

Appalachian School of Theology

Doctoral Program Handbook

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Doctor of Theology (ThD) Program Information

The following policies, procedures, and academic requirements are established to ensure the quality, integrity, and academic rigor of the Doctor of Theology (ThD) program. These requirements and expectations will provide interactive instructions, spiritual growth, and desired leadership skills for the graduates. All requirements must meet school policies, State regulations, and accreditation standards for the welfare of the school.

The Appalachian School of Theology is authorized by the State Council of Higher Education to offer the following degree programs: Associate of Theology (ATh), Bachelor of Theology (BTh), Master of Theology (MTh), and Doctor of Theology (ThD), subject to applicable state regulations and institutional compliance requirements.

Our mission is to emphasize application of knowledge and work experience rather than academic regurgitation and research. Application of learning for present and future theological life experiences is our foundation.

A concept worth remembering, “Knowledge and information without application is worthless”

Candidacy Review:

Acceptance into the Doctor of Theology Program can be achieved through one of two tracks:

- **Track 1** is for students who hold a Master’s Degree, or higher, in religion, theology, or education from a duly accredited school, college, or university.
- **Track 2** is for students who hold a Master’s Degree, or higher, from a duly accredited school, college, or university without any theological education and/or experiences.

Admission Requirements:

The admission procedure will include;

- Review of transcripts
- Completing a written questionnaire
- A personal interview by the Academic Dean or President.
- Final admission consideration will include evaluation by a Credentials Committee composed of three individuals holding earned doctoral degrees

Degree Requirements:

Upon acceptance into the program all Doctoral students will be required to complete (2) approved Doctoral program courses. Upon completion of these courses a formal review will be completed. Continuation in the doctoral program is contingent upon satisfactory academic progress, professional conduct, financial standing, and compliance with institutional policies. Doctoral students may continue with their course program according to the track in which they entered the Doctoral program.

The remaining requirements are as follows:

Track 1

- Completion of (2) more prior approved courses at the prevailing tuition rate. This requirement will include teaching at least one session per semester for each class taken for credit.
- Completion of four (4) projects for which the student will earn 36 credit hours (9 credit hours for each project) when completed.

Track 2

- A minimum completion of (5) more prior approved courses (to be determined in the formal review evaluation meeting) at the prevailing tuition rate. This requirement will include teaching at least one session per semester for each class taken for credit.
- Completion of four (4) projects for which the student will earn 36 credit hours (9 credit hours for each project) when completed.

Attendance Requirements:

Classes taken by Doctoral students for credit are required to be taken in person at the Nickelsville site or other approved satellite locations. Individual circumstances will be considered but is contingent upon direction from and/or approval of the Academic Dean and president.

In person students may use Zoom for emergency situation with a limit of three (3) per semester. Distance in excess of 40 miles and international students may be exempt from in person attendance which will be subject to administrative approval. Doctoral classes at the Nickelsville site will be a “Hybrid” course for in person and Zoom students.

Project Requirements:

Doctoral students will be required to complete four (4) projects for which the student will earn 36 credit hours (9 credit hours for each project) when completed. These projects do not necessarily have to be completed in this order, a project timeline should be developed and presented to the Academic Dean for review.

Required Project 1: Research, design, and develop at least one (1) graduate-level course for the Appalachian School of Theology (AST) and present to the Academic Dean, President and one other faculty member’s (of his/her choice) their completed work. Please note that this faculty member of choice must hold their Doctorate Degree.

Required Project 2: The student will be required to plan, develop, participate in, and lead one domestic or international mission trip that demonstrates meaningful ministry engagement and measurable leadership outcomes. The trip must include at least six (6) church and mission minded individuals. The proposal must have approval by the school leadership to receive credit.

Applied Ministry Projects 3 and 4:

With our philosophy of the value of life experiences, you must complete 2 (two) additional projects consisting of 9 (nine) credit hours each which must be carried out under the supervision of the Academic Dean, the President and one other approved individual, with a Doctorate degree. More information on these projects along with examples can be found in the Doctoral information that will be posted on the website.

Approved Courses

Please see the full list of approved doctoral courses on the **Domestic & International Student’s Course of Studies** list located on the website and Doctoral Google classroom under the assignment “AST Reference Documents”.

Honor Code and Doctoral Academic Integrity

Students enrolled in doctoral programs at Appalachian School of Theology are expected to uphold the highest standards of Christian character, academic honesty, scholarly excellence, and professional conduct. As advanced students and developing scholars of the Word of God, doctoral candidates are

expected to demonstrate integrity in all research, writing, ministry projects, academic collaboration, and use of emerging technologies.

All doctoral students are required to review, sign, and abide by the Appalachian School of Theology Student Honor Code as a condition of enrollment and continued participation in the program. The Honor Code establishes institutional expectations regarding original authorship, proper citation practices, academic honesty, ethical conduct, and the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Doctoral students are expected to produce original scholarly work and maintain full compliance with approved citation standards. The use of AI tools is prohibited unless expressly authorized in advance by the supervising professor, course syllabus, dissertation supervisor, or doctoral committee, and any approved use must be appropriately disclosed in submitted work.

Violations of the Student Honor Code—including plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, misuse of AI, duplicate submission of academic work, or other breaches of academic integrity—may result in formal academic review and disciplinary action, including probation, suspension, dismissal, or referral through the institutional appeals process.

Doctoral students are expected to pursue scholarship in a manner consistent with the mission of Appalachian School of Theology: to honor Jesus Christ through faithful study, intellectual honesty, spiritual maturity, and a Biblical worldview.

Ministry Ethics and Professional Conduct

Students enrolled in the Doctor of Theology (ThD) program at Appalachian School of Theology are expected to demonstrate conduct that reflects Christian character, spiritual maturity, professional responsibility, and faithful stewardship of ministry opportunities. As representatives of Christ, their churches, ministry organizations, and Appalachian School of Theology, doctoral students are expected to maintain behavior that promotes trust, integrity, accountability, and servant leadership.

Doctoral students shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with Biblical principles and the mission of the institution, exhibiting honesty, humility, respect, and care in all academic, ministry, and interpersonal settings. Students are expected to engage faculty, fellow students, ministry participants, churches, and community partners with dignity, professionalism, and Christian love.

Professional conduct expectations include, but are not limited to:

- Demonstrating integrity and truthfulness in ministry, teaching, research, communication, and leadership responsibilities.
- Respecting confidentiality and exercising discretion regarding personal, pastoral, organizational, and ministry-related information.
- Maintaining appropriate boundaries and ethical relationships in ministry environments.
- Showing respect toward differing theological perspectives while remaining faithful to the doctrinal commitments of Appalachian School of Theology.
- Exercising responsible stewardship of ministry resources, finances, facilities, and institutional property.

- Conducting ministry projects and academic work in a manner that reflects sound judgment, accountability, and servant leadership.
- Communicating in ways that are respectful, constructive, and Christ-honoring in person, electronically, and through social media.
- Complying with all institutional policies, applicable laws, and expectations of ministry settings in which doctoral work is conducted.

Because doctoral study at Appalachian School of Theology emphasizes applied ministry and leadership development, students are expected to demonstrate not only academic achievement but also evidence of ethical ministry practice and Christian discipleship throughout the duration of the program.

Concerns regarding professional conduct or ministry ethics may result in review by the Academic Dean and institutional leadership and may lead to corrective action, probation, suspension, dismissal, or referral through established appeals procedures.

Each doctoral student acknowledges that academic excellence and ministry effectiveness are inseparable from Christian character and ethical conduct.

Doctorate Tuition (To be in effect on July 1, 2026)

The approved tuition rate for all classes taken by doctoral students will be \$300 per credit hour.

Each Doctoral Project will be worth 9 credit hours and (4) projects will be required to complete the Doctoral program totaling (36) credit hours regardless of which Doctoral Track (1 or 2) that a student is completing.

Tuition will be \$1,000 per (9 credit hour) project or \$4,000 for the four (4) projects needed to complete this program.

Registration and Payment Deadlines:

- Online or In-person registration, full payment and/or an established payment plan must be completed on or before the date of the second class session.
- Failure to provide full payment or establish a payment plan will result in unenrollment from the class without the ability to re-enroll for that class term.
- All tuition must be paid in full by the end of the final scheduled class of the semester.
- Final grades will be withheld until all outstanding balances are paid in full.

Please Note:

Prospective participants who are concerned about the cost of the classes should not let this hinder their interest or involvement. Payments can be made throughout the semester and scholarship funding is readily available, both from our school and other sources such as the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV), provided that your church is a participating BGAV church- Please click on: <https://www.bgav.org/blog/scholarships-and-ministerial-education-funds> ; however, participants who

receive scholarship assistance need to remember that someone felt they were worthy of their investment and should try their best to excel.

***The Appalachian School of Theology does not provide room and board facilities for students.**

Recognition of Military Service and Academic Credit

Appalachian School of Theology recognizes and honors the service, leadership, sacrifice, and life experience of honorably discharged veterans and active-duty personnel serving in the United States Armed Forces. Consistent with the institution's commitment to valuing applied learning and real-world experience, eligible students may receive academic credit toward degree completion based upon documented military service, education, training, and leadership experience.

Military credit evaluations are conducted in accordance with the Appalachian School of Theology Policy: **Recognition of Academic Credit for Honorably Discharged Veterans and Active-Duty Personnel Serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.** Credit consideration may include active-duty service, documented military education and training, and leadership advancement, subject to institutional review and curricular alignment. Military credit awards are not automatic and are subject to established institutional limitations and academic standards. Students seeking military credit consideration should contact the Academic Dean and submit all required military documentation, including discharge records and/or official military training transcripts where applicable.

Doctoral Google Classroom Resources

The Appalachian School of Theology Doctor of Theology (ThD) program utilizes a dedicated Doctoral Google Classroom as the official supplemental platform for program communication and resources. Additional information including announcements, project guidance, forms, schedules, deadlines, templates, and program updates will be posted in this classroom.

Upon admission to the Doctor of Theology program, students will receive instructions from the AST Vice President and/or academic dean regarding enrollment and access to the Doctoral Google Classroom. Students are responsible for joining promptly and regularly reviewing all posted information and communications.

The Doctoral Student Handbook remains the governing document for official program policies and requirements.

Policy Revision Statement

The Appalachian School of Theology reserves the right to revise policies, procedures, curriculum, tuition, and handbook provisions as necessary to maintain academic quality, regulatory compliance, and institutional effectiveness. Reasonable notice of substantive changes will be provided.