



THESIS PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

DUKE UNIVERSITY DIVINITY
SCHOOL DOCTOR OF MINISTRY



The D.Min. thesis is expected to be a polished theological analysis of a question or issue pertinent to the student's area of ministry. The thesis is not expected to be a piece of original research based on the use of social science research methods but an analysis of already collected data informed by the classical theological disciplines (e.g. Bible, theology, church history) and insight derived from the student's years of experience in ministry. It must demonstrate the student's ability to contribute to the church's discourse about the ministries and practices of Christian communities.

DMin Statement of Interest

Composing the Statement of Interest (SOI) is the first step in writing the DMin thesis. The purpose of the SOI is to give the DMin director and the DMin Oversight Committee a sketch of the student's initial research interests so that they may link the student with members of the faculty whose areas of expertise best compliment the student's research interests.

The SOI should be between 400-500 words (not including bibliography). It has three parts. First, it should state the general question or problem that the student would like to explore in the thesis. For example:

- how a robust theology of realized eschatology might shape a congregation's ministry to the poor of their community.
- how leadership roles of laywomen have changed in the years since women have been ordained. This portion should go on to give an account of why this is an area of interest or potentially important for the student's ministry.

Second, the SOI should specify the approach or angle the thesis will take in its exploration of the general question. For example:

- the thesis will examine the realized eschatologies of the Gospel of John, Gregory of Nyssa, and Dorothy Day to provide a model for thinking about our ministry among the poor.
- the thesis will compare the changing roles of the United Methodist Women in local congregations and conferences in the Southeastern Jurisdiction and those in the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

The SOI's description of this approach should be informed by research in the secondary scholarship on the topic. It also should explain why this approach might be a fruitful angle and why it will help address concerns important to the student's ministry. Finally, the SOI should have a bibliography of no fewer than 5 references (books and articles, preferably from scholarly publications).

Due Date: The Last Monday in November. A copy of the SOI should be submitted electronically to Office of the Registrar (academics@div.duke.edu).

By December 25, the DMin Oversight Committee will contact students with the name of faculty members who have agreed to be their faculty advisor and second reader. During the January term, students can be in touch with their advisor to discuss the SOI and how best to proceed with research.

PREPARATION OF THESIS

The writing of a thesis will ordinarily take one to two years. Longer periods require an extension approved in advance by the Associate Dean for Academic Programs.

The final thesis should be 30,000 to 40,000 words in length, including notes and bibliography. (A different thesis length may be approved by the supervisor in cases where it is warranted by both the nature and quality of the project.) For information about the format of the thesis, see the D.Min. Thesis Style Guide.

- Students develop the first draft of the thesis in consultation with their supervisor. It is advisable that individual chapters or portions thereof be submitted in stages to the supervisor for review.
- Students are strongly advised to bring their second reader into the process of review and revision from as early a date as possible.
- Drawing on the recommendations of the supervisor and second reader, a student next revises the first draft of all chapters, preparing a final draft of the thesis.
- The final draft should be submitted by the first day of March of the year in which the student hopes to graduate. Students must give their supervisor and second reader four weeks to review this draft. The supervisor and second reader may decide: a) that the thesis is ready for submission, b) that the thesis requires some minor revisions, or c) that it needs more substantial revision. If substantial revision is required, or if the supervisor and second reader cannot both agree to accept the thesis, the supervisor may suggest that it be looked at in part or in full by one or more additional readers. If revisions are required, the student will make them and then resubmit the thesis. A majority of persons reviewing the thesis must agree to its acceptance before it is submitted to the chair of the D.Min. Oversight Committee.
- When the supervisor and reader(s) decide that a thesis is ready, the student will submit a pdf copy of the thesis to the D.Min. Oversight Committee chair, who will either approve the thesis as is, return it to the student for minor revision, or, if warranted, refer it to the D.Min. Oversight Committee for further consideration. Reasons for such a referral will vary, so the Committee will determine the appropriate next step on a case-by-case basis.
- The supervisor, reader(s), and the Committee chair must sign an original copy of both the Thesis Title signature page and the Thesis Abstract Title signature page. The student will have responsibility for submitting these pages with the final version of the thesis.
- The approval process detailed above must be completed at least three weeks prior to graduation.
- Students are reminded to “Apply to Graduate” through DukeHub by the appropriate deadline in the semester that they intend to complete their thesis.

ACADEMIC PROBATION AND REMOVAL FROM THE D.MIN. PROGRAM

Rationale:

Faculty members are charged with guiding and encouraging students while also upholding high academic standards. Ordinarily, these aims are in concert, but occasionally, when the quality of a student's work falls below expectation, they may appear to conflict. Faculty must then provide a reasonable opportunity for a student to succeed, though not at the expense of violating academic integrity and thereby undermining the school's mission.

The following procedure is meant to provide students with sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their likelihood of success and to provide a means by which students whose work is nevertheless judged to be of insufficient quality may be fairly removed from the D.Min. program.

Procedure:

In the event that a student's work on the thesis is judged by the supervisor and reader(s) to fall below the minimal standard required for successful completion of the program, the following steps will be taken:

- 1) The student will be notified by the supervisor concerning the specific nature of the deficiencies.
- 2) The student will be notified by the Office of Academic Formation and Programs that he/she has entered a probationary period of two months, by the end of which he/she is required to submit revised work to the supervisor and reader(s) that satisfies all concerns.
- 3) If by the end of the probationary period the supervisor and reader(s) judge the revised work to be sufficiently improved to merit the expectation that the student will complete the program successfully, the student will be returned to full status.
 - A) A probationary student who is reinstated to full status must continue to make satisfactory progress toward the completion of the thesis. Reinstatement is no guarantee of successful completion of the degree. A student can be reverted to probationary status if he/she again fails to provide work of satisfactory quality.
- 4) If at the end of the probationary period the supervisor and reader(s) judge the revised work to be insufficiently improved, the student will be removed from the D.Min. program and awarded the Th.M. degree.
 - A) Within thirty days of the sending of notification of removal (and only if the Th.M. degree has not already been officially awarded), the student may appeal this decision in writing to the Associate Dean for Academic Formation and Programs. In such a case, three faculty members, at least one of whom will be a member of the D.Min. Oversight Committee, will be assigned by the Associate Dean to review the thesis

pages the student has submitted to date along with the comments of the supervisor and reader(s). A majority of these three faculty members will determine whether to uphold the decision of the supervisor and reader(s) or to overturn the decision and possibly to request that:

- i) a new supervisor and/or reader be assigned, and/or
- ii) the student make substantive changes to the thesis within a specified period of time.

B) The agreement on the part of the supervisor and reader(s) and on the part of the panel of three Duke Divinity School faculty members that a student's work is not of acceptable quality will be considered final.