

**Questions received re. the proposed PhD in Religious Studies after the 4/17/25 Academic Council Meeting**

**Sent:** Sunday, April 27, 2025 5:47 PM

**To:** Academic Council <[acouncil-prov@win.duke.edu](mailto:acouncil-prov@win.duke.edu)>

**Subject:** questions about RS proposal

--In the 2025 QS university rankings, Duke is listed **5<sup>th</sup> in the world** for theology, divinity, and religious studies. Won't the Religious Studies proposal fracture and thereby diminish the strength of this internationally renowned program?

--If, after many decades of doing so, Trinity College is no longer willing to provide **financial** support for PhD students who work primarily with Divinity faculty, even though those Divinity faculty are members of the Graduate Faculty at Duke, how will the Divinity School be able to continue a PhD program on its own?

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**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 4:36 PM

**To:** [acouncil@duke.edu](mailto:acouncil@duke.edu)

**Subject:** Questions about the Religious Studies proposal for a new PhD program

**Importance:** High

Dear Academic Council:

1. How is it possible that I, a faculty member of the Graduate Program in Religion and, consequently, a faculty member of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, am effectively removed from doctoral education in both without getting a vote in the matter? How am I a member of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences without being able to teach in a doctoral program housed there?
2. How is it possible that RS can effectively change the bylaws of the GPR without faculty vote?
3. How is it possible that a new doctoral program offered by RS gets funding for students that was, heretofore, designated for the GPR which was, heretofore, populated by RS and Div faculty?
4. Why is the dean of trinity college not considering Div faculty who have participated in doctoral training in religion since its inception at Duke as members who count or matter in deliberations about governance/programing and calculation of doctoral lines?

Thank you. I trust it is clear I am strongly opposed to the RS proposal.

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**Sent:** Thursday, May 1, 2025 2:08 PM

**To:** acouncil@duke.edu

**Subject:** Questions

Hello,

Below are some questions that I wanted to pose concerning the proposal for a new PhD program in religious studies. If you could please anonymize these, I would be most grateful.

If the GPR remains, will the Department's new program be in competition with the GPR for students? Will it be confusing to faculty colleagues, prospective students, and hiring committees if there are two PhD programs in religion and religious studies in the Graduate School?

Has the Department conducted surveys to receive feedback from current students in the GPR about this proposal? How do the students feel about (potentially) transferring to a new program and the termination of their current program? Alumni?

How exactly does the new program's structure around focus areas (or contact zones), coupled with other courses external to that focus, differ from the current configuration of the GPR? The proposal says that the new program's coursework will differ from the GPR's since the GPR has "no required coursework and allows students to do all their work in a single area" (p. 21). But on the GPR's website (<https://graduateprograminreligion.duke.edu/research>), the different tracks require coursework in a minor field (in addition to a major field); they also require minor area representation for the preliminary exams, with some tracks requiring both an internal minor and an external minor.

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