

Doctor of Ministry Program Manual

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I. INTRODUCTION – OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

PURPOSE OF DEGREE

Meadville Lombard Theological School, one of two Unitarian Universalist seminaries in the United States, offers a Doctor of Ministry program for advanced professional studies. The mandate of this program is to foster excellence in liberal religious ministry and scholarship. The Doctor of Ministry (DMin) is an advanced professional degree, presupposing a first professional degree (MDiv, or its equivalent). It is entered after a period of formal engagement in ministry (defined as a minimum of three years), and is designed to prepare women and men for responsible religious leadership in a wide variety of settings.

This professional doctoral program is designed to enhance the theological and practical skills of religious professionals. The program is dedicated to the transformation of congregations, agencies, and the cultural systems in which we live and work. The program promotes these objectives through enlarging and deepening the abilities, competences and theological acumen of religious professionals. Through this program, experienced religious professionals can engage with peers and faculty in an educational process that integrates the theological and the practical as it relates to the academy and the religious community. Learning is collegial, participatory, and interdisciplinary, providing an opportunity for reflection on one's experience and context of ministry.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The program is designed to enhance the communication, analytic, and leadership skills of its participants toward the goal of structural change within the contexts of ministry. Students admitted to this program, by virtue of their application materials, have demonstrated competence in ministerial leadership. This program is intended to strengthen, deepen and expand these areas of competence. Participants in the program, in consultation with their faculty committee, will develop a specialization of focus that demonstrates:

1. increased skills in critical analysis, theological reflection, systematic thinking and reflective practice;
2. increased awareness of the impact of culture on persons and the responsibility of the church for public witness and social justice engagement;
3. increased effectiveness in constructing and implementing congregational or community initiatives of compassion and care, theological reflection, religious education, the creative arts, or social outreach;
4. increased leadership abilities in spirituality and/or organizations.

The program is designed to enhance the communication, analytic, and leadership skills of its participants toward the goal of structural change within the contexts of ministry. The outcomes # 1 and # 2 serve as the basis of assessment for the consultation process and the integrative review. Outcomes # 2 and # 3 are assessed in light of the successful completion of the DMin project by means of the doctoral project seminar, the final oral faculty review, and the DMin colloquia.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Requirements

- i. MDiv degree (or its equivalent), with a grade average of “B” in previous academic work
- ii. A minimum of three years of post MDiv professional ministry experience
- iii. Evidence of the applicant’s ability to utilize the context of ministry as a learning environment
- iv. Evidence of the applicant’s ability to work and learn collaboratively
- v. Demonstration of a capacity for self-reflection, self-analysis, and self-directed learning

Application Procedure

Action by the Faculty Committee on Admissions will be taken when the following steps have been completed:

- i. Receipt of completed application form with required essays
- ii. Receipt of official transcripts of all academic work beyond the high school level whether or not a degree was awarded. These must be requested by the

applicant and forwarded by the granting institution directly to Meadville Lombard Theological School.

- iii. Receipt of four letters of reference assessing the applicant's academic and professional ability. References should include a professor (or someone familiar with the applicant's intellectual abilities) with whom one has studied, a person in leadership at one's place of ministry, a professional colleague or associate, and a person of the applicant's choosing.
- iv. Receipt of non-refundable \$55.00 application fee
- v. Interview with the Meadville Lombard Doctor of Ministry Committee, if deemed necessary

Details regarding each of these application items are described in the application packet available from the Admissions office.

COOPERATIVE DMIN PROGRAMS

Meadville Lombard Theological School cooperates with a variety of institutions in the DMin Program. With prior approval, advance work in such institutions is accepted as the equivalent of three courses toward the DMin. degree. Normally such preparation includes the necessary training and supervision to enable the student to apply for member status in a specialized field of ministry. Work taken in these approved programs can be applied as credit for up to three of the elective courses needed to complete the degree.

Application must be made separately to the cooperating institution. Additional tuition charges are payable to the affiliated program.

ADVISORY PROCESS

The successful completion of the DMin program depends upon the collaborative critical reflection and interaction of peers with each other and with faculty. The backbone of this collaborative process is the Consultation Sequence (see below), which presumes a close working relationship with the student's Faculty Advisory Committee (see below) and with one's peers.

Peer Process

Program participants are understood as fully qualified practitioners of ministry. The entire process of the program presumes open interaction between fellow professionals.

For details of the peer evaluative process, see **Consultation Sequence** below.

DMin Faculty Advisory Committee

During **Orientation**, in discussions between the student and faculty, a two member Faculty Advisory Committee will be chosen to work with the student for the duration of her/his studies. One member of the committee will be the DMin Director, Susann Pangerl. The selection of the additional faculty member will depend upon the particular focus of the student's research area. If it is deemed necessary, due to the nature of the student's proposed doctoral project, an additional member will be added to the committee to insure the use of professional standards in the ongoing evaluation of the project's development and completion. One faculty member will be designated as the first reader; the other as second reader. Most correspondence will occur between the first reader and the student. This Committee will work closely with the student throughout the degree process, helping to coordinate the academic coursework and the **Doctoral Project**. Work on the **Doctoral Project** must be done in close consultation with this faculty committee. Their approval is required before the **Integrative Review** (see below) can occur.

The DMin Director facilitates the **Consultation Sequence**, and teaches the **Doctoral Project Seminar**. The DMin Director coordinates the various components of the program. Communications regarding general information, academic procedures, professional components, personnel, and the process of the program should be directed to her.

II PROGRAM OF STUDY

OVERVIEW

The DMin Program begins with **Orientation**, following acceptance into the program, and concludes with the **Community Colloquium**, preceding graduation. During **Orientation**, new students meet with the DMin Director. During this meeting, decisions regarding the composition of the student's faculty advisory committee are confirmed, a program of study is proposed, and an initial formulation of the type of doctoral project is discussed.

The DMin courses are offered primarily in an intensive format so that ministers need not leave their positions for prolonged periods of time. Intensive courses meet daily for a one or two week period in January and July. Students who rely exclusively on the intensive format will need three to six years (maximum) to complete the degree. The program must be completed within six years of matriculation. Continuation beyond six years will be permitted in cases where there is evidence of active, sustained pursuit of the degree. Beyond six years, an annual continuation fee of \$400.00 will be assessed.

ACADEMIC COURSE WORK

Number and Types of Courses

Eight academic courses plus the **Doctoral Seminar**, a **Doctoral Project** and the successful completion of **the consultation sequence** (see below) are required to complete this degree. Each student must take the **Doctoral Seminar** offered in the Spring quarter. At least four of the eight courses must be taken at Meadville Lombard.

Students may combine courses taken in both the intensive and the residential formats. Courses, both in the intensive and residential format, are also available through the ACTS consortium. The student has great flexibility in designing a program of study that best serves the goal of increased professional competence.

LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE REQUIRED

The DMin Program requires a minimum “B” (3.0) average. See Meadville Lombard Community Handbook regarding the institutional guidelines for dismissal from the program (both academic and non-academic).

CONSULTATION SEQUENCE

As part of the DMin process, the successful completion of the **Consultation Sequence** is required. The **process** of each consultation is one of peer review, critique, and faculty facilitation (by the DMin Director), of the developing doctoral proposal. The **purpose** of the **Consultation Sequence** is to move students towards the formulation of the **doctoral project proposal**. Each level of consultation is intended to ensure that students move towards a deeper level of theological and contextual analysis associated with their particular project. The **paper** required for each level of consultation must have the prior approval of the Faculty Advisory Committee members.

Face-to-face consultations are offered twice yearly. Generally, these consultations are scheduled on a designated Saturday in January and July. Specific consultation dates are posted on Moodle. Additional consultations can be scheduled at other times if there is sufficient interest.

INITIAL CONSULTATION

The **Initial Consultation** assists students in refining their initial project proposal. The **Initial Consultation** is designed to provide advice regarding the appropriateness, scope and ethical considerations regarding the doctoral project. It is designed to provide guidance regarding the theological and interpretative framework that will be used to describe and interpret the project.

Required for the first consultation is a **two page paper describing a “project” in the practice of ministry** in a specific place, with specific persons or with a defined condition. The practice of ministry being described may be the student’s “practice” or someone else’s “practice.” Sufficient copies of this two page paper must be available for the consultation.

This two-page paper should include the following:

- In **one sentence** describe the specific “issue in the practice of ministry” under consideration. Identify the theological concerns to be addressed.
- In **one half page**, describe the contextual boundaries of the practice of ministry, the settings and procedures, the persons or groups, the problems and possibilities.
- Is there one specific project/location/arena that provides a focus for the above?
- In **one paragraph**, consider the potential research tool (and/or combinations of tools) which might be used to critically assess and evaluate the identified “issue.” Possible research tools are, for example, field notes, verbatims, interviews, questionnaires, historical documents, journals, etc.
- In **one paragraph**, consider potentially helpful sources for informing theories concerning this practice of ministry. Indicate the result of an appropriate **literature search**.
- List specific courses taken or anticipated.

A written consultation report will be completed during this consultation. One copy will be completed during this consultation. One copy will be placed in the DMin office file with copies to the student and the faculty advisors.

ADVANCED CONSULTATION

The **Advanced Consultation** provides a deeper level of critical reflection and methodological tools to facilitate the students’ completion of the design of their project in ministry.

Required for the **Advanced Consultation** is a two-page paper detailing in greater refinement the anticipated doctoral project. Sufficient copies of this document must be available for the consultation. This document should include:

- A succinct statement of the central issue or problem and the relevant theological considerations
- A brief, one paragraph description of how this project grows out of the course of study
- Tentative learning goals of the proposed project

- A statement of the central theological resources to be used, and the relationship of these issues to the student's theology of ministry
- A brief bibliography

FINAL CONSULTATION

The **Final Consultation** involves a peer review of the proposed doctoral project proposal. The **Final Consultation** is designed to examine, in detail, the coherence of the interpretive theological framework that the student is bringing to the doctoral project. It is designed to examine the appropriateness and consistency that this framework provides in communicating the project effectively to the intended audience. It is designed to provide any final advice regarding the design of the project, and the methods used to evaluate the project. The ethical issues regarding the proposed project will be reviewed.

Required for participation in the Final Consultation is the submission of a doctoral project proposal. The proposal should be limited to not more than fifteen double-spaced pages. Copies of the project proposal must be provided to the final consultation participants not less than one week before the consultation date. Members of the Faculty Advisory Committee must sign the form in the back of this manual which certifies that the project proposal is a credible draft ready for the final consultation. The consultation group will indicate specific needs they feel must be addressed in the proposal to the student. A written consultation report will be provided following this consultation. One copy will be sent to the DMin office file, with copies to the student and faculty advisors.

The project proposal is to be written in clear, non-technical language. It is to be typed and should demonstrate correct form, spelling, grammar and punctuation.

The proposal should contain the following components:

- **Title:** The title of the proposed project must identify the subject of the study, be descriptive and intelligible to the reader. **Limit the title to the minimum of words necessary.**
- **Nature and Purpose:** The student proposes a **problem** or area of interest, the study of which will contribute both to her/his own practice of ministry and to others who are interested in the field. From this problem or interest grows a **central thesis or question** to be explored. The theological questions to be addressed must be specified. The student is to clearly state her/his theological understanding of this aspect of ministry.
- **Learning Goals:** List the learning goals. Learning goals include skills which are intended to be developed and/or knowledge which is intended to be mastered. In setting out these learning goals, students should give particular attention to the

ways in which previous work has provided background, resources or stimulation to the project idea.

- **The Design:** In outline or narrative form, state the steps which must be undertaken to achieve the learning goals described above **along with projected dates by which each step will be accomplished.** Include a detailed outline of procedures which will be followed in the project itself.
- **Annotated Bibliography:** A preliminary working bibliography must be included. Entries should be annotated.

CANDIDACY STATUS

A distinction is made between admission to the DMin Program and admission to candidacy for the degree. Admission to candidacy for the degree is a critical evaluative milestone for the faculty and for the student. While admission to candidacy for the degree is no guarantee that the student will complete the degree requirements, it is an affirmation that substantial academic progress has been achieved by the student.

INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

Successful completion of the **Final Consultation** is the prerequisite for scheduling the **Integrative Review.** The **Integrative Review** is a conversation between the student, her/his Faculty Advisory Committee, and one additional faculty member. The conversation will focus on the student's project proposal, which is the outcome of the Consultation Sequence, its relationship to the student's academic work and ministerial context. At the end of the **Integrative Review,** the committee will decide whether the **project proposal** should be approved.

If approved, the student will be granted "Candidacy Status" for the DMin degree. It is the prerogative of the **Integrative Review Committee** to recommend additional requirements or stipulations if deemed necessary. Successful completion of the **Integrative Review,** is required before admission to the **Doctoral Project Seminar.**

Evaluative Criteria

- Project proposal (with annotated bibliography)
- Faculty Advisory Committee signatures certifying that student's doctoral project proposal is satisfactory.
- Review of admissions records: in particular the student's goals for entry into the DMin program

- Academic course evaluations: the printed transcript and comments from professors involved

Timing of Integrative Review

The Integrative Review is to occur following:

- A minimum of five (5) academic courses;
- Successful completion of **Final Consultation**
- Certification by student's Faculty Advisory Committee of a credible **Doctoral Project Proposal**
- Minimum of a B (3.0) academic average

The Integrative Review is to occur before:

- Entry into the **Doctoral Project Seminar**
- The **Oral Review of Doctoral Project**

III Doctoral Project

The candidate will complete a doctoral project that addresses a significant issue in ministry and contributes to greater understanding and integration of the various theological disciplines in relation to the practice of ministry. Since the DMin Program is designed to enhance the practice of ministry, the doctoral project must demonstrate the candidate's ability for critical theological, historical and ethical reflection, explore imaginative and effective approaches to ministry, engage in evaluation of the context and the approach to ministry, as well as contribute to new knowledge and practice.

The doctoral project is a demonstration of praxis. A range of differing forms, appropriate to the candidate's context of ministry, are possible. These may include research manuscripts, workbooks and manuals, instructional videos, musical scores, or other praxis-based projects. Participants are understood as fully qualified practitioners of ministry who submit their project for discussion and evaluation. The project is a demonstration of practice, an exploration of applied reflection, or creative work. They are not considered tests to prove ministerial competency.

DOCTORAL PROJECT FORMS

Project in Ministry Paper

The subject of the paper should be a topic, an issue, or a problem central to the practice of ministry. It is for ministers seeking to enhance excellence in the practice of the profession. **It is therefore to be grounded in the concrete empirical data of ministerial practice.** It is a critical study of such practice in which the results of the study are communicated in such a fashion to one's peers that they can carry on a more effective ministry. It is not an academic paper, grounded primarily in books. It is not simply a research paper which may gather and interpret data, but does not deal with the relation of the data to ministerial practice.

Form of the Paper

- The candidate may develop the doctoral project out of the context of her/his own ministry setting. The paper should explicate the underlying theory informing the project, describe the design and implementation, and engage in critical reflection on what has been learned that can be shared with one's professional peers.
- The candidate may base the project on the study of some aspect of an ongoing historical or contemporary ministry performed by others. The same elements of underlying theory, operational analysis, and critical evaluative reflection noted above should be included.

Length and Style of the Paper

- The components listed above are important elements to be considered in constructing the final version of the paper. Delimit the topic so that it is manageable within the limits of space and time in your program. The paper is **not** a Ph.D. dissertation.
- Do not exceed 30 double-spaced pages. Strive for clarity and readability. Use case materials, illustrations, and documentation effectively. Avoid excessive reliance on secondary sources. The final version should be of publishable quality. It is the expectation of this program that these papers will be published.

RESEARCH THESIS

The candidate may engage in an advanced study of some aspect of historical or contemporary ministry performed by others. This study will result in a written thesis of no more than 150 pages. It will involve research and scholarly rigor. The purpose of the

thesis is to contribute to the practice of ministry and the wider liberal church rather than to a narrow focus on the academy.

ARTISTIC PROJECT

Artistic projects may be developed in a variety of forms. In each case, close collaboration with the Faculty Advisory Committee is imperative. If the candidate chooses this form of project, the **Consultation Sequence** will be used to develop the written rationale, design, and documentation for such a project. Final evaluation of such projects will be done in accord with the standards appropriate to the medium and the areas of ministry under exploration.

CLINICAL/RESEARCH SUPERVISION

The academic program of Meadville Lombard provides for academic supervision and advising. All clinical work and collection of research material shall be governed by the policies and procedures of the institutions in which the clinical/research is being conducted. All clinical supervision required is to be provided by the site where the clinical work/research is being conducted. If the site for research is a congregation or other community organization without explicit research guidelines, informed consent must be obtained from an appropriately constituted body from within that community. Students in congregational settings are encouraged to establish a covenant with the congregation that the proposed research project be understood within the framework of "shared research."

ETHICAL REVIEW OF PROJECTS

Ethical issues regarding each doctoral project will be reviewed by the student and the student's Faculty Advisory Committee prior to the acceptance of the final project proposal. Ethical issues shall be re-examined during the **Final Consultation** and before research is started. Significant shifts in the research methodology will be reviewed by the student's Faculty Advisory Committee and appropriate other faculty regarding ethical issues before these changes are implemented.

THE DOCTORAL PROJECT SEMINAR

Once the doctoral proposal has been approved, the doctoral project is conducted. Following the collection and preliminary analysis of the data, the candidate meets with the Faculty Advisory Committee for a review of the project. The candidate will work toward having a draft of the written materials for the doctoral project ready for the **Seminar**.

An organizational first meeting will establish dates for the discussion of each candidate's project. The **Seminar** gives each candidate an opportunity to present and refine the written materials for her/his doctoral project. A designated peer participant will be responsible for initiating reflection for each project presentation. The purpose of the **Seminar** is to produce a final version of the doctoral project written materials.

Once the final version is approved by the candidate's Faculty Advisory Committee, the candidate will schedule the **Oral Review**.

ORAL REVIEW

The Faculty Advisory Committee plus one additional faculty member will meet with the candidate for the **Oral Review**. The final project and supporting documentation must be in the hands of the Committee members **no later than two weeks before** the scheduled **Oral Review**. Upon successful completion of the **Oral Review**, the candidate will be graduated at the next degree awarding convocation.

COMMUNITY COLLOQUIA

As a community of scholars, Meadville Lombard Theological School values the opportunities for collegial interaction in pursuit of excellence in the practice of liberal religious ministry and scholarship. To this end, following the successful completion of the **Oral Review**, candidates will present their work to the broader scholarly and ministerial communities as part of the colloquia process associated with the June convocation.

IV Appendices

POSSIBLE TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION OF DMIN PROGRAM

Year One:

- Orientation
- Initial Consultation
- Two Courses

Year Two:

- Advanced Consultation
- Two Courses

Year Three:

- Two Courses
- Final Consultation
- Integrative Review

Advancement to Candidacy

- With Satisfactory Completion of Integrative Review

Year Four – Six:

- Additional Courses (As Needed)
- Conduct Doctoral Project Research
- Doctoral Seminar
- Oral Review
- Community Colloquium

The following two documents provide a visual outline of your progress through the program. They are for your personal use.

DMIN PROGRAM SUMMARY

Name: _____ Date Admitted: _____

Faculty Advisory Committee Members: _____

I. CONSULTATION SEQUENCE

- Orientation (January & July) _____
- Advisory Committee Approval for Initial Project Consultation _____
- M 520 Initial Consultation _____
- Advisory Committee Approval Advanced Consultation _____
- M 521 Advanced Consultation _____
- Advisory Committee Approval for Final Consultation _____
- M 522 Final Consultation _____

II. INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

- Minimum of five courses completed _____
- Successful Completion of Final Consultation _____
- Project Proposal (with annotated bibliography) _____
- G.P.A. of 3.0 or above _____
- Admission to Candidacy _____

III. M 501 Doctoral Seminar _____

IV. Completion of Written Component of Doctoral Project _____

V. Oral Review of Doctoral Project _____

VII. Community Colloquium _____

VIII. Doctoral Project Presented to Library _____

IX. Graduation _____



ANTICIPATED CONSULTATION DATES

All dates are Saturdays. The time of the consultation is from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. Meetings generally take place on the first floor of the main building.

January 15, 2011

July 16, 2011