

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Program

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PROFESSIONAL PROJECT GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The Professional Project is the culminating experience of the Doctor of Ministry program. A Professional Project is an opportunity for a participant to: (1) select an area of ministry, (2) undertake theological and theoretical research about it, (3) design a project or program for ministry in which the participant will provide leadership working with others, and (4) evaluate the theory, design, and execution of his or her leadership in the project. (A “book” option is available for qualified applicants with advance approval. Contact the Doctor of Ministry Project Coordinator.)

Purpose of the Professional Project

The Professional Project is designed to enable the participant:

1. To identify and address specific ministry needs,
2. To discover and apply biblical, theological, and theoretical research to ministry practices,
3. To develop, implement and evaluate a project applied in a ministry context (working in a setting of ministry with others),
4. To measure and evaluate outcomes of ministry activity,
5. To apply data from feedback to improve his or her effectiveness in ministry,
6. To grow in effectiveness through reflective evaluation of ministry practices, and
7. To construct tools or product of ministry that contributes to greater ministry effectiveness for the larger Christian community.

The Doctor of Ministry professional project makes an essential contribution to developing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that a Doctor of Ministry degree suggests. It requires rigorous and disciplined work to complete, but contributes immensely to the participant and to the participant’s ministry environment.

Distinguishing Elements of the Professional Project

What is the difference between a project and a dissertation?

The professional project integrates both the theory and practice of ministry. It is this combination of theory and practice in the field of the participant’s ministry that

distinguishes the Doctor of Ministry Program from Ph.D. programs that focus on academic research. In general, a professional project may be distinguished from Ph.D. or other dissertations as follows:

1. The D.Min. professional project seeks to (a) apply a specific aspect of theoretical learning to a ministry task and measure and evaluate the results, and (b) demonstrate the participant's competency in ministry.
2. The Ph.D. research dissertation seeks to (a) test a hypothesis which can be reported in such a way that it adds to the scholarly literature in the area of study, and (b) demonstrate the participant's competency in testing a theory.

Who are the key people involved in the process?

Primary Participants:

1. The Doctor of Ministry Participant
 - **The participant is responsible for taking the initiative at each stage and meeting the deadlines in the process.**
2. The Doctor of Ministry Project Coordinator
3. The Doctor of Ministry Project Adviser
 - You will be asked to recommend 3 or 4 potential project advisers, but the final selection will be determined by the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program.

Others involved:

4. Those at the public presentation of Project
5. The Project Reader (s)
6. The Doctor of Ministry Project Committee

STAGES OF THE PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

Stage 1: Project Course

Prerequisite:

Completion of core course phase and at least one elective. During the course the participant will:

1. Draft and refine his or her Project Topic and Prospectus.
2. Sharpen skills in research, analysis, and writing.
3. Consider and suggest potential Project Advisers.

What is an acceptable Project?

Projects are varied and cover every possible ministry assignment. There is great latitude in the area of ministry selected. Therefore, the identification of a Project rests primarily with the participant, subject to the approval of the D.Min. Project Committee. The role of the Project Coordinator and Project Adviser is to see that it is developed in a way that is commensurate with the participant's skills and opportunities for ministry, and that it conforms to the academic and ministry requirements a D.Min. Project must meet.

Please remember that all aspects of the project phase involve formal, academic writing and format, and must conform to Turabian and Seminary guidelines.

The first task of a participant is to identify the area of ministry they will focus on in their Project. A participant may base this choice on several factors such as the desire to explore or improve knowledge and skill in an area of ministry or the need to develop and carry out a certain ministry. It will probably be based on a combination of factors.

Stage 2: Project Adviser Selection

What should one consider when selecting a Project Adviser?

There are four things to consider in looking for a Project Adviser.

1. Accessibility,
2. Competence in the aspect of ministry being explored in the Project,
3. Evidence of ability to help in the writing of the Project (i.e., advanced degrees or publications), and
4. Ability to provide critical and supportive feedback.

You should ask the Project Adviser to consult with you about research, Project design, and writing the Project. This will mean several conversations as you think through the Project and consultation while completing the Project. We recommend that you submit completed chapters of the Project (in the draft stage) for critical review and suggestions the Project Adviser may have. Finally, the Project Adviser will review your final draft and write a report regarding your Project to be submitted to AGTS.

Who gives the final approval of a Project Adviser?

The participant will propose a Project Adviser, which AGTS must approve. Guidelines for receiving approval for an adviser:

- ***AGTS professors and adjunct faculty***: It is necessary for the participant to first gain the consent of the AGTS professor to serve as adviser. A participant must have negotiated this with the professor prior to submitting his or her name. It is not necessary to submit the resume of an AGTS professor.

- ***Non-AGTS advisers:*** It is necessary to submit a resume to the Doctor of Ministry Committee for all whom are not approved resident or adjunct professors. This is the responsibility of the participant.

What is the role of a Project Adviser?

The role of the Project Adviser is to:

1. Consult with the participant about research, Project design, and writing the Project report,
2. Engage in discussions with the participant as he or she thinks through the Project,
3. Consult with the participant during the implementation of the Project as required,
4. Advise the participant concerning the writing of the ministry Project report,
5. Review completed chapters of the Project as submitted (in the draft stage) and offer suggestions, and
6. Review the final draft and write a report regarding the Project to the D.Min. Committee.

Note: It is the participant's responsibility to clear all work with the Project Adviser prior to submitting it to AGTS. This includes the Topic, Prospectus, Project chapters, etc.

Stage 3: The Project Topic Approval

The Topic is one of the most crucial stages of the Project. The reason for this is that the Topic must have a clear, sharp, specific focus. The most common problems are Topics that are too broad, too vague, too superficial, or too general. It is highly recommended you work with your Project Adviser from the beginning on the development of your project.

The Project Topic is a formal statement by the student which: a) clarifies what the student intends to do, b) states why it is worth doing, c) spells out how the student intends to execute the Project, and d) identifies what ministry product will result from the project. Successful Topics depend on extensive prior background reading and exposure to the field. A Topic cannot be developed without care, reflection, and effort. Preparation of a Topic is integral to the execution of the Project. Time, work, and effort expended on the Topic will pay off in the execution of the Project.

The purpose of a careful, formal, and precise writing of the Topic is to ensure an adequately conceived Project. A successful proposal can be stated effectively in few words, if those words are carefully honed and arise from a background of substantial preparation. If the Topic does not achieve these standards, the participant is not yet prepared to move ahead with the Project.

Getting started well is vital to success, and those who work with the participant are motivated by concern to help prevent potential problems at the onset, rather than encourage marginal or poorly conceived proposals that will require major reworking at a subsequent date.

What should the Topic contain?

Topics should be from three to five pages long, double-spaced, and contain the following:

1. **Title:** The title should be very specific and precise. It may contain ten to fifteen words in order to give a clear description of what will be done.
2. **Problem:** This should be a clear description of the problem to be examined. It should relate to the Project in very specific terms. It should explore the need in the ministry setting, the skill to be developed, and the knowledge that is to be found. It is important that the problem be described as such, and not as a conclusion the participant has already reached.
3. **The Purpose:** This should be one concise, sharply focused sentence. The intent of this sentence is to provide guidance to the central goal of the Project, and should clearly state the ministry product.
4. **Definition of key terms:** This should identify key terms pertinent to the Project.
5. **Identification of Biblical-Theological Themes for Review:** This should identify several key biblical-theological themes and subjects that will be studied in relation to the project.
6. **Identification of Other Literature Themes for Review:** This should identify several key themes, subjects and theories from the literature that will be studied in relation to the project.
7. **Major Steps:** This section should briefly outline the following Project phases:
 - a) The Research Phase,
 - b) The Planning Phase,
 - c) The Implementation Phase,
 - d) The Evaluation Phase,
 - e) The Writing Phase.
8. **Bibliography.** The beginning bibliography should be included. This section must demonstrate comprehensive research and involve multiple forms of research (i.e. books, journals, etc.) that represent the breadth of the field and varied opinions.

What is the process for Topic approval?

Topic approval is a key stage for the participant. Clearly presented Topics present the least problems for everyone involved. The key to this stage is the participant's clarity about what he or she wishes to achieve in the Project.

The participant must submit **six copies** of the Topic to the D.Min. Office to be distributed to the Project Committee and placed in his or her file. Each Topic will be reviewed by the D.Min. Project Committee, chaired by the Project Coordinator. The committee will act on all submissions and is the final approving body. The committee may approve, approve with minor suggested revisions, or ask that the Topic be resubmitted with suggested changes. The participant will be notified of the outcome, in writing, within one week. When the Topic is approved, the participant may move to the Prospectus stage.

[Note: In some instances, if a participant is able to submit an acceptable Prospectus to the Project Committee, it is possible to bypass the Topic stage.]

Stage 4: The Prospectus Stage

The Prospectus should be viewed as the **plan** for the Project and the **contract** of what the participant will accomplish through the Project. The participant should keep these two concerns in mind. The Prospectus is similar to the Topic, except that 1) **the Project Adviser must approve the prospectus before it is submitted** and 2) it includes a few additional elements.

What should the Prospectus contain?

The Prospectus must include the following elements, in this order, and be double-spaced in correct Turabian form:

1. **Title** (usually this will be taken from the Topic)
2. **Problem** (usually this will be taken from the Topic)
3. **Purpose** (usually this will be taken from the Topic)
4. **Definition of Terms** (usually this will be taken from the Topic but probably is now more comprehensive) Define special terms so that readers know the participant's meaning.
5. **Scope**: This is the "fine print" of the contract. It shows the positive aspect – what the participant is going to do, and the negative aspect – what is not going to be done. It should spell out limiting factors that will operate in the Project. It is also important that the participant ask what is within his or her control. It is here that the participant should try to ensure that the Project's intent is achievable and verifiable.
6. **Identification of Biblical-Theological Themes for Review** (usually this will be taken from the Topic)
7. **Identification of Other Literature Themes for Review** (usually this will be taken from the Topic)
8. **Methodology**: This should build on the major steps of the Topic. Now they should be *spelled out in detail*, with specific indications of what will be done and

how it will be achieved. AGTS realizes that a finely detailed plan may not be possible, but will not accept vague, general statements. This is your plan for the Project. Indicate how you will get data for self-evaluation, and how others will provide evaluation of your leadership. We strongly recommend that recognized survey instruments be used in Projects. These should be identified in the Prospectus. Whether your instrument is used as is, adapted, or created specifically for your project, it must be approved by the Project Committee.

9. **Timetable:** This should interface with your major steps and should include significant time for comprehensive research, planning, action, evaluation and writing. It should be fairly specific in regard to month and date. Dates should be according to the calendar (i.e., evaluation - “December 15th to December 31st” rather than “two weeks”).
10. **Contribution to Ministry:** What is important is that the Project not only be done well, but be significant for the participant's ministry setting and potentially in other settings. It should not be done simply to obtain a degree. The participant should indicate the key contribution(s) from his or her point of view.
11. **Bibliography:** This should be more comprehensive than the one from the Topic. It should be divided into categories areas that are pertinent to the Project. The bibliography is normally four to eight pages (60-120 items), and should be in correct form. It should begin on a new page so that it is separate from the rest of the Prospectus.

What is the process for Prospectus approval?

The Prospectus approval process is as follows:

1. **D.Min. Project Adviser Approval**
The participant will develop the Prospectus, working with their Project Adviser until it is deemed acceptable. Once the Adviser has signed off on the Prospectus, the participant may proceed to the next step.
2. **D.Min. Project Committee Approval**
The participant must submit **six copies** of the Prospectus to the D.Min. Office to be distributed to the Project Committee and placed in his or her file. Each Prospectus will be reviewed by the D.Min. Project Committee, chaired by the Project Coordinator. The committee will act on all submissions and is the final approving body. The committee may approve, approve with suggested revisions, or ask that the Prospectus be resubmitted with suggested changes. The participant will be notified of the outcome within one week. When the Prospectus is approved, the participant may move to the Project stage.

The participant may need to check with the D.Min. Project Coordinator and Project Adviser if adjustments or changes become necessary.

Stage 5: The Project Stage

Implementation

At the Project stage participants will carry out their Projects as described in the Prospectus.

It is important that the participant determines in advance how he or she will know that the objectives of the Project are reached and why. The key question for the participant to ask is, “What information (hard data) will I have on hand to analyze?” For example, when participants share how they feel when they begin the Project, the feelings are subjective. But the way they felt before and after does become “hard data” for the participant to analyze. The objectives, standards of measurement, and methods of measurement should be determined prior to the action phase.

Evaluation

The evaluation phase should be sure to evaluate the theory, design and execution of the Project, as well as the leadership of the participant.

Writing

Remember that a doctoral project is a formal academic document that has a very precise format. It is the most rigorous and demanding writing most students will ever do. It is expected that the Project will be written in a formal academic style that demonstrates clarity, coherence, and professional competence.

There are four questions that should be able to be answered by any reader:

1. How was the participant’s theological, theoretical, and practical understanding of ministry involved?
2. What was done in the action phase?
3. What is the product of ministry?
4. At the conclusion, what is the participant’s analysis of: presuppositions and theory, design and plan for ministry, the participant’s performance, and what key learnings should be shared for others to learn from and/or build upon?

The absence of any of these elements represents an incomplete report.

The text should be between 100-125 pages, excluding notes and appendices. Most workbooks and seminar notes will be included in the appendices. It is expected that the

Project will be free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors. It is not the adviser's primary task to be a proofreader. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for the participant to have someone proficient in English proofread the text.

Once proofread, the participant is advised to submit each chapter to the Project Adviser and Project Coordinator as its first draft is completed. The participant should assume that revisions will be requested in the first draft.

Stage 6 – The Approval Stage

Preliminary Comments

It is often asked, "Must a Project achieve all of its ministry goals to be approved?" While we all hope that Projects will work as planned, the granting of degrees does not hinge on this. It is possible to have a Project work out but not meet the requirements of the degree because the theoretical analysis, Project reporting, and/or evaluation are not adequate. Likewise, it is possible for the Project not to work as planned, but meet the requirements of the degree. It must be remembered that there is an element of risk in the Project because it is a new venture, and often a proposal is being tested.

Approval Process

The completed Project will undergo the following approval process:

1. **Project Adviser Approval**

The candidate's Adviser must approve the completed Project for submission to the D.Min. Project Coordinator.

2. **Project Coordinator Approval**

The Project Coordinator must approve the completed Project for submission to the D.Min. office.

3. **First Reader Approval**

The D.Min. office will send the Project to be read by a reader. The reader is chosen on the basis of his/her competence to judge each particular work. The reader's evaluation is made without consultation with the adviser. However, a copy of the candidate's Prospectus with any approved changes is sent to the reader.

The reader judges the primary strengths and weaknesses of the work, its significance as a contribution to ministry, the adequacy of its logic, coherence,

critical insight, and scholarship, and its style and format. He/she prepares a two to three page critique and evaluates the Project report as one of the following:

- a. Acceptable without change
- b. Acceptable with specific minor changes
- c. Acceptable with specific major changes
- d. Not acceptable with no bar to rewriting
- e. Not acceptable with bar to rewriting

While candidates are anxious to hear the report of the reader, the candidate should remember that all readers have other responsibilities, and need time to fulfill the reading responsibility.

4. **Second reader**

In the event that the first reader does not approve the Project (“d” or “e” above), a second reader will be selected. The Project will then be evaluated following the same guidelines specified for the first reader. This second reader will not be informed that the Project has been read before. If this reader approves the Project, it can be sent to the committee for action after recommendations (if any) are completed.

5. **Oral presentation and evaluation**

Candidates will make an oral presentation of their completed project.

6. **Revisions**

When a Project has been approved, but minor or major revisions are requested, the candidate will be asked to make these revisions in consultation with either the Project Coordinator, the Project Adviser, or the reader. When these changes have been judged acceptable, the D.Min. Project Committee will act on the Project. Candidates should plan time in their schedules for revisions to ensure committee approval before commencement.

7. **Committee action**

During the period between submission of Projects and graduation, the committee meets regularly to act on Projects. It reviews the reports of the Project Adviser, Project Coordinator, and reader(s) and approves the Project for faculty action. It also makes the final recommendation when there is a difference in judgment between reader(s), Project Adviser, and Project Coordinator.

If the Project is judged not acceptable with no bar to rewriting, the student may resubmit the work within a year of the rejection; the adviser continues to serve during that period. The work is then reread and rejudged with the student bearing any additional costs.

The candidate will be notified in writing of the committee’s action.