Ashland Theological Seminary

Doctor of Ministry Program

Supplemental Student Handbook

2016-2017 Academic Year

Contents

Introduction

This supplemental handbook has been created for use by students, academic advisors, and field consultants in the Doctor of Ministry program. It includes requirements, dates, procedures to, and policies which affect the program and the student's progress in it. It is a supplement to the Student Handbook which contains policies and procedures for students at Ashland Theological Seminary. It is assumed that it is the responsibility of the student to read and become familiar with the information in the Student Handbook. Students can find the handbook for the current academic year on the Ashland Theological Seminary website.

 http://seminary.ashland.edu/downloads

It is recommended that you read the entire handbook and visualize your participation in the program. If you find there are areas you do not understand please contact the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program for further explanation and discussion. You can call 419-289-5815 or email: mbevere@ashland.edu.

It is the policy of Ashland Theological Seminary to admit students and to provide equal opportunity for all persons regardless of race, color, nationality, and ethnic origin, gender, age, or handicap, and to extend all the rights, privileges, and activities generally accorded or made available to students in the school.

Brief History of Ashland Theological Seminary

Ashland Theological Seminary began as a Department of Theology of Ashland University in 1906. Ashland University is affiliated with The Brethren Church which was born out of the Pietist/Anabaptist movement in Germany in 1708. In 1930, the department became a graduate school requiring three years beyond the bachelor's degree. In 1958 the Seminary moved to a separate location and built a library, classroom building, chapel, and student housing. Additional faculty, library holdings, and programs led to accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada, and by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Ashland is the only accredited Protestant seminary in North Central and Northeast Ohio and has developed programs in Cleveland and Columbus, OH, and Detroit, MI.

The Doctor of Ministry Program at Ashland

The Doctor of Ministry degree has been an integral part of Ashland Theological Seminary since 1971. In that year eleven seminaries from Ohio worked cooperatively to form the Consortium for Higher Education Religion Studies.

The Consortium, while offering several benefits, presented some major areas of concern. These included the admissions procedures, degree requirements, and faculty ownership. These problems led Ashland Theological Seminary and Methodist Theological School in Ohio to withdraw from the Consortium. In 1977 these schools plus Evangelical Lutheran Theological

Seminary (now Trinity Lutheran Seminary) formed a new cooperative venture. The new design offered greater faculty participation as well as greater quality control for each school.

The Association of Theological Schools and The North Central Association accredited this program in 1982 and again in 1987. While it was a cooperative program, each school engaged in a self-study and re-accreditation according to the Standards of the Association.

Because of declining enrollment and other factors at the other two schools, Ashland Theological Seminary pursued independent accreditation for the program in the early 1990s. With the graduation of all students from the other seminaries in 1993, the cluster ended. Since that time, Ashland has offered its own D.Min. program.

Purpose and Objectives of the Doctor of Ministry Program

The Doctor of Ministry program represents a response to the need of professionals in ministry for educational experiences that enable them to grow in personal and professional competence. The D.Min. degree program provides ministers an opportunity for serious and sustained academic engagement while continuing to carry out their responsibilities in ministry.

To meet the need for disciplined educational experiences leading to advanced professional development, the D.Min. program offers:

- Academic course work
- Supervised contextualization
- Peer interaction
- Evaluative structures

These program components, described in detail in later sections of this handbook, aim at the following objectives for students:

- To increase self-understanding
- To identify their growing edge
- To do self-directed study
- To enhance the ability to reflect theologically and critically
- To identify and utilize the resources of the student's heritage
- To improve listening, communication, and writing skills
- To increase ecumenical awareness and community concerns
- To enhance ability to identify, gather, and manage resources
- To build a support group within the context of ministry
- To utilize the context of ministry in learning
- To update the personal and professional information base
- To enhance research and design skills
- To develop skills in one or more ministry function

Doctor of Ministry Program Design

Each student admitted to the D.Min. program must identify an area of concentration. A central concern of the program is to enable students to strengthen their understanding of one or more of the classical theological disciplines and integrate that knowledge in responsible ministry.

Progress and completion in the program involves three stages. These stages include:

1. Preliminary Stage – requires satisfactory completion of the six compulsory courses.

2. Candidacy Stage – writing an approved project proposal. This includes:
   - Submission to and approval by the Academic Advisor and Director.
   - Focused work uniting theoretical and practical dimensions.
   - Use of appropriate field research, within the student's context.
   - Demonstration of an awareness of research methods, professional literature, and theological reflection, so as to lead to significant contribution to the practice of ministry and its theological understanding.

3. Oral Defense Stage – final oral evaluation of the D.Min. project (includes the chair, student, advisor, field consultant, and ATS faculty member).

Policies

Coursework policies

1. All course work has pre-class preparation, starting 60 days prior to class. Coursework is due within 60 days following the last day of each class (per course). Formational counseling students have 120 days following the two-course, two-week cycle.

2. Students requesting an "I" (incomplete) or "E" (extension) for coursework, must do so in writing. An "I" or "E" are *reserved for emergencies*, not the normal interruptions of ministry schedules. Policy for an "I" is 30 days, and for an "E" is 60 days. Work not turned in following the extension will automatically become an "F."

3. One grade of "C" is admissible on a student transcript. More than one is reason for dismissal from the program. A student can repeat one course in an attempt to raise the grade to "B" or better.

4. One grade of "F" is reason for dismissal from the program. Depending on the circumstances, a student can repeat a course in an attempt to raise the grade to "C" or better.

5. Students are permitted to take one master's level course as an elective, supplemented to fit the five hour D.Min. coursework requirement. The student is required to arrange with the professor and/or advisor the supplemented reading and/or coursework.

6. Students may submit a request for seminars and/or conferences to be used as a contracted study for their elective course credits. Subject matter must be relevant with student's final project. Approval is granted by the Director.

7. All course assignments and final project document must be in conformity with *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 8th ed.* by Kate L. Turabian, using parenthetical reference. "How to Write the Doctor of Ministry Proposal and Research Project," available at the seminary website, includes a brief summary of significant issues considered in Turabian.

Timing policies

1. The D.Min. program is structured for students to complete within three years. Students have up to six years after entering to complete their program. Extension beyond the six-year policy must be requested in writing by the student and approved by the director and the D.Min. Committee.

2. Students must apply for graduation by the end of February in the year graduation is anticipated. If the student wants to graduate in the fall/winter, deadline for application is September 15th.

3. Students must schedule their oral exam through their academic advisor, coordinating the date with the program director and the field consultant, no later than March 30th. The deadline for correcting and/or rewriting of the student's final project is generally April 30th. Exams will be scheduled through the D.Min. administrative assistant's office.

Financial policies

The Doctor of Ministry program does not have an endowment and is unable to offer scholarships. The program is funded by tuition and fees which are set by the Board of Trustees each January and go into effect the following June.

On their application, students are asked to affirm that they have adequate financial resources to undertake the program. Resources might include personal/family assets, student or personal loans, financial help from family or friends, personal sponsor, church or organizational support, etc.

Students accepting admission are also agreeing to be faithful in meeting the financial obligations of the program. Meeting those responsibilities is a matter of integrity and character.

Students are billed for tuition and fees prior to each class session. Payment is due by the date specified on the invoice, but no later than the day of the first class session. Students will not be allowed to continue in class on the second day unless they have paid their current invoice, have made arrangements for payment through the registrar, or have on file proof of a student loan. Payments are accepted in cash or by check or credit card. Failure of a sponsor (personal, church, or organizational) to provide payment before class does not alleviate the student of this responsibility.

Students who are more than 90 days in arrears will have finance charges added to their account. They will not be allowed to register for another class until the account is paid in full, and they may no longer use the services of their advisor. The account may be turned over to a collection

agency and information may be submitted to the credit reporting agencies. Students may also be dropped from the program, requiring application for re-admission.

All outstanding accounts must be paid in full before a student may take their final dissertation exam and before graduation and reception of the degree. In the event the student does not complete the degree, the outstanding bill must be paid up to the time the student requested to be dropped or was dropped from the program.

Advisory Core Team

Each doctor of ministry student is required to be part of an advisory core team. The Advisory Core Team is composed of:
- an advisor
- a peer academic group (6-8 student peers)
- a field consultant
- a resource person(s) (editor)

The advisory core team will meet at least 3 times a year (excluding resource person and field consultant). Attendance at these meetings is required for students. The meetings will be scheduled one evening of the regularly scheduled weeks of D.Min. classes (fall, winter, and spring).

Each advisory core team will have a group of students who are at various levels in the D.Min. program. Advisors should have no more than 2 students graduating in any given academic year.

Contact with advisors is the student's responsibility. Dialogue with the advisor is important and should be on-going throughout the program. Once the student reaches the candidacy phase, the advisor is the first point of contact.

Following is a list of guidelines and/or roles for Ashland Theological Seminary advisors:

1. Advise students on D.Min. program, using this student handbook and "How to Write the Doctor of Ministry Proposal and Research Project" as a guide (i.e. coursework, policies).

2. Create an environment for collegial relationships and peer-group learning.

3. Answer questions concerning writing standards.

4. Advise students as they move to the goal of proposal and dissertation stage.

5. Help validate contextualization for all students and their projects.

6. Be on campus three times (fall, winter, spring) to facilitate their Advisory Core Team.

7. Get to know the each student in the peer group and encourage them through the process.

8. Facilitate the proposal stage with each student, which must be submitted to and approved by the student's entire team.

9. Read each chapter of the student's final project, recommending changes.

10. Hold each student to academic excellence so their final document will be worthy of publication.

11. Attend the final oral defense for each student in the core team.

12. The advisor is **NOT** responsible to edit your final document.

Field Consultant

The field consultant is a person chosen from the student's context of ministry. The student recruits the field consultant, with the approval of the advisor and advisory peer group.

The role of the field consultant includes:

1. Validate the context of the student and his/her personal project

2. Read each chapter of the student's project, suggesting changes

3. Communicate accurately and sensitively his or her personal assessment of the student's performance

4. Make a final written evaluation of the student's project and contextual involvement

5. Participate in the final oral exam of the student

6. All expenses and/or fees related to the field consultant are the responsibility of the student.

Resource Person(s)

Each student is to identify a resource person(s) to be a part of the core advisory team. This person(s) will be approved by the advisor and advisory peer group. The resource person(s) are individuals who have academic knowledge and/or expertise in a particular discipline related to the student's final document.

The role of the resource person(s) includes:

1. Provide suggested resources in the topic or discipline area of the student's final document

2. Provide additional advice or counsel related to the final document, as requested by the student

3. All expenses related to the resource person(s) are the responsibility of the student.

Contextual Education: An Alternative Approach

The Doctor of Ministry program incorporates a deep commitment to a contextual dimension. This concern is so basic that we are devoting a sizable amount of space to consider the meaning and implications of contextual education.

Education on this an advanced level can tend to be totally institutional – like the Ph.D. program in which the participants "go away to school." These advanced degrees center their educational experience solely within the classroom setting.

The D.Min. program seeks to blend together the classroom and the context. The student who has been in ministry for a period of time needs the renewal and deepening of insights relative to classical areas of theological study. At this point in the student's educational experience, there needs to be a high level of personal initiative. Individuals who are motivated to do further study probably have a fairly clear idea of what they want to learn and where growth should take place. More than anything else, a student requires help with learning resources and methodologies.

Ashland has invested strongly in the D.Min. program, committing both resources and personnel. As a result, there has been steady growth. Ashland has also initiated several changes to strengthen the D.Min. program. These include:

1. Advisory Core Team: The Advisory Core Team includes an advisor, field consultant, peer academic group, and a resource person(s). The student, advisor and peer academic group meet at least 3 times a year (Advisory Core Meetings), for the purpose of advising the project proposal and final document. The students are required to attend Advisory Core meetings, which normally take place during on-campus course scheduling. Dialogue with the advisor is important and should be on-going. It is the responsibility of the student to contact and communicate with their advisors.

2. Contextual Support Group: Students are required to work on the local level with a small group from their context. This group is required to work directly with the student to insure that the program includes contextualization. This group is made up of three or more individuals.

3. Publishable Document: Each student is required to produce a written document worthy of publication and of value to the context.

4. Final Oral Defense: Students are required to defend their Doctor of Ministry work through a final oral defense. This interview team will consist of five individuals, including: the director of the Doctor of Ministry program, the student, the field consultant, an ATS faculty member (chosen by the Dean), and a guest reader (selected by the student). Three areas are evaluated: the person, the program, and the project.

These elements have greatly strengthened the integrity of Ashland's Doctor of Ministry program.

The normal length for completing the degree is three years. The D.Min. program is designed so the six required academic courses will become informative to the writing of the final project. Though students will be formulating a potential project topic, they are not permitted to begin designing or writing the project until the completion of the six course requirement, plus completing DM 914 "Research Proposal Seminar" and DM 919 "Dissertation Writing Seminar."

All course assignments and final project document must conform with *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th ed.* by Kate L. Turabian, using parenthetical reference. "How to Write the Doctor of Ministry Proposal and Research Project," available from the seminary bookstore, includes a brief summary of significant issues considered in Turabian. **Each student is required to purchase a copy of these manuals.**

Ashland Theological Seminary endeavors to affirm both men and women as created in the image of God, called and gifted for various forms of ministry. The faculty, therefore, requests that a good faith effort be made to use inclusive language in class, all papers, and the final project document. Inclusive language calls for the use of language that does not speak solely in terms of masculine gender when one intends to talk about men and women. In reference to God, the faculty urges that a variety of <u>biblical</u> images, both male and female (cf. Is. 49:14-15) be used when describing God's activities and character. The Bible itself does so, and students should follow that model.

The Philosophy of Contextual Education

<u>Learn through a self-directed approach</u>. Contextual education asserts that mature persons can become self-directed learners who take the majority initiative in their continuing education. This does not discount the value of formal/institutional input in the educational process.

<u>Learning as a process of practice and reflection</u>. Contextual education maintains that learning in mature persons is a process of practice and reflection taking place in the setting of ministry. Practice and reflection are not two separate aspects of the learning experience but, instead, are integral to the process.

<u>Learning through form and function</u>. Contextual education implies that form follows function in the learning process. Learning objectives identified out of one's experience in the context dictate the form the educational process will take.

<u>Learning as a communal and heuristic process</u>. Contextual education implies that learning is a perpetual movement of discovery and growth within a community of persons having interests and purposes, at least in some measure, in common. The mature learner continues the position and role of enlarging the dimensions of cognitive growth, enhancing the shape and effectiveness of their relationships, and enriching his/her own inner life through openness and interaction.

The Learner in Contextual Education

The self-image, role, and competencies of the student will be different in contextual education from those in traditional education. It seems clear that the student will assume a greater leadership role in the educational process than in "teacher-centered" education. Some may be quite uncomfortable in assuming this role in their own education; however, a contextual approach asserts that this is a part of maturity – the student will exercise this leadership.

Some steps in an educational process and a method of working through problems include the following:

- Learning begins with a felt-need on the part of the student. The minister/student identifies a problem with which they are not able to deal at this point in their maturity for any of a number of reasons.
- Reflection upon the problem leads to addressing it in a self-conscious manner in the development of a study-learning proposal. This may be called a proposal for problem solving.
- Development of steps in the study learning process:
  o Formulation of the question.
  o Development of a theory (thesis) or theories as to how this problem might be addressed.
  o Formulation of learning objectives. Needs must be translated into measurable goals and objectives. Only in this way can the student/minister assess their progress.
  o Determination of necessary resources for dealing with the problem: information needed, where and how to get it; skills needed and how to develop them; personal growth needed and how to attain it; etc.
  o Marshalling resources to bear upon the problem.
  o Working with persons within and beyond the context in dealing with the problem. This includes gathering information, developing and applying strategies, assessing personal needs, addressing situations in the context and developing skills to meet them, etc. This may well take the student outside the context for equipping and enabling into formal instructional settings such as workshops, seminars, and university classes, etc.
  o Applying learning to the situation to test out information gathered, skills gained, and personal growth sought. This implementation is not completely divorced from the other stages described above; there are interfacing dynamics in the total learning process.
  o Reflection upon the process. What has been happening to the student, persons in the context, peers, and teachers/facilitators? Has the "thesis" been supported in the processes engaged?
  o The reflection experience implies evaluation.
  o Documenting gains and determining next steps. If learning is to be of value to others – or to you in the future in the ramifications of its details – some kind of summarization and recording is necessary. A part of this reflection and recording will be the new insights coming out of the experience – serendipities, new directions, and new problems.

Context in the Educational Process

By now, it should be clear that contextual education springs naturally from one's setting in ministry. One does not "go away to get educated"; rather, the learning experience arises out of the needs of the context and centers in the focus of ministry. This process in no way divorces the student from the institution. The Seminary provides resources in terms of information, skills, evaluation, and interaction at all points of the process. Ideally contextual education joins the

institution and the student in context in a cooperative enterprise that promises increasingly effective approaches to dealing with the problems and opportunities of ministry.

Since the educational experience arises in the context, a thorough grasp of that setting is essential. Because the anticipated learning will grow out of the context, the students are generally expected to have been in their present setting of ministry long enough to understand the situation and have a feel for its requirements and needs. Context in this sense is the total environment in which the ministry is performed, including geographic locations, institutions, persons, programs, and experience within it. It includes the student, background, family, etc.

As the student considers focus and project, the context is central to any decision. How does this focus and this project emerge from its context? Can it be demonstrated that the focus has relevance for the setting? What is the relation of the proposed project to the setting? It is incongruous with the principles of contextual education to determine a focus and design a project with the idea of imposing it upon the setting. It is imperative, then, at this early point in the program to reflect seriously upon the context and to move forward in your program with this clearly in view.

Administration

The D.Min. Committee establishes and implements policy, as well as exercises responsibility for the administration of the D.Min. Program.

Responsibilities of the D.Min. Committee include:
- Determination of general policies
- Approval of courses and programs
- Approval of faculty
- Coordination of the program
- This committee is composed of, the director of the Doctor of Ministry program, and members appointed by the Personnel and Professional Committee of the Seminary

Responsibilities of Ashland Theological Seminary include:
- Terminal responsibility for the matriculation of its Doctor of Ministry participants
- Assures operation within the guidelines established by the D.Min. Committee
- Awards the degree to qualified candidates

Responsibilities of the Dean include:
- Implement recommendations of the D.Min. Committee
- Maintain files for participants
- Register students for courses
- Enlist faculty
- Assign academic advisors

Project Proposal

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Origin: The proposal is to envision a focused piece of work that unites the theoretical and practical dimensions of theological investigation, including the use of appropriate field research, into the participant's own context of ministry, and to demonstrate an awareness of research methods, professional literature and theological reflection, so as to promise a significant contribution to the practice of ministry and its theological understanding.

Final Document

Definition: a focused piece of work that unites the theoretical and practical dimensions of theological investigation, within the context of the student's ministry; a "demonstration plot" in which ideas and applications of the program find implementation and are measured and evaluated.

Significance: Emerging naturally from the student's ongoing ministerial activity, the project assumes a steadily larger place in the student's work on campus and their context.

Documentation: The end product of this process is a document of approximately 40,000 words (100 pages minimum, maximum of 250 pages) that will enable the student to demonstrate competence in the integration of the cognitive and practical dimensions of theological education in the performance of ministry.

Working With Your Advisor

The advisor is crucial to the completion of your project, paper, and degree. Ashland Theological Seminary entrusts the advisor with considerable power and responsibility in the project acceptance process. The core faculty is also important, but less so than the advisor.

The advisor and core faculty are responsible for assisting the student. The student is responsible for presenting material in a way that effectively uses the advisor and core faculty resources of time and insight. This paper explores procedures the student can follow to help make interaction with the advisor and core faculty effective.

Aids to Effective Interaction with an Advisor and Core Team

Recognize that there are many demands on the advisor for time and attention. The student's task is to increase the probability of a timely and helpful response from the advisor. The method suggested here includes 1) written notes, 2) outlines and issue summaries, 3) scheduled times for meeting, 4) meeting agendas, and 5) progress reports.

1. **Provide written notes of meetings.** When a meeting takes place, the student should make notes. A meeting may be face-to-face or it may be a lengthy phone communication.

Consider any exchange of important information, decision-making, or agreement-reaching a meeting.

a. *Type notes.* Immediately after the meeting, type up these notes, summarizing what was talked about and any conclusions that were reached.

b. *Copies.* Provide copies of the notes to the advisor and the core faculty.

If there have been a number of quick question-and-answer contacts with the advisor, the student may wish to summarize the significant ones every two weeks or every month. The rule: the student takes responsibility for documenting the decisions and actions communicated by the advisor and the core faculty.

2. **Provide outlines and issue summaries with each set of materials to be read.** Include the following:

a. *A transmittal note.* This lists the materials being given and a reminder of the date by which the advisor or core team member has agreed to return comments.

b. *Issue summary.* A short statement that tells the contents of the materials and gives a short description of each issue (or area in the material) to which the reader should direct attention or for which the student would especially like comments.

c. *Outline of each chapter.* Outline the major headings. If only one or two chapters are being provided, it is helpful to attach the outline of all chapters, so the reader can keep the material received in context. (See example 5.)

d. *The material to be read.* This should always be printed <u>double-spaced</u>. The student should keep a copy, and the readers should write notes on their copies. You will be asked to submit a "first" draft; a "second" draft, perhaps a "third" draft, or more before the "final" draft. (**Special Note: In doctoral work, there are no "rough" drafts. All material should be presented in quality form**.)

3. **Schedule meetings.**

a. *Plan ahead and schedule the necessary meetings.* A schedule for the project and a schedule of critical reviews will assist the student and the advisor in deciding on the meetings to schedule.

b. *Distribute materials at least a week before..*

c. *Send a separate reminder notice of the meeting.*

Arrange well in advance for a place to hold the meeting if this is a problem. A good policy would be to schedule the next meeting at the conclusion of the current meeting, because there can be a group discussion and resolution of conflicts in schedules.

4. **Provide action agendas for meeting.** The advisor may act as chairman of the meeting, but the student should discuss with the advisor the items or objectives to be included on the agenda. After the advisor approves the agenda, it should be sent along with the reminder notice to those who are to attend. The agenda should describe each point to be discussed and decisions, if any, to be made.

5. **Provide written responses and periodic progress reports.** The file of reports, agendas, and questions forms a partial diary of the student's work.

   a. *Written answers.* If a core team member asks a question that the student cannot answer immediately but has agreed to provide an answer for later, the answer should be written and sent (keeping a copy on file).

   b. *Progress Report.* A periodic written progress report is necessary if the student is not meeting regularly with the advisor and core team member. A short, half-page summary will keep the faculty apprised of the student's work.

Remember that your advisor is human

Each advisor is unique. Each advisor has special requests, prefers certain procedures, requires specific standards. Review the material in this document with your advisor. What are the special requests, procedures, and standards of your advisor?

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Adapted from Davis, Gordon B., Parker, Clyde A. *Writing the Doctoral Dissertation: A Systematic Approach*, 2nd edition, 1997, Chapter 10, pages 113-119.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Dean of Intensive, Online, and Off-Site Learning
Dr. Dawn Morton, ext 5113
dmorton@ashland.edu

Senior Admissions Counselor & Coordinator of Student Life
Wendy Hall, ext 6977
whall4@ashland.edu

Seminary Housing
Hayley Marth, ext 5161
hmarth@ashland.edu

Registrar
Laura Bedocs, ext. 5907
ats-registrar@ashland.edu

Assistant Registrar
Susan Icenhour, ext. 5023
sicenhou@ashland.edu

IT Specialist
Jonathan Cole, ext. 5770

Library Director
Sylvia Locher, ext. 5168
slocher@ashland.edu

Library Specialist
Sarah Thomas, ext. 5169
sthomas4@ashland.edu

Interim Academic Dean:
Dr. John Byron, ext 5722
jbyron@ashland.edu

Administrative Assistant to the President
Charlotte Cole, ext. 5963 or 5165
ccole3@ashland.edu

President
Dr. Mark Harden, ext. 5160
mharden@ashland.edu