

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES AND PROCESS

Timeframe and Length of Project

The project proposal process should begin after the completion of 12-credit hours and before the completion of 18-credit hours. Completion of the Proposal Writing Workshop is also required. Once the proposal has been approved by the Advanced Degrees Committee, the student should make a written request of candidacy to the program director.

The project itself will be 100 pages or equivalent. Equivalency is determined on the basis of the media used (e.g. video, podcast, collection/evaluation of data) and in consultation with the faculty advisor. The project should be completed within six years of beginning the program.

Purpose

The purpose of the D.Min. project is to enhance the professional competence and understanding of the student. Consequently, the project must have a professional focus, provide opportunity for reflection on professional development, occasion the opportunity for the student to integrate academic learning experiences with the professional dimensions of ministry, and move the student forward in his/her understanding and practice of ministry. It is not expected that every project will be “an original contribution to knowledge,” but it must make a significant contribution to the student’s perception of or competence in ministry and to the knowledge and practice of ministry. A student must be prepared to defend the relevance of this topic in the proposal to the Advanced Degrees Committee and incorporate this understanding of that relevance into the project itself.

Approaches

There are several avenues that might be pursued in a project. The following are the most obvious, but these are not intended to exclude other possibilities which the student may wish to propose:

- a) Action/reflection model—a presentation of the results growing out of some direct engagement within a context of ministry.
- b) Program model—a presentation or description of program possibilities (educational, liturgical, homiletical, pastoral, etc.) designed by the student for his/her work.
- c) Thesis or essay—a study of some topic related to the integration of one’s academic work and professional focus.

Advisor and Second Reader

You will begin by choosing an advisor in consultation with the director of the Advanced Degrees Program. The advisor, who will also serve as an academic guide, must be on the faculty of the University of the South.

You will discuss the topic on which you intend to write with your advisor. Your advisor will direct you in shaping the proposal, defining the issue or problem, understanding the method of research to be used, and in preparing an adequate bibliography. Once your advisor has agreed upon the content of your proposal, you will submit it to the Advanced Degrees Committee for approval.

You will also need a second reader. You may suggest a second reader from outside the faculty for the Committee to consider, but no formal invitation can be extended except by the director.

Institutional Research Board

Before you begin a project that involves research into living subjects, you should consult the Institutional Research Board (IRB) website

<http://www.sewanee.edu/offices/dean/information-for-faculty/institutional-review-board/>

The website states: "The goal of the University of the South IRB is to assist Principal Investigators at the University of the South in their efforts to protect the rights and welfare of individuals who participate in research conducted at or under the auspices of the University, and to ensure the University of the South's compliance with federal regulations regarding the protection of human subjects. To meet these goals, the IRB will provide Principal Investigators with information about ways to design their research projects in a manner to minimize potential harm to human subjects, review all planned research involving human subjects prior to initiation of the research, approve research that meets established criteria for protection of human subjects, and monitor approved research to ensure ongoing protection of human subjects."

If you are in any doubt, consult the director of the program.

Proposal Content

The project proposal (3-5 typewritten pages) should state clearly:

- the topic and issue or problem, and a thesis about the topic, issue, or problem
- the limiting factors anticipated
- the logical progress of the proposed task
- anticipated length of the written component
- the amount of academic credit the student wishes to earn (3 or 6 hours)
- a tentative bibliography
- answers to the following questions:
 - a) What type of project is to be undertaken?
 - b) What is the situation or problem that is the starting point for the investigation?

- c) How does this project relate to work already undertaken in the program and how will it go beyond that work?
- d) What method(s) will be used in researching the topic? Stated another way, how will you get your information and data?
- e) What will be the primary sources of reflection used in completing the project?
- f) How will the project contribute to the on-going practice of ministry?
- g) What is the relationship of this project to your present and long-range goals?

The project should have a professional focus. It should provide opportunities for reflection on professional development, for the integration of academic learning experiences and one's own professional situation, and for moving forward in one's understanding and practice of ministry.

An important dimension of projects is evaluation. Evaluation designs and instruments must be spelled out. It is also important to state clearly the logical sequence of the steps in the proposal. Show how you move from one point to the next. The student must answer in the proposal the question "how?" at every level and every stage of the project.

Approval or Resubmission of the Proposal

Once a proposal is submitted, the Advanced Degrees Committee can either approve or disapprove it. If approved, the student begins to write the project. If the Committee disapproves it, they suggest changes to a proposal that will require some rewriting or rethinking before resubmission.

One of the major problems seen in project proposals is the student's failure to state clearly and concretely what the project plans to do. The student must look for hidden assumptions, state and demonstrate the assumptions, and have no unexamined and unarticulated assumptions in the proposal. The goals being pursued as a result of the project must be clearly stated.

(Rev. 5/19/17, subject to change.)