

Bangor University, Wales

Department of Religion and Philosophy

Thank you for inquiring into the PhD in religion under my supervision at Bangor University, Wales (formerly called, University of Wales, Bangor).

PhD programs in the UK are dissertation based, meaning that they revolve around the writing of a dissertation under the guidance of a faculty mentor. Thus, the application to the PhD program will center on the research proposal. It is therefore crucial to write a successful proposal before applying. Since there are no required courses or exams for the PhD in the UK, any significant gaps that exist in a student’s theological knowledge (especially as it relates to the dissertation) are to be filled in by the student with the advice of his or her mentor (usually as the student does research for the dissertation). Writing a dissertation for a PhD at a major university like Bangor is no easy task. It requires long hours of research, thinking, and writing. Diligence must be exercised throughout the entire process. Though the program will be pursued on a part-time basis, the work required must be undertaken self-sacrificially and consistently. Deadlines should be set by the student and every effort made to meet them. This is the only way that the goal of writing a significant dissertation will be achieved.

If you are interested in working under me at Bangor, you should begin by telling me about your research interest. That interest may be broad. But you will eventually need to narrow it down. I can help you to do this, once you’ve decided to apply.

Narrowing Your Research Interest: The first step is for you to develop a sharp focus for your research. What, precisely, is your topic or research interest? A broad topic needs to be granted tighter focus, perhaps by zeroing in on a specific issue involved in your topic, and/or by connecting your topic to a significant thinker, or context. For example, one of my students is writing a theology of social justice. This topic is too broad, so he focused it further by viewing it through the lens of pneumatology. He then focused it even further by connecting it to the social justice theology of Jürgen Moltmann. He seeks to develop a pneumatological theology of social justice in dialogue with the social justice theology of Jürgen Moltmann. This is just one example of how a research topic can be granted greater focus. The more one focuses a research interest (specifies or tightens the research interest), the deeper one can probe when engaging in the research. A doctoral dissertation requires depth of analysis, which also requires a tight focus.

After your topic is narrowed sufficiently, send your topic description to me. You will then need to define your approach to the topic (method of inquiry) and develop a full-blown outline of chapters with a brief bibliography for each chapter. We will discuss this next step below.

Define the Approach: After arriving at a narrow research topic, the second step is to arrive at a clear method of inquiry. Specifically, how do you intend to investigate your topic? In the above example, the pneumatological theology of social justice is being pursued using a “dialogical” method, namely, by conversing with the theology of Jürgen Moltmann. I can help you define your method. In laying out your approach or method, you will also need to explain what justifies your topic and your approach to it. Why is this study important, or needed? Usually a student will be able to point to a relative lack of attention in the scholarship to the specific research topic under investigation.

Develop an Outline: Once you have a clear topic and method of inquiry, the third step will be to develop an outline for your study, including a description of each chapter and a brief bibliography of sources for each chapter. The final chapter should be constructive (a theology of…). This gives the readers the “cash value” of your research. This is the time for you to reflect on your thesis and develop it.

Finances: If accepted to the PhD program at Bangor, you will sign a five year financial contract with the university to work on your dissertation part time. You will absolutely need to have your dissertation completed by the end of the five year period. Your tuition cost will be approximately 5,700 pounds a year (about $8,000 a year). This cost is generally lower than most other UK schools. Given the fact that the student does not need to leave his/her employment or re-locate to another state or country, the cost is usually regarded as manageable. I commonly recommend that a student save up all or most of the first year prior to applying, so that the second year may be saved up during the first year of study, and so on. There is no financial aid offered by Bangor for part time foreign students. Also, if accepted to the Bangor program, we will skype or talk by phone roughly every month and meet in person twice (at least once) a year.

If you are prepared and feel called to take this important step in your life, contact me so that we can begin this journey together.

Many blessings,

Frank D. Macchia, D.Theol., D.D.

Associate Director

Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Research

Department of Philosophy and Theology

Bangor University, Wales