Durham Ph.D. Program at Vancouver School of Theology

Application Process

VST has partnered with the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University in the United Kingdom to deliver a Ph.D. program in Vancouver. The Department of Theology and Religion at Durham is ranked third in the world by QS University Ranking. It is a department that is thoroughly engaged with the church through St John’s College and Cranmer Hall, where candidates are prepared for Anglican Ministry. This program, while suited to those with an academic vocation, is also suited for the clergy and other leaders who want theological depth and to engage in interdisciplinary research for the practice of ministry.

The international research Ph.D. program through Durham/VST is a residential program. It is a three-year program for full-time students and a six-program for part-time students, although extensions may be granted by successful petition. Students who wish to apply to this program must live within commuting distance of VST. The expectation for both full and part-time students is that they participate in the academic culture of the school, in the class-room as teaching assistants, in the research colloquium, and in conferences hosted by the school. This program is for permanent residents and citizens of Canada.

Students in this Ph.D. program must plan for a trip to Durham within the first year to be oriented to a research Ph.D. VST students will have an academic advisor both at Durham and at VST. Periodic engagement with both advisors, the Durham advisor online, is required to keep research on track.

To familiarize yourself with the department of Theology and Religion and Durham, visit https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/

A useful information handbook about the Ph.D. program – ‘pure research’ - in Theology and Religion at Durham, its requirements, costs, expectations and faculty can be found here and downloaded: https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/theology.religion/postgrad/PGStudiesUsefulInformationHandbook2017-2018.pdf

For further details around the application process, forms and dates, entry requirements and Durham based scholarships and funding see: https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/postgrad/researchdegrees/

Please note: Ph.D. residency requirements are met through meetings with your VST advisor, and your Durham advisor online. Additional scholarship funding is available through VST up to $5,000.00 a year. A list of funds and foundations that support doctoral students in theology is available through the VST financial aid office.

Application Process:

Step 1. If you are interested in this Ph.D. Program, you should be in contact with Prof. Jason Byassee (Richard Topping until July 1, 2019 – richardt@vst.edu) to make an inquiry. He will be interested in the area of your research and will direct you to an appropriate VST faculty member, who is able and willing to support your potential research. Prof Byassee and the VST faculty member will help you be in touch with a member of the Durham faculty who is able and willing to support your research as a second director of your work. If you are unable to find a director on the VST faculty and on the Durham Faculty who will support you in the proposed research, entry into the Ph.D. program is not possible.
Step 2. A solid research proposal is the key to a successful application to this program. Before you apply you will need to have this prepared since it is a document required in the application. Prof. Jason Byassee has copies of first-rate thesis proposals that you can use as a model. Durham University also provides important guidance around a solid proposal: https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/respropguide/ You will develop this proposal with advice from your VST director and with the input of the second director from Durham. Yes, this is all before the formal application to the VST/Durham Ph.D. program. This informal pre-application process will serve to strengthen your application and expedite your progress on the thesis if accepted. Once you and both potential directors are satisfied that you have a strong proposal, you can move to the next step 3.

Step 3. Students submit their research proposal through Dr. Jason Byassee to be considered at the Research Studies Committee at VST. Do not apply to Durham until you have received approval to do so from The Research Studies Committee at VST. This does not imply that the student is accepted to the Durham Ph.D. program. It is an initial step. Once you have received approval of your thesis proposal from The Research Studies Committee at VST proceed to step 4.

Step 4. The student applies to Durham University, copying their full application to VST through the VST Registrar. Durham University, the Department of Theology and Religion, determines a students’ academic fitness for the program. The application procedure is detailed here: https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/postgrad/researchdegrees/to.apply/ The application requires care and an investment of time. Durham will inform candidates of the decision on their application in four to six weeks after it is submitted.

Step 5. Students accepted into the program at Durham will then also receive a formal acceptance to the joint VST/Durham Ph.D. program from VST. Admission at Durham and VST are necessary for this program. And they will occur in that order – first Durham and then VST will notify you of your acceptance to the program.

Step 6. Student fees and tuition are paid to the Vancouver School of Theology. Rates for the current academic year can be found here: https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/postgrad/feesfinance/. An international research Ph.D. is expensive, and students should use research skills to secure funding through the sources available to them through Durham, VST and by using the inventory of funding sources provided to them through the financial aid office. A bursary to cover ‘student fees’ applied to their account at our school is available.