

Doctoral Project Proposal Guidelines

Doctoral Project

The capstone of the D.Min. program is the doctoral project. The purpose of the project is to provide students with the opportunity to address a particular issue in the ministry and offer new insights which contribute to pastoral effectiveness. Each doctoral project will address some aspect of the general topic of congregational revitalization and/or pastor leadership.

The Doctoral Project may take a variety of forms, such as the creation of a model for effective stewardship education; a research project based in the ministry setting that addresses a particular problem; or investigation of biblical and theological factors in renewal. In the project the student must:

- a. **demonstrate an understanding of a particular issue or question of ministry.**
- b. **Identify and critically interpret the ministry issues raised by the question.**
- c. **Clarify and relate their particular tradition's understanding of the issue or question;**
- d. **Demonstrate a theological and biblical framework of understanding which undergirds the exploration of the project;**
- e. **Explore various issues related to the topic at hand; and,**
- f. **Critically evaluate the applicability of conclusions to the ministry setting.**

Two possible options for the Doctoral Project include: the **Ministry Focus Paper** or a **Doctor of Ministry Thesis**:

- I.) **Ministry Focus Paper.** A Ministry Focus Paper is a publishable project which combines a theology of ministry with a strategy for ministry. As such, it is focused in a congregational setting and deals with theory, strategy and guidelines in order to produce more effective ministry in a particular locale.

The Ministry Focus Paper centers in the place and experience of ministry and must be contextual. The paper will offer:

- a. a critical assessment of the pastor's ministry setting, informed by a biblically rooted theology of ministry, which addresses the historical and contextual issues affecting revitalization and growth;
- b. a discussion of the biblical and theological issues, which undergird the ministry as related to the needs of the setting and the vision for the future;
- c. a ministry strategy which includes goals, objectives, implementation, assessment and feed-back measures; and

- d. a discussion of the results of the project including positive and negative outcomes, alternatives strategies which might be used in the future and the contributions the project made to revitalization within the ministry setting.
- 2.) **Doctor of Ministry Thesis:** A doctor of Ministry Thesis is a publishable project that combines investigation of some aspect of the tradition of the church (biblical, theological, historical, pastoral), postulates a thesis regarding its implications for congregational renewal today and articulates an integrated response.

The thesis will:

- a. begin with some aspect of the tradition of the church and move to contemporary concerns with the intent of making a contribution to the ministry of the whole church catholic.
- b. Be grounded in research appropriate to the topic at hand and seek to discern the ways the traditions and practices of the church can inform efforts to revitalize the ministry and mission of the church in our own time.
- c. Be written under the supervision of a faculty mentor who will work with the student to discern the most appropriate structure and method for the paper.

All projects must represent a level of achievement commensurate with the awarding of the doctoral degree. Projects should make a substantial contribution to a particular aspect of ministry and must demonstrate the student's ability to build an adequate bridge between theological concepts and the practice of ministry, while addressing a significant pastoral concern in a creative and meaningful way.

Project will be completed under the guidance of an assigned faculty mentor, one of the faculty team members, according to the requirements of the selected project and written in a style and format appropriate to doctoral level scholarship. When the student's Doctoral Project is ready, it will be submitted to the Doctor of Ministry Program Director for distribution to the mentor and the style readers.

1. The mentor will focus on the paper's content, whether it meets the proposed goals and normally return a three to five page critique and evaluation of the paper.
2. The style reader will read for style and form and return the paper with the appropriate stylistic comments on the paper.

These evaluations will be returned to the student within two weeks. The student then makes revisions and returns the paper to the mentor for further consideration.

3. Upon completion of the doctoral project, there will be an oral presentation and evaluation (see ATS standard F.3.1.3.2) at a time and place to be determined by the faculty/staff council of the seminary.

Criteria for judging a proposed D.Min project

The proposed project –

- Is the proposed project sufficiently narrow to be accomplished in the allotted time (is it “do-able”)?
- Is the project applicable to the student’s ministry?
- Is the project appropriate to the D.Min. studies?
- Does the proposal evidence sufficient research to consider it an informed proposal?
- Does the student have a clear concept of the possibilities and limitations of the project?
- Is there a way to evaluate the benefit of the project?

Viability –

- Is the project viable in the ministry setting?
- Does the proposal evidence a valid Biblical/theological background?
- Is the proposal developed in such a way that it can be completed and such that evaluation is possible?
- Are the constructs definable and researchable?

Integrity with the ministry setting –

- Does the proposed project meet a need in the ministry setting?
- Is the project directly related to the student’s ministry?
- Are the proposed issues being considered in theological, biblical and historical contexts as well as in the ministry setting?
- Have the issues relating to church ministry, understanding of persons and processes been explored insofar as they are presupposed by the project?

The Doctor of Ministry project should integrate in one focused undertaking the skills, insights and understanding produced by the various components of the D.Min. program. As a result the project should:

- **Expand our understanding of ministry,**
- **Focus in the practice of ministry,**
- **Reflect the learning of new skills,**
- **Exhibit disciplined research, analytical methods and quality writing,**
- **Demonstrate a familiarity with and use of key literature, and**
- **Be the capstone of the D.Min. program.**

Criteria for judging the proposal itself.
(Your proposal should follow this sequence.)

- Is there a clear statement of context for the ministry and the needs this ministry will address?
- Is there a clear and adequately developed thesis statement?
- Is this thesis statement supported with essential biblical and theological themes?
- Is a workable schedule or action plan for the proposed project included?
- Are the objectives clearly stated (including a statement of ministry skills to be employed and/or developed) as well as a means for assessing the accomplishment of the objectives?
- Is a tentative outline of the project report included?
- Does the proposal contain a tentative bibliography?

In addition:

Doctoral proposals must be written but also will be presented orally to the instructors and a group of peers.

The proposal itself should be 10-15 pages in length.

The appendix to the proposal (in addition to the 10-15 pages) must contain the educational background and work history of the proposer.

Doctor of Ministry Project Proposal Guidelines
Sample Outline for a Proposal

1. Title
 - a. Title will reflect your thesis
 - b. Title page
2. Thesis Statement
 - a. Concise statement of your thesis (two or three sentences)
3. Context: General
 - a. What need are you addressing?
4. Context: Local
 - a. The context of your ministry and how the project will meet a need there.
5. Biblical and Theological Foundations
 - a. Preliminary thinking about foundational biblical texts.
 - b. Concise discussion of the theological concepts your project will build on or illuminate.
6. Proposal
 - a. How will your thesis be enacted in your context?
7. Methodology
 - a. A specific discussion of the methods used in your project.
8. Action Plan
 - a. Plot the steps of your project on a timeline.
9. Project Objectives
 - a. What are your specific objectives?
 - b. What strategies will help you meet those objectives?
10. Ministry Skills
 - a. List and define the ministry skills that are essential to this project.
11. Assessment
 - a. Is your project measurable?
 - b. How will you measure your results?
12. Tentative Paper Outline
 - a. Outline your final paper. How will you organize the essential components?
13. Tentative Bibliography
 - a. List of resources that could potentially inform your work.
 - b. Do not narrow the list to those you will quote.
14. Appendix A - One Page Resume
 - a. Educational background and work history of the author.
15. Other Tentative Appendices

Doctor of Ministry Project Proposal Guidelines Sample Outline for a Thesis

1. Title
 - a. Title will reflect your thesis
 - b. Title page
2. Thesis Statement
 - a. Concise statement of your thesis (two or three sentences)
3. Context: General
 - a. What broad need of the church are you addressing?
4. Context: Local
 - a. How is this need typically and/or uniquely expressed in local congregations?
5. Biblical and Theological Foundations
 - a. Preliminary thinking about foundational biblical texts.
 - b. Concise discussion of the theological concepts your project will build on or illuminate.
6. Methodology
 - a. What driving questions, logical thread, or progression of ideas will drive your thesis, lend it focus, and keep it on track? Think in terms of the progression from biblical foundations to theological doctrines to practical insights and rules of art for ministry, but not merely in terms of topics. Be as specific at every stage as possible
7. Practical Implications and Expectations
 - a. On what areas of ministry do you think your thesis will have the most practical bearing?
 - b. How do you envision its implications contributing to the vitality of pastoral or congregational ministry?
8. Tentative Paper Outline
 - a. Outline your final paper. How will you organize the essential components?
9. Action Plan
 - a. Propose a timeline for the submission of the major divisions or chapters of your thesis.
10. Tentative Bibliography
 - a. List of resources that could potentially inform your work.
 - b. Do not narrow the list to those you will quote.
11. Appendix A - One Page Resume
 - a. Educational background and work history of the author.
12. Other Tentative Appendices