DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE PROGRAM

HANDBOOK

August 1, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook supplements the Academic Catalog by providing information particular to the Doctor of Ministry degree program. Electronic copies of the catalog and handbook shall be provided to each DMin student as part of orientation to the degree program and any inquirer or applicant upon request.

DMin students are strongly encouraged to read this handbook and related sections of the Academic Catalog at least once each semester and must comply with all of the academic, administrative, and financial policies, protocols, and requirements contained therein. Unfamiliarity with and/or misunderstanding concerning any items and provisions in the catalog or handbook shall not constitute grounds for exceptions.

All students studying in the DMin degree program must comply with the administrative provisions of the Academic Catalog and DMin Program Handbook edition in force during each current academic year of their enrollment, which begins on July 1 of each calendar year and continues until the last day of June the following calendar year. Through the Committee on Academic Programs, the Academic Dean, and/or the Director of the DMin Program, Union Presbyterian Seminary reserves the right, in accordance with sound academic and administrative practices as well as accrediting standards, to interpret, apply, administer, update, amend, and correct the contents of the catalog and handbook, and to deny or to approve exceptions to any matters stated herein.

Questions and comments related to the Academic Catalog or DMin Program Handbook or to how they may be improved are most welcome and may be directed to the following person:

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THE MISSION OF UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY

Mission:
Union Presbyterian Seminary prepares people to be leaders of gospel-inspired transformative change in pursuit of a more just and compassionate world.

Context for Mission:
Union Presbyterian Seminary participates in God's New Creation, the liberation, wholeness, and flourishing that God reveals in Jesus Christ and intends for all.

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?" –Isaiah 43:19

As witnesses to this New Creation, we are called to respond to a suffering world struggling to address multiple interlocking crises, from epidemic violence to systemic oppression to the climate emergency.

Steeped in Christian traditions, equipped to innovate for changing contexts, and in discernment of where the Spirit of God is already at work, we form leaders who will nurture in people an unquenchable longing for—and prepare them to work toward—a more just, faithful, and compassionate church and world.

ACCREDITATION

Union Presbyterian Seminary is accredited by The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (www.sacscoc.org/) to award degrees at the master's and doctoral levels.

The DMin has been approved by The Association of Theological Schools Commission on Accrediting to be offered on our campuses in Richmond and Charlotte.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE PROGRAM

The Doctor of Ministry program is designed to offer experienced ministers a framework for advanced professional study that will help deepen previous academic experiences while integrating new learning with leadership in ministry. This program is offered on the Charlotte and Richmond campuses, with entering cohorts of students admitted on a particular campus in alternating years.

An overall theme, *the church in the world*, provides coherence for the program. Implied in this theme is a concern for how well students relate to contemporary church and contemporary cultures. Students in this program will find opportunities to enhance ministry competencies in such areas as proclamation, evangelism, education, interfaith relations, advocacy through civil society organizations, and other forms of community engagement, depending on their personal and vocational interests. By the end of the program, students will demonstrate a deepened

capacity for theological reflection on the practices of ministry, especially toward ethical witness and social justice.

Program Goals

Three distinct but interrelated program goals, with intended student learning outcomes, have shaped the requirements for this degree program.

Goal 1: Our DMin graduates will be able to articulate advanced understandings of the contemporary church and expressions of culture, and relationships between the two.

Outcome: Students will demonstrate substantive reflection on the church's nature and witness, as well as the world and cultures, grounded in biblical, theological, historical, ethical, and socio-cultural analyses.

Goal 2: Our DMin graduates will advance in their capacities to express the church's public voice for social justice through practices such as proclamation, pastoral care, education, evangelism, interfaith relations, community organizing/advocacy, and other emerging ministries in context.

Outcome: Students will demonstrate advanced capacities for faithful witness and transformative ministry in communities of faith and society.

Goal 3: Our DMin graduates will develop theologically reflective practices for ministries of community witness.

Outcome: Students will demonstrate competence in theological and sociological research methods, show an ability to use theological and sociological research methods to analyze contexts of ministry, and generate creative proposals for new ministry initiatives that reflect integrative thinking about the church in the world.

Admission

Applicants for admission to the Doctor of Ministry program must ordinarily hold a bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a four-year college or university accredited by one of the nationally recognized regional accrediting agencies or the international equivalent. Applicants without such a bachelor's degree or its equivalent may be considered for admission based on their performance in a qualifying master's degree program, the rigor of that degree program, and the overall quality of their application. Applicants must have completed an accredited master's degree in a ministry-related area from a seminary or university accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada or its international equivalent. Applicants without an accredited Master of Divinity degree may be admitted, provided applicants meet each of these criteria: (a) the ability to thoughtfully interpret scripture and the theological tradition of one's ministry context, (b) the capacity to understand and adapt one's ministry to the cultural context, (c) a basic self-understanding of one's ministerial identity and vocational calling, (d) readiness to engage in ongoing personal and spiritual formation for one's ministry, and (e) an

accredited master's degree (or its educational equivalent) in an area related to one's ministry setting or vocational calling. All applicants must have significant ministry experience that enables the applicant to engage as a ministry peer with other students in this advanced professional doctorate.

Applications for admission are available on our website at www.upsem.edu/admissions-aid/apply-now/. For assistance, call the Office of Admissions at (804) 278-4221, or e-mail admissions@upsem.edu. Requirements for application to the DMin program may be found in the "Admissions" section of the Academic Catalog.

The seminary welcomes and seriously considers applications for admission from all qualified applicants. UPSem does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local law applicable to a religious educational institution.

Advising

Each entering student in the program will be assigned a faculty advisor by the Academic Dean. This advisor may or may not be the faculty member who supervises the integrative project.

Residency and Time Requirements

The DMin program ordinarily takes three to four years to complete. The maximum time permitted to complete the program is six years.

In Charlotte, courses will include short weekday on-campus intensive sessions several times per academic term paired with online work. In Richmond, courses will feature one-week, on-campus intensive sessions paired with online work. Specific information regarding on-campus and online work will be detailed in the syllabus for each course.

Since students in this degree program are not enrolled as full-time students, this program cannot consider international applicants.

Learning Cohorts

The DMin program is shaped to emphasize the importance of peer engagement in learning cohorts for the duration of the program. Learning cohorts are defined by the group of students entering the program at the same time.

Summary of Academic Requirements for the DMin Degree

A student must complete 30 credit hours and meet the course requirements detailed below. Each three (3) credit hour course assumes 135 hours of work. Ordinarily, three or four years of study are needed to complete the DMin degree.

DMin Degree Curriculum (30 credit hours)

> Year 1, Fall term: two foundational courses
> - The Church in a Multi-Faith World (3 credit hours)
> - Embodied Approaches in Theological Discourse (3 credit hours)
>
> Year 1, Spring term: two required courses
> - Research Methods Seminar (3 credit hours; online format)
> - Mini-project Seminar (3 credit hours; students work with faculty mentors through the semester; at the conclusion of the course, students share their research with student peers in their cohort)
>
> Year 2: four elective courses (3 credit hours each; hybrid format)
> - The following elective courses are scheduled to be taught during the 2024-2025 academic year:
>   > Spirituality and Social Transformation
>   > Chaplaincy in Context
>   > Youth, Culture, and Faith Formation
>   > Advanced Topics in Practical Theology
>   > Race/Ethnicity, Enslavement, Caste
>   > Trauma-Informed Pastoral Care
>   > Monsters and Empires
>   > East Asia Travel Seminar
>
> - A listing of courses with descriptions and the identification of instructors is available on the student portal, upsemsonis.jenzabarcloud.com/.
> - DMin students may participate in a travel seminar to fulfill an elective.
> - Directed studies may be approved, in exceptional cases, by the Academic Dean.
>
> Year 3: Integrative project in consultation with advisor (6 credits)
>
> Year 4: Integrative project in consultation with advisor (if needed)
>
> At the conclusion of their program, in either Year 3 or Year 4, students will come to campus to share their research with other final-stage candidates for the degree.

Mini-Project Seminar Requirements

The mini-project seminar requirements aspire to support the program goals and outcomes referenced on page 5 of this handbook. In light of these goals and outcomes, students fulfilling mini-project requirements will demonstrate (a) an ability to identify, evaluate, and constructively integrate theories of culture and ecclesiological perspectives appropriate to the context of their project; (b) how insights derived from theological reflection and an appropriate selection of sociological data can be used together to support the central argument advanced in their mini-project; and (c) an ability to analyze at least one specific context for ministry using theological and sociological research.

The mini-project is designed by the student under the supervision of a member of the faculty **and** with the concurrence of the DMin director and Academic Dean. It involves the workload of one course and earns three (3) credit hours. The project should be 20-25 pages long, excluding appendixes and the bibliography. Proposal forms are available from the DMin director.

Faculty supervisors of these mini-projects may be drawn from either campus.

At the conclusion of the course, students will share their mini-projects via Zoom with peers in their cohort. Faculty supervisors also will be present for these presentations.

Integrative Project Requirements

The integrative project requirements aspire to support the program goals and outcomes referenced on page 5 of this handbook. In light of these goals and outcomes, students fulfilling integrative project requirements will demonstrate (a) advancement in a practice that strengthens witness and ministry in both communities of faith and society; (b) an advanced ability to analyze a specific context for ministry using theological and sociological research; and (c) insights reflecting creativity or an innovative approach to ministry and integrative thinking about the church in the world.

As with the mini-project, the integrative project is designed by the student under the supervision of a member of the faculty and with the concurrence of the DMin director and Academic Dean. This project involves the workload of two courses and earns six (6) credit hours. It should be 60-100 pages long, excluding appendixes and the bibliography. Integrative project proposal forms are available from the DMin director.

Faculty supervisors of these integrative projects may be drawn from either campus.

A prospectus for the final project must be submitted to the faculty supervisor and will include descriptions of (a) the purpose of the project, (b) the background of the proposal, (c) the research methodology, (d) conceptual dimensions of the project, (e) pastoral strategies and responses, (f) reflections upon and evaluations of the project, (g) the project design, including the focus of each chapter and a timeline for completion, and a selected bibliography to ensure the accessibility and adequacy of sources in providing appropriate frameworks for your project. The suggested length of this prospectus is 15-18 pages, not including the bibliography.

Any DMin student who involves persons in project research in any way must submit to the DMin director, after receiving the approval of the faculty supervisor, a *Research Participant Information and Consent Form* to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for its review and approval. This form, as approved by the IRB, will be included in the prospectus for the final project.

When students complete their integrative projects in the Spring term in Richmond or Spring II term in Charlotte, they will come to campus to share their research with other final-stage candidates for the degree. The faculty supervisor and a second reader will assess each project. In consultation with the second reader, the faculty advisor assigns a grade for the project.

Two copies of the completed project must be submitted to the Academic Dean. One bound copy will be returned to the student, and the other will be accessible in the seminary library on the campus where the degree is completed.

Passing Grades

Passing grades are B- and higher for all DMin courses, the mini-project seminar, and the integrative project. One grade of C leads to a meeting between the student, their faculty advisor, and the academic dean. A second grade of C requires the Committee on Academic Programs to vote on whether the student may continue in the program. A third grade of C results in automatic dismissal from the program. Students who receive a grade below C are dismissed from the program unless the Committee on Academic Programs votes otherwise.

Additional Requirements for Graduation

The faculty considers three factors before recommending a student to the board of trustees for a degree or other recognition at graduation: 1) the course of study pursued, 2) the quality of work done, and 3) the quality of life manifested. In the usual language of the Reformed tradition, that quality of life should be "becoming to a minister of the gospel."

Degree Program Support Resources

The Academic Catalog and seminary website identify a comprehensive list of support services for DMin students, with contact information offered for various offices and personnel. Identified here are two particular resources upon which DMin students will depend.

Library Resources

Union Presbyterian Seminary has a world-class theological library with service locations in Richmond and Charlotte, a collection of nearly 400,000 physical items, plus access on or off campus to 87 full-text research databases comprising over 43,000 electronic journals and serials. Approximately 82,000 full-text ebooks are accessible through a traditional library catalog, with tens of thousands more accessible through database subscriptions and online discovery services. Library support services include reference assistance (both on-site and remote), course-integrated research instruction, and interlibrary loan.

Technology Resources

Courses are linked to the seminary's Blackboard system, which provides digital access to course materials, reserve readings, peer interactions, and an online grade book. Faculty regularly use educational technologies in courses with the support of the seminary's information technology staff, who provide students with access to the institution's computer network and offer support when students need assistance navigating technology-based systems. The library's Digital Learning Lab also provides technology-related support for students and faculty. Students have access to the Internet via wireless connections in the library, academic buildings, student meeting

areas, and student residence areas. Students can also access computer workstations and audiovisual equipment in the library and selected classrooms.

Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid

DMin students pay $1,000 per course in tuition and $50 per course for student fees. (Usually, a student will take two courses per term). For the integrative project, which earns six (6) credit hours, tuition for three (3) credit hours is charged during the term when the student submits a prospectus; tuition for three (3) credit hours is charged during the term when the student submits a project.

DMin students pay a graduation fee of $125, and a fee of $50 is charged to cover costs for binding two copies of their final DMin projects.

DMin students may submit the application for need-based aid, which is usually available in mid-March. Financial aid for these students is capped at 1/3 of tuition.

Since students in this degree program are not enrolled in courses on at least a half-time basis, they are not eligible for federal student aid, such as loans.

ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS

DMin students should familiarize themselves with the academic procedures and regulations included in the Academic Catalog. Each year, the catalog is updated and posted on the seminary website (https://www.upsem.edu/academics/academic-catalog-handbook/). Upon request, either the Academic Dean or the DMin director will provide a PDF version to a student during the second and following years in the program. In reviewing the catalog, students will find information about the following areas:

- Academic Calendars, including dates of registration and deadlines for drop, add, and withdrawal
- Rosters of Faculty Members, Administrative Officers and Staff, and Trustees
- Attendance Policy
- Registration and Late Fees
- Drop, Add, and Withdrawal
- Extensions within the Term
- Extensions beyond the Term
- Failing Grades
- Appeal of Grades
- Leave Time
- Policies Concerning Students with Learning Disabilities
- Policies Concerning Students with Physical Disabilities
- Plagiarism Policy
- Academic Records
- Statement and Guidelines on Language for Diversity & Inclusion

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Additional policies are found in the Policies and Procedures Booklet, available on the seminary's intranet site and accessible through the **MYUNION** tab on the seminary webpage. DMin students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following policies:

- Acceptable Use of Technology
- Alcoholic Beverage Policy
- Community Grievance and Discipline Policy
- Copyright Ownership
- Firearms Policy
- Inclement Weather and School Closing Policy
- Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures
- Smoking Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Substance Abuse Prevention Policy