for consultation from other faculty members or other qualified persons in evaluating the student's exam. After consultation among the members of the student's committee with respect to their evaluations of the student's examinations, the student's advisor will inform the Th.D. student as to his/her success or failure on the various exams and provide information about specific strengths and weaknesses in the exams.

In the event that one or more of the five field examinations are not satisfactorily passed while the remaining field exams are satisfactory, the student may be permitted to retake the unsatisfactory field exams upon recommendation of the student's advisory committee and approval of the Th.D. committee.

The Research Project and Dissertation

(a) The Dissertation Committee

The Dissertation Advisor and Committee need not be faculty members of the student’s school of enrollment, but normally at least one member of the Committee is on the faculty of the student’s school of enrollment.

After the examinations have been successfully completed a student may begin working on a dissertation proposal. At this time, the student may continue with the same Advisor and Advisory Committee, which then becomes the Dissertation Committee, or the student may petition the ThD Committee for a new Advisor and
Dissertation Committee, based upon the areas of expertise of the faculty and the student’s proposed research topic. Like the advisory committee, the dissertation committee consists of three persons, at least one of whom is ordinarily from the school in which the student is enrolled. The dissertation advisor serves as the committee chairperson. Where possible, a third member of the committee will be selected from the faculties of one of the A.T.A. schools other than that in which the student is enrolled. In addition to these regular committee members, with the approval of the dissertation advisor, the student may invite other persons to serve as consultants to the student’s research and/or additional readers on the student’s dissertation committee in order to give attention to certain perspectives not well represented by the expertise of the regular committee members. When faculty from non-ATA schools are used as external readers/committee members, approval of the full Th.D. committee is required. Consultants and external readers must agree to serve without financial remuneration, except in instances where the student is able and willing to provide such remuneration. The dissertation committee must be selected and approved before the student can begin working on the dissertation proposal.

(b) The Dissertation Proposal

After the examinations have been successfully completed a student may begin working on a dissertation proposal. The dissertation proposal is developed in consultation with the student’s Dissertation Advisor, and members of the student’s Dissertation Committee.

The dissertation proposal is a proposed plan for the dissertation. It should outline the student’s plan to meet the requirements of the dissertation.

The content of the proposal shall include the following:-

1. The Research Problem and Question being addressed.
   (a) A one-paragraph statement of the issues addressed or area of inquiry and principal research question. (For quantitative and mixed methods research, this should include a hypothesis/es; for qualitative research there should be a clear, concise research question.)
   (b) i. Statement of the problem: a concise and clear description of the issue, problem or question being researched. (2-4 paragraphs)
      ii. The significance of the problem and why the author is concerned with it. (2 pages approx.)
      iii. Background or Description of the problem providing information needed to understand the scope or dimensions of the problem.

2. Literature Review
This section should be a comprehensive review of previously published scholarship addressing the research problem, as well as the gaps and limits of this literature to adequately address the problem:

(i) Theological literature: This section should provide a brief overview of the theological literature the student intends to undergird the examination of the research problem. The purpose of this section is to show how the proposed dissertation will make an original contribution to or extend the scholarly discussion within the field of pastoral theology.

(ii) Clinical and theoretical literature: This section should provide a brief overview of the psychological and social science literature that has examined the problem. The purpose here is for the student to demonstrate awareness of other research that addresses the topic, including approaches with which they may disagree. Gaps in the literature and contributions which the proposed dissertation addresses may be pointed out here. The purpose of this section is to show how the proposed dissertation will make an original contribution to the field of pastoral care and counseling.

3. Methodology
   (a) A discussion of the overall design of the dissertation and of the various methods involved in its execution. E.g.,
      (i) Theological or Pastoral Theological Method, including a discussion of the manner in which the theological, empirical, and operational disciplines will be utilized and related to one another in the dissertation congruent with the theological framework identified in the literature review above.
      (ii) Clinical Research Paradigm: Framework for the research and strategies of inquiry, including a rationale for why this method is the best fit for the research problem under investigation. (e.g., Quantitative, Qualitative or Mixed Methods
      (iii) Specific Research Methods: Discussion of how data will be gathered (e.g., focus group, case study, questionnaires, etc.) and analyzed (e.g., in Quantitative methods, which instruments – new or published surveys, etc. and which statistical tests will be applied to the data using what computer software; in Qualitative methods, which specific model(s) of analysis will be used, e.g., Grounded Theory, Phenomenological, etc.)

4. Glossary of Key Terms and Definitions
5. Anticipated Chapter Outline
6. Time Line for Completion
   Including proposed time for the conduct of the research and the completion of the dissertation.
7. Preliminary Bibliography
Proposals must be succinctly written and to the point, and would normally 20-40 double-spaced 12-point typed pages including bibliography.

**Dissertation Proposal Hearing/Defense:**
The student is responsible for getting the dissertation proposal which should already have been approved by his/her dissertation committee to members of the Th.D. committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting time of that committee. The student is expected to be present and to respond to questions raised by members of the Th.D. committee concerning the proposal. After an initial discussion among members of the committee in the absence of the student, the student is invited to engage the committee about the issues raised in the discussion. Following this, the committee meets without the student present to make a decision about approving or disapproving the proposal and to make recommendations to the student and the advisory committee.

Note: Approval by the student’s Dissertation Committee will be made pending approval by the IRB Committee of the student’s school of enrollment.

**Institutional Review Board (IRB) Review**

Because dissertations in pastoral theology and counseling normally involve human subjects, it is expected that all student dissertation proposals will undergo appropriate IRB review in their respective schools. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate and complete this IRB process, in consultation with a faculty member at the student’s institution of enrollment.

Once the IRB approval is obtained in writing, the student is cleared to begin conducting his/her research. NO research may be conducted without documented IRB approval.

**(c) The Dissertation**

The research project and dissertation constitute the concluding and most comprehensive component of the student's Th.D. program. It should grow out of a concern within an area of pastoral counseling which directly affects the student's particular ministry. It is designed to demonstrate the student's ability to engage in professionally-oriented research and to utilize his/her ability in bringing theological and other theoretical knowledge to bear upon the professional practice of pastoral care and counseling. The dissertation is expected, moreover, to contribute useful findings and insight to this particular form of ministry. The dissertation should reflect mature theological insight, painstaking inquiry, logical and coherent thought, imagination, careful execution, and relevance to the ministry of the student and the mission of the church.
The research project and dissertation should be carried out in close cooperation with the student's advisor and with the consultation of his/her dissertation committee. The student is strongly encouraged to consult with his/her advisor and when needed, other committee members at every major point. While dissertations may vary greatly in subject matter and organization, the following elements will be expected in all of them:

1. **The Research Problem and Question being addressed.**
   This section should parallel this section in the original dissertation proposal.

2. **Literature Review**
   This section should parallel (and may elaborate upon) this section in the original dissertation proposal, including theological and clinical/theoretical literature, and incorporate reflections on any further reading added during the period of conducting the research. This section should now reflect the student’s own appropriation, critique, and constructive reflections on both theology and psychological/clinical theory in relation to the research problem.  

3. **Methodology**
   This section should parallel (and may elaborate upon) this section in the original dissertation proposal (including any updates and revisions).

4. **Results**
   The results and conclusions resulting from the research, including appropriate and adequate means of evaluating the original hypotheses and/or qualitative research questions. This section should be an entirely newly written section, stating the findings of the quantitative and/or qualitative research, *without interpretation*, following the procedures outlined in Section 3 of the dissertation proposal. In quantitative research, provide a summary of the data together with graphics, and in qualitative research the data should be organized into general themes, categories, or patterns, together with sub-themes.

5. **Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations**
   This section should interpret the findings in Chapter 4 above. This should include (a) implications of the research the field of pastoral theology, care and counseling. This section should include final substantive theological and theoretical reflections, as well as concrete recommendations for best practices based on the research findings presented in the previous chapter.  

   (b) Limitations of the study (e.g., small sample size; limited demographic representation; ways in which the research might not be transferable to other settings, etc.)

   (c) Recommendations for further research by the author or others in the future, based on what has not yet been studied with regard to the original research problem.

6. **Bibliography**
This section should include the bibliography from the dissertation proposal together with any additional written material and other resources employed in the dissertation.

(d) **Criteria for the Evaluation of the Dissertation**

The doctoral dissertation will be evaluated in terms of its demonstration of:

1. the ability to generate and explore an interesting and useful thesis in the field of pastoral care and counseling;
2. an adequate understanding of the contextual factors which are directly or indirectly related to that thesis;
3. scholarly competence in the academic disciplines relevant for the research and dissertation;
4. the ability to integrate the theory and practice of pastoral care and counseling;
5. observance of acceptable canons of scholarly writing and documentation.

These criteria allow for a broad range of dissertation projects. The student is encouraged to explore a topic which has personal importance for his or her ministry but which can also contribute more generally to the understanding of pastoral care and counseling as a dimension of the church's ministry.

**Final Oral Exam (Dissertation Defense)**

When each member of the student's dissertation committee has indicated to the committee chair that the dissertation text is fundamentally acceptable (meaning that no revisions are anticipated which involve additional substantive work, such as further reading, research, or thinking through of a problem), the student will meet with the advisory committee and any faculty or students in the Th.D. program who wish to attend for an oral review of the dissertation. The student is responsible for arranging the time and place of the review in consultation with committee members. The Th.D. Program Director is responsible for informing the Th.D. student body and faculty of the time and place of the oral review and the subject of the dissertation project.

The purpose of the oral review is threefold: (1) to enable the faculty to determine how well the student understands and can join with the faculty in critically assessing his or her own work; (2) to reflect more broadly on the project's significance personally for the student and professionally for the field; and (3) to provide the student and
committee an occasion for bringing their work together to a common conclusion and to celebrate the student's achievement. At the review, the advisory committee formally votes to recommend the student for graduation from the school in which he/she is enrolled.

In the unlikely event that the oral review reveals unanticipated major revisions of the dissertation, the advisory committee will set a reasonably timely date for completion of the revisions. The committee may use its discretion in determining whether a further oral review is needed. If it determines that this is appropriate, it may modify the length and nature of the follow-up review to fit the circumstances.

Graduating students are strongly encouraged to attend commencement ceremonies in their school of registration. Commencement is a grand occasion of acknowledging the achievement of a doctoral degree and can be personally meaningful to faculty, students, their families, and friends.

**Final Procedures**

1. An abstract of the dissertation, not to exceed 300 words, shall be provided according to the guidelines of the school in which the student is enrolled. It should include the student's name, title of the dissertation and the date.

2. The original and all copies of the dissertation must be on high quality bond paper of twenty-pound weight. It is to be typewritten or printed on a letter quality or laser printer. Alternately, the dissertation may be filed electronically if permitted by the student’s school of enrollment.

3. In all other respects, students shall follow the style and format rules for dissertations of the school in which they are registered. Students are responsible for obtaining the current year style and format rules from their school of enrollment, and for contracting independently for any copy editing needed.

4. When each member of the student's dissertation committee has approved the final draft, the chairperson of the advisory committee will write a letter to the A.T.A. Program Director indicating that the dissertation has been satisfactorily completed. The Program Director will then inform the Advanced Studies Director in the school of the student's registration, who will take the necessary steps to recommend the student for graduation.

5. The student's advisor and dissertation committee members will sign an original signature page for the front matter of the dissertation to indicate formal approval on behalf of the ThD Committee. The student should also obtain any additional signatures required by the student’s school of enrollment.

--END OF MAIN BODY OF HANDBOOK--
ThD Handbook – APPENDIX A
Atlanta Theological association – Doctor of Theology in Pastoral Counseling

COURSE SEQUENCING

*Normally completed first two years full-time*

**REQUIRED CORE COURSES (21 credits)**
(* = offered on alternate years;  ** = offered alternate years depending on enrollment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATA 471 Theology &amp; Personality*</td>
<td>ATA 463 Historical and Global Dimensions of Pastoral Counseling*</td>
<td>ATA 435 Ethics in Marr. &amp; Fam. Counseling &amp; Pastoral Counseling**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATA 475 Pastoral Theological Methods*</td>
<td>ATA 481 Research Methods*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATA 473a&amp;b Theory and -- (year-long course, Practice of Pastoral Counseling required of 1st year students)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATA 484a&amp;b Developing Inter Pastoral Cultural Competence for Counseling required of 2nd year students)</td>
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</table>
ThD Colloquium as offered*** | ThD Colloquium as offered***

** NB: The 1-credit “Integrative Colloquy” (still listed in some older documents) is replaced by this non-credit degree requirement of participation in Colloquium during first two years of coursework.

** ELECTIVES (AS OFFERED) | ELECTIVES (AS OFFERED) | (TOTAL 12 CREDITS)

PRACTICUM (TOTAL 17 CREDITS)
Supervision years 1 & 2 (ATA 485 a,b,c,d) | Summer Practicum
Group Supervision years 1 & 2 (ATA486 a,b,c,d) (Wed. a.m.)
Case Conference years 1 & 2 (ATA 487 a,b,c,d) (Thurs. a.m.)

TOTAL REQUIRED COURSE CREDITS: 50
After completion of coursework and Practicum (including passing Performance Exam), 3rd year students should enroll in ATA497 Comprehensive Exams (presumed full-time; non-credit degree req.)
After passing Comprehensive Exams, students should enroll in ATA499 Dissertation (presumed full-time; non-credit degree req.)

APPROVED by the ThD Committee 9/21/09
(revised from every 3-semester cycle to an alternating 2-year cycle);
ATA 497 and ATA499 approved as updates by ThD Committee 3/15/10
(Course numbers updated Fall 2010).

ThD Handbook - APPENDIX B
Atlanta Theological Association - Doctor of Theology in Pastoral Counseling
PLAN OF STUDY (2 pages)

Name: _______________________________ Year of Entry: _______________________________
School of enrollment: __________________ Nationality: _____________________________
Preliminary Advisor: __________________
Advisory Committee Members:
Dissertation Advisor: (assigned after completion of coursework: __________________
Dissertation Committee Members:

I. Required (Core) Courses: (21 credit hours)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Semester/Year Enter date:</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Historical and Global Dimensions of Pastoral Counseling</td>
<td>ATA 463</td>
<td>Spring 20</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Theology/ Theological Methods</td>
<td>ATA 475</td>
<td>Fall 20</td>
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II. Practicum (17 credit hours)

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<tr>
<td>Individual Supervision (yr.1)</td>
<td>ATA 485 b</td>
<td>Spring 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Supervision (yr.2)</td>
<td>ATA 485 c</td>
<td>Fall 20</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Supervision (yr.2)</td>
<td>ATA 485 d</td>
<td>Spring 20</td>
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<td>SUMMER PRACTICUM</td>
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<td>Summer 20</td>
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<td>Fall 20</td>
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<td>ATA 486 b</td>
<td>Spring 20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>ATA 486 d</td>
<td>Spring 20</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Fall 20</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Conference (yr.1)</td>
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<td>Spring 20</td>
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<td>Case Conference (yr.2)</td>
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III. Elective Courses (minimum 12 hours total)

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<th>Credit Hrs</th>
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<tr>
<td>annually)</td>
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<tr>
<td>+Family Systems</td>
<td>ATA 421</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>+Family development</td>
<td>ATA 479</td>
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<td>+Evaluation &amp; Treatment</td>
<td>ATA 476</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>+Group Theory &amp; Therapy (bi-annually)</td>
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<td>Summer 20</td>
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<td>offered bi-annually)</td>
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<td>Reading Freud in a Postmodern Time (offered</td>
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<td>occasionally)</td>
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<tr>
<td>From Object Relations to Relationality</td>
<td>ATA</td>
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Teaching and Learning Theory
(Recomm. for acad teaching career)  ATA 462  Jan.  3
Spirituality and Sexuality  ATA465  20  3
Other elective:  20  3
Other elective:  20  3

IV. Clinical Practice (Performance) Exam  Date passed

V. Comprehensive Exams (ATA 497)
   Exam 1 (Psychology and Psychotherapy)…Date passed
   Exam 2 (Family Theory and Therapy)………..Date passed
   Exam 3 (Pastoral Theology)…………………..Date passed
   Exam 4 (Sociocultural Dimensions) ……..Date passed
   Exam 5 (Ecclesiological and Ethical Dimensions) ….Date passed
   ORAL EXAM ………………………………..Date passed

VI. Dissertation Proposal  Date passed

IRB Approval…………………………………..Date approved

VI. Dissertation (ATA 499):
Final Oral Exam (Dissertation Defense)…………… Date passed

Graduation Date:__________________

Appendix C
Criteria-Based Assessment for Basic Residents – CCCG Training Program
Training Competencies and Performance Standards

First Term (fall)

1. Conducts appropriate in-take assessment and evaluation, including phone calls, fee setting and session scheduling, following CCCG protocol
2. Able to establish a positive frame for therapeutic relationship and demonstrates beginning level ability to form an on-going working alliance
3. Engages individual and small group supervision effectively, doing required preparation and being prompt and regular with attendance
4. Identifies learning issues raised by training seminars and supervision sessions
5. Fully participates in didactic seminars and case conferences, evidencing regular and timely attendance
6. Establishes treatment plan for therapeutic work
7. Has read and agrees to offer services according to good practice standards and code of ethics put forward by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists
8. Can offer a succinct and clear definition of pastoral counseling that differentiates it from other therapeutic modalities

Second Term (spring)

1. Shows ability to name and manage personal anxiety so as not to interfere with therapeutic work
2. Beginning identification of transference and counter-transference issues as they are manifest in clinical work
3. Able to retain clients over time and offer appropriate referrals and termination when necessary, handles financial administrative details in appropriate and timely manner
4. Beginning use of psychotherapeutic theory to interpret counselee’s developmental history and their clinical presentation
5. Able to co-create effective genogram with counselee that incorporates personal, social and cultural data that impact life experience
6. Formulates theological perspective of counselee’s life situation, including clear attention to personal religious history
7. Offers working clinical diagnoses based on DSM nomenclature
8. Can articulate difference between supportive counseling and change oriented psychotherapy and demonstrates ability to choose appropriate orientation with clients

Third Term (summer)

1. Continues formation as a pastoral counselor by integrating more fully the expected competencies noted for the first two terms of Year 1
2. Demonstrates deepening knowledge and use of a particular psychological theory to meaningfully comprehend the experience of the counselee and guide the therapeutic treatment

Fourth Term (fall)

1. Effectively monitors psychotherapeutic alliance, is alert to therapeutic boundaries and their maintenance
2. Demonstrates increased utilization of supervision/consultation to promote professional development and therapeutic practice
3. Exhibits increased facility with DSM descriptive diagnosis
4. Shows growing ability to offer appropriate and timely therapeutic interpretations
5. Has working understanding of systemic and of dynamic approaches to psychotherapy and is able to use both to meaningfully interpret life experience of counselees
6. Articulates beginning level pastoral and theological interpretation of the praxis of psychotherapy and the life experience of counselee
7. Able to appropriately handle administrative file needs, fee collections and client records

Fifth Term (spring)

1. Shows evidence of integrating theological reflection into the therapeutic process and is able to identify theological lenses shaping their understanding
2. Shows evidence of careful attention to transference and countertransference issues active within ongoing therapy. Recognizes parallel process dynamics.
3. Initiates own learning in areas of pastoral psychotherapeutic theory and is able to proactively address self-assessed deficits as a practitioner. Shows emerging readiness to work independently.
4. Demonstrates working knowledge of professional ethics that shape and bound the therapeutic process
5. Displays ability to name, monitor, and manage the anxiety surrounding their own dynamic issues stirred by psychotherapeutic and supervision relationships
6. Recognizes and articulates knowledge of larger cultural, social, historical forces and factors that impact counselor and counselee’s experience of psychotherapy
7. Can offer integrative definition of what is ‘curative’ about pastoral psychotherapy that draws from theological understanding along with psychological theory.

The above criteria will guide your supervisors in determining your progress through the five terms of the Basic Residency beginning in September of the first training year and ending in May of the third, (Fall, Spring, Summer, Fall, Spring). Each term builds upon the learning and skill sets that came before and the criteria is cumulatively considered for evaluation and assessment purposes.

If Applying for Advanced Residency

1. Has established AAPC connection within appropriate membership category
2. Has appropriate documentation of supervision and clinical contact hours that are needed toward both AAPC certification and state licensure
3. Can outline and discuss goals and training plan for next two years that will lead toward establishment of professional identity and needed certifications/licensure
4. Has a zero balance with the CCCG business office and is considered a resident in good standing

Criteria for Assessment with Advanced Residents

1. Demonstrates appropriate proficiency with all the criteria established for the Basic Residency training experience
2. Shows ability to expand and hold case load of more than ten clients each week
3. Clinical work displays awareness of self as resource for therapeutic progress
4. Displays ability to self-supervise and is able to engage in collegial consultation and confrontation
5. Evidences ability to make positive use of counter-transference and transference dynamics within therapeutic frame
6. Able to articulate three different clinical theories and demonstrate their application in a clinical setting
   a. Exhibits ability to use wider frame of social, cultural, historical and power dynamics to deepen clinical interpretation
   b. Also evidences skill in using understandings of (a) above to shape the work of therapy
7. Articulates and applies theological reflection to the work of therapy that shows a cohesive understanding of how the counseling process is grounded theologically within
the counselor, counselee, and the intersubjective relational field of the therapeutic process
8. Demonstrates theoretical and clinical competence in working with couples and families in addition to individuals
9. Shows ability to claim personal and professional identity as a pastoral counselor
10. Has invested significant time in their own personal therapy

Appendix D

Statement of Academic Freedom and Responsibility
The Doctoral (Th.D.) Program in Pastoral Counseling
The Atlanta Theological Association

In order to fulfill the purposes of the ATA Th.D. Program, members of the (Th.D.) faculty perform their duties in a climate of moral responsibility and of academic freedom. Faculty members are free to teach, to carry on research, and to publish subject to their responsibilities for their academic duties as assigned and subject to their responsibilities for the academic freedom of students and of their colleagues in the ATA Th.D. program, in the scholarly community, and in the Church. While the ATA Board alone is able to speak officially for the program, Faculty members are free to express and act upon their conscientious conviction as individual citizens and/or as a collegium of teachers. They are also encouraged to fulfill their civic responsibilities;
The ATA/ThD Program shares in and seeks to reflect an abiding respect for all persons as creatures of God. We are committed to providing members of the community, including students, staff, faculty, administrators, and board members, with an environment where they may pursue their studies, work, careers, and social interactions without being sexually harassed or exploited. Sexual harassment, exploitation and assault are prohibited by law, are a violation of the ethical vision which informs the life and mission of the Th.D. program, and are incompatible with the standards of its members and professional leaders; 

Both in and out of the classroom, balances must be found among personal freedom, freedom to associate, freedom to express views, the responsibility to seek peace in our living and working together, and the importance of maintaining an environment conducive to investigation and learning. Our academic and religious mission encourages frank and open discourse and debate in the classroom, often about the most profound and deeply held beliefs. Participants in these discussions should be able to express these beliefs without fear of censure, intimidation, or retribution. Even when expressing the most strongly held beliefs, however, students and faculty are expected to maintain civility, collegiality, and respect.

This assertion represents a longstanding commitment of the Th.D. program to encourage freedom of research and publication for its students in all degree programs and its faculty.

Nevertheless, since this assertion does not literally assert a “freedom [for doctoral students] to conduct research in their respective disciplines and, within any formally adopted confessional commitments of the institution, the freedom to communicate the findings of their research,” the faculty will be asked at each opening orientation session to adopt the core values of the program.

The search for truth is central to the vocation of the Th.D. program and to its faculty members, students, and staff. This search for truth is the calling of both individuals and of the community as a whole.
Students and Staff: The freedom necessary in this search for truth holds as much for students and staff as it does for faculty, and in particular, students engaged in doctoral research shall have freedom to conduct their research in their respective disciplines and to communicate the findings of their research.

Faculty: The faculty members of the Th.D program acknowledge the responsibilities attendant upon their academic freedom. They exercise their freedom in a manner conformable to the vows which they take at their installation as members of the instructional staff of their home institution as well as to the vows they have taken if they have been ordained as officers of the church.

Approved by the ThD Committee April, 2012