Guidelines for Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) and Doctor of Biblical Studies (DBS) Project Proposals

The Ministry Project

The Doctoral Project will involve the design, implementation, and evaluation of an action in ministry. That is, you are going to **do** something, introducing something new into your ministry. What you do should address a significant situation or issue within your ministry setting, something that you and your partners in ministry care about. The project should set out a strategy to effect change that will transform and/or intensify the faith and practice of your ministry community. And you should be able to reflect on what happens in a way that makes your learning relevant beyond your particular community and therefore adds to the general body of knowledge about and practice of ministry. Becoming a "doctor" of ministry means that you have learned something new about how ministry happens and are able to reflect on that learning in a way that enables you to be a "teacher" of ministry.

Deciding what to do

During course of study, as you deepen your understanding of your ministry context, explore and articulate your theology of ministry, and sharpen your skills in the practice of ministry, you will lay the foundation for your Project. What you choose to do should be thoroughly grounded in what you have learned about your setting and about your own theology and practice of ministry.

Because Ministry Projects are grounded in a particular place, you should also think early about how to involve participants *within your ministry setting* (or other appropriate partners) in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Ministry Project. Most students will put together a doctoral support group that can be an important sounding board and partner in developing a focus for the Project.

You should work closely with your *advisor* throughout your program, but especially as you begin to focus and clarify your thinking about the Project. *Approval by the advisor is required before a proposal may be submitted for approval.*

Writing the Proposal

The writing of a Proposal is both a necessary step toward completing your Project and a means of demonstrating that you have gained the learning and skill necessary to proceed. This document is your "qualifying exam." The faculty will be looking for evidence that (a) the issue is sufficiently defined and delimited to be manageable, (b) the issue is broad enough to be of more than merely parochial interest, and (c) the proposed action of ministry has promise as a means of addressing the issue.

Of course, the best demonstration that you have that necessary insight and skill will be in the coherence and appropriateness of what you propose to do. However, you should also be explicit about the learning on which you are drawing, showing how what you plan to do is informed by an understanding of the social and cultural context, how it is grounded in a theology of ministry, and how it draws on the best insights of those who have thought about and practiced the kinds of ministry you propose. Your sources should be named and appropriately cited throughout the proposal. This is not simply a "review of the literature," but it should demonstrate that you *know* what others have had to say about the issues and strategies you plan to engage.

Submitting the Ministry Project Proposal

You may submit a Proposal when:

a) you have the approval of your advisor.

The approval of your advisor usually means that you have submitted a preliminary draft to him or her, received comments, and revised the Proposal to his/her satisfaction. You should assume that it will be at least a few weeks between when you give your advisor a first draft and when you are ready to proceed.

Contents of the Ministry Project Proposal

1) Ministry Project Title: The title should describe the ministry project in clear, concise language so someone who sees the title knows what the project is about. Your goal is to describe the project, not to sell a book.

> *Good Title*: "Strengthening Grace Episcopal Church's Ministry with Families through a Program of intergenerational Retreats"
> *Bad Title*: "From Brokenness to Wholeness: the Experience of a Congregation"

2) The Proposal should begin with a succinct statement of what you hope to accomplish. What are your goals, and how will your project move toward those goals? This should be no more than 1-2 paragraphs.

3) You should give explicit attention to how this Project addresses and grows out of the realities internal and external to your setting of ministry. Why this project in this place? What do you understand about the social and cultural realities of your setting that has helped you think about how to lead toward change? This section will usually be 4-6 pages in length.

4) You should include an explication of the theology that calls forth the proposed Project's action. What do you believe about the nature of church, ministry, and God's activity in the world that draws you to this proposed action? Why is this ministry fitting? Here you should include attention to scholarly theological sources, as well as to appropriate sacred traditions, to relevant theoretical analyses, as well as to your own experiences and convictions. This section will usually be 4-6 pages in length.

5) There should be a detailed outline of the transformative actions you wish to undertake. This need not be a complete set of all the plans and resources, but it should include sufficient detail to make clear how you actually hope to achieve your goals. What do you actually plan to do? Additional supporting details (e.g.,

       sample sermon outlines, lesson plans, event descriptions, and the like) may be added in an appendix. This outline will normally be 3-5 pages in length.

6) Having described what you are going to do, you should discuss why you have chosen these particular strategies. On what theoretical and practical wisdom are you drawing? How are your actions grounded in an understanding of the specific practices of ministry you will use? For example, what theories of learning, change, conflict management, communication, spiritual formation, etc., are relevant to your work? This section will normally be 3-5 pages in length.

7) Finally, there should be a brief description of how you plan to evaluate the proposed Ministry Project. How will you know what happened and why? What will count as "success" and why? How will you gather information on the responses of participants? What sorts of changes will you be watching for? This section will normally be 1-2 pages.

8) You should end with a brief statement about what sort of support you have for the Project from (1) those in your ministry setting (both participants in the project and support for/ownership of the project by your governing board) and (2) various Seminary and other advisors. Who will be helping you, and how will they be doing it? This will usually be a paragraph.

9) The text of the Proposal will be followed by a bibliography. The first section of the bibliography will be the "works cited" in the Proposal itself. The second will be a list of "additional resources" you anticipate using in your project. Materials in the bibliography should be chosen for their relevance to the project. While the faculty recognizes the bibliography will grow and change through the course of your project, it is important that a provisional bibliography be developed at this stage. The bibliography must be in proper academic form.

10) After the bibliography, add any appendices you deem useful in helping the committee to understand the details of the project you propose. Examples of items to be included in the appendices are sample sermon outlines, lesson plans, event descriptions, sample questionnaires, etc.

11) The total length of the proposal should be 20-25 pages – double-spaced, 10-12 point type, with margins of 1 inch all around. Consult the Seminary's *Guidelines for Writing a Research Paper* for detailed instructions on format.

Other Items to Submit with the Proposal

       You should provide a detailed time-line for completion of your doctoral work. The time-line should include any remaining course work to be completed and should project a date for the project's completion and submission of the final report.