

Sioux Falls Seminary

Student Assessment Plan

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**Seminary Milestones:
A Plan for Academic and Professional Assessment at
Sioux Falls Seminary**

Introduction

The mission of Sioux Falls Seminary is “*to equip servant leaders for the ministries of Christ in the church and in the world.*” We exist as a ministry to enable faithful formation of quality ministers for the church and the world. As a final outcome, we want to prepare equipped ministers who will serve effectively as servant-leaders in whatever ministries God provides. We value the centrality of the Word of God and the authority of scripture. We value the church as the primary witness to the gospel. We value the pursuit of educational excellence in a balanced, wholistic approach, and the process of spiritual formation for all students. To enable us to meet this mission and support these values, every student in the school is engaged in an ongoing program of academic, professional, and personal assessment. The Seminary views this program as a series of milestones that are progressive. Acknowledging these milestones will affirm an increasing expectation that students will reflect both qualitatively and quantitatively the knowledge, skills, and formational growth that will produce a servant-leader who is prepared for ministry upon graduation.

The purpose of this document is to provide a road map charting the plan of student assessment at Sioux Falls Seminary for students in all degree programs of the institution.

Masters Degree Programs

Admissions and Degree Enrollment

Admission and acceptance into a degree program is the first milestone in the student assessment plan. Interviews may be required for specific degree programs. A student applying for a degree program meets with a faculty advisor to review the purpose of the program, and expected outcomes of the course of study. If the student is a good candidate but requires remedial work or counseling services to help him/her prepare to meet these outcomes, recommendations and/or a plan is developed. Each student completes the Entering Student Questionnaire (ESQ). Information related to this assessment is a critical component in the ongoing assessment of recruitment, admissions counseling, and student services.

Academic Advisement

Academic advisement is given to each student upon initial registration, each registration thereafter, and at all points that are necessary to assure that a student is progressing through the required course of study and or exploring opportunities which will enhance

his/her preparation. Declaring a degree program and recognition of the objectives and desired outcomes of the program establishes the covenantal relationship between the adult learner and the institution. These degree objectives and desired outcomes are established and communicated in the Catalog, the Growth Manual, and in each course syllabus.

Faculty Advising

An important milestone in student assessment is established in the formation of an advising relationship with an appropriate faculty member. The Office of the Registrar according to degree program assigns advisors. It is the responsibility of the faculty advisor to begin the development of the advising/mentoring relationship with the expectation that the student will contribute to that development in increasing measure. This advising relationship will serve as an important step for students as they communicate their strengths, weaknesses, personal goals, and outcomes related to their education and preparation for ministry. This ongoing relationship will be a significant source in the progressive assessment steps for each student. In addition, it serves as a critical connection in the feedback necessary to assure that each student has achieved his/her desired goals and that the seminary is achieving its mission. Options are available for students to be reassigned a different faculty advisor if a successful match does not occur or the student changes degree programs. It is expected that students will ordinarily meet with their advisors at least once per semester during their academic careers.

Professional Development Testing

During orientation and/or upon admission into a degree program, students are required to complete Professional Development Testing. This testing process includes the administration of several assessments. These particular assessments are used to support a growth-based approach to personal, spiritual, academic, and skill formation. Each student will complete the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, the *Hout's Spiritual Gifts Inventory*, and the Association of Theological Schools' *Profiles of Ministry: An Assessment Program Designed for the Seminary Student*. Students will meet with the Director of Student Life and Assessment to receive an orientation and interpretation to their specific assessment results. Supporting the growth-based approach, each student will reflect upon the results and interpretation and develop a Self Assessment and Intentional Growth Plan. This will include a student's awareness of his/her strengths and weaknesses, spiritual gifts, personal characteristics, and perceptions of ministry. The student will produce and work toward goals and/or outcomes to be achieved throughout the completion of his/her degree program. These goals should be designed to challenge the adult learner to consider desired areas for celebration and growth. Attention will be given to examining the objectives and outcomes of his/her degree program as they relate to a student's individual results and goals. The collaborative nature of the testing process supports the ongoing covenantal relationship between the adult learner and institution and the value of modeling lifelong learning. Results of the

Professional Development Testing will be placed in the *Portfolio* section of the Student Growth Manual.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Professional Development Testing process will occur through an exit interview process for graduating seniors. Data from the assessment will be carefully reviewed by the Curriculum, Assessment, and Academic Policies Committee (CAAP) and appropriate action taken when indicated.

Student Growth Manual

The Student Growth Manual is the centerpiece of the student assessment plan. Initiated by the seminary in a practical physical format, it is designed to represent over time the progress for each student. The Growth Manual contains information vital to a student as he/she considers the degree program, areas for special focus, and representative samples of the student's work. Upon orientation, each student will receive a Growth Manual specific to his/her degree program. Throughout each semester, students are required to provide and maintain their manuals. The manual will be used at each additional milestone in the student assessment process. The CAAP committee will review effectiveness of this format annually.

Academic Achievement

The seminary is aware that ministry depends upon the effective integration of the intellectual, spiritual, and skill acquisition within each student. Each degree program is designed to address and support this integration. Each faculty member has developed criteria and methodologies for assessing the acquisition of this knowledge and skill base. Each course offers that assessment through traditional grading procedures, in-class feedback, and informal discussion. Each assignment is structured to assess knowledge gained of the subject matter, application in the appropriate context, and/or spiritual growth as a result of the completion process. Students are given a wide range of options and opportunities to demonstrate and articulate learning. Results of each student's effort are used as important criteria in providing supportive data for continuing in a degree program and achieving graduation. In addition, student evaluation of learning, course objectives, teaching approaches, and assignments provides a critical component in providing feedback for evaluating courses and degree programs.

Progress Review

At the end of the second semester (30 semester hours completed), a Progress Review will take place with the student's faculty advisor. Passing this milestone will be necessary before beginning a third semester for all students.

The Progress Review is conducted at a critical juncture in a student's education. Placed at a time when the student has had opportunity to begin graduate studies, develop a sense

of the theoretical and practical application of his/her degree program, and produce evidence of learning and growth, it is also placed at a point when there is time to address any academic or personal concerns which would prevent the student from achieving his/her goals. A student will prepare the Portfolio section of the Growth Manual and submit the manual to his/her Faculty Advisor prior to a scheduled meeting. The Portfolio includes an assortment of key documents and self selected best work.

Faculty Advisors will use the review process to assess both ability to achieve and disposition to learn. Questions for consideration may include the following:

- ❖ Is there adequate academic performance?
- ❖ Is there a willingness on the part of the student to assess personal strengths?
- ❖ Is the student willing to identify and articulate areas for growth?
- ❖ Has the student completed a set of goals, assessed resources, and developed a plan?
- ❖ Is there evidence of progress, and is the student able to articulate his/her progress?
- ❖ What additional effort or resources would be helpful to this student?

The Faculty Advisor will bring a recommendation to the faculty and administration at the last business meeting of the semester. Students who do not receive an affirmation will either be discontinued from their programs or will be required to meet case-specific goals over a designated timeline as established by the faculty in dialogue with the student's mentors, the Dean, and other appropriate seminary personnel.

Candidacy Review

Candidacy Review is another critical milestone for students in the assessment process. A Master of Divinity student will stand for candidacy upon the completion of 60 semester hours. The Master of Arts student will stand for candidacy upon the completion of 45 semester hours. Students will meet with their faculty advisors to go over the portfolio section of the Growth Manual. Specific samples of material to submit are identified in the Portfolio section. The purpose for this milestone is to assess progress in applying learning, spiritual growth, and skills in relation to a present understanding of the task of ministry and/or therapy. Input from Supervised Ministry/Therapy evaluations and teaching supervisors will be critical sources at this juncture. Additional measurement tools may be required at this time. Questions for consideration may include the following:

- ❖ Is the candidate achieving adequate academic performance?

- ❖ Is this candidate beginning to demonstrate the ability to integrate knowledge, skill development, and spiritual growth in the appropriate context? Can he/she articulate examples from experience?
- ❖ Are there signs that this integration occurs as a result of the disposition to do so, when an incentive is not present?
- ❖ Are there evidences that the student is achieving the objectives and outcomes of the degree program?
- ❖ What additional resources/recommendations would be helpful?

The faculty will discuss recommendations for candidacy for each student. For those with particular needs, a growth plan, additional requirements, or withdrawal may be recommended. Passing this milestone is the responsibility of each student in order for enrollment to continue.

Readiness for Ministry Colloquium

Readiness for Ministry Colloquium provides a necessary format for the student to articulate the integration of the knowledge, skills, and spiritual formation that has occurred throughout his or her seminary experience. This course is an integrative seminar dealing with professional issues and is required for all degree programs with the exception of students in the Marriage and Family Therapy programs. Each student completes a statement of faith addressing foundational theological issues, including a philosophy of ministry. In addition, each student completes a self-assessment in ten competency areas.

Integrative Seminar

Students completing a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy will take several integrative seminars or courses that focus on theology and the family system. These courses are optional, but encouraged for students in the Master of Arts in Counseling Program. These integrative courses assist students in reflecting theologically on family systems issues. Students formulate therapeutic strategies and interventions that are sensitive to both the church and clinical setting. Work produced in this seminar assists the student in developing the integrative skills necessary to effectively practice in his/her field of study.

Exit Interview

Prior to graduation, a student and his/her faculty advisor will meet face-to-face for an exit interview. This meeting provides a final opportunity for the advisor and student to assess

the completion of the outcomes identified by the mission of the school, the specific degree program, and the student's own goals and plans developed throughout his/her seminary experience. It is designed to affirm the covenantal relationship between the adult learner and the seminary and set the stage for an on-going relationship as a lifelong learner and alumnus/a. Of equal importance is the information obtained by using the Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ) and the Exit Interview. These objective and subjective data form a critical component in the assessment of the achievement of the seminary's mission and strategic plan and identified outcomes for each degree program.

Degree Objectives and Outcomes

Each degree program is developed with a set of objectives that guide the identification of core classes, electives, concentrations, integrated experiences, and personal/spiritual formation. Specific outcomes for each objective become the guides that enable an instructor, faculty advisor, supervisor, and student to assess the development toward achieving the critical knowledge, skill, and formation base necessary for completion of degree requirements. More importantly, these outcomes guide students as they identify and gain critical competencies that will enable success upon graduation. The objectives, outcomes, and subsequent data also play a significant role in the regular evaluation of a degree program and implementation of recommended changes. Specific objectives and outcomes can be found in the Appendix.

Integration for Learning and Assessment

Supported opportunities for integrating knowledge, skills, and personal/spiritual formation are provided for several degree programs: Master of Divinity; Master of Arts in Christian Leadership; Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy; and Master of Arts in Counseling. Each degree program has entering criteria, expected outcomes, and assessments. The most significant of these opportunities are summarized below.

Supervised Ministry

Supervised ministry experiences are a critical component in the integration of knowledge, spiritual formation, and skill development. Supervised ministry provides a bridge between campus academics and the realities of a local church or field. Students' strengths and weaknesses are discovered in the context of practical experience. Professional confidence and identity are developed. Theory is integrated with practice, and skills are sharpened as responsibility increases. The supervised ministry experience occurs through the classroom setting in a progressive series of courses. Three to five courses are required depending upon the degree program. Active work in a ministry context is required in all but the first course. The student develops a ministry context with the assistance of the Supervised Ministry Instructor. The on-site supervisor and the student develop a written set of learning objectives for the supervised ministry experience. Assessment of the student's progress in meeting the written objectives and

class objectives is obtained through in-class assignments and participation, student self-evaluation, and supervisor evaluation. Shared evaluation, which includes the student, instructor, and supervisor, supports the adult learner model.

Entering a supervised ministry context is not automatic. While we expect almost all of our students to achieve this milestone after completing the prerequisite of Supervised Ministry 501, we realize that some may not be ready to make this step. The following are the criteria that a student must meet to proceed on to a ministry context for the purposes of supervised ministry:

- ❖ It is expected that the student preparing to enter Supervised Ministry 502 will have identified a general direction in which he or she wishes to focus his or her learning: i.e., the pastorate, church staff ministry, chaplaincy, etc. The Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Christian Education, and Master of Arts in Church Music degree programs are designed as preparation for professional ministry, and supervised ministry requires that students prepare themselves for specific functions.
- ❖ Prior to beginning SM-502 and subsequent semesters, the student is responsible for securing a place of ministry and a qualified supervisor. The supervisor should, if possible, possess the Master of Divinity Degree and be ordained in the student's preferred denomination. The Director of Supervised Ministry in consultation with the Academic Vice President may grant exceptions to this rule in rare cases.
- ❖ The student is expected to make use of the testing and self-assessment features of SM-501 to establish a personal set of growth goals to be addressed during the supervised ministry process. Students should make these goals known to their field supervisors, their faculty advisors, and the Director of Supervised Ministry.

Review of data related to evaluations by supervised ministry sites and supervisors will be a critical component in assessing the effectiveness of the supervised ministry format and its relationship to the objectives and outcomes of the degree program. Information related to supervised ministry will also be gathered from graduating seniors through the exit interview process and reviewed annually.

Internships

Internships represent an important elective learning opportunity for students enrolled in any of the seminary's master's level programs. Internships are not simply credit granted for work experience. They represent credit granted for *learning*, which occurs primarily through a work experience in a ministry setting. A student who elects to pursue an internship in a particular area of practical training must make arrangements both with an on-campus supervisor, normally a full-time member of the seminary's faculty with expertise in the area of study, and with a field supervisor. The on-campus supervisor

along with the Director of Student Life and Assessment and the Director of Supervised Ministry can assist the student in the process of locating an appropriate field placement. The student and the supervisor set up a written set of learning objectives for the internship that includes a plan for evaluation and which typically include reading to accompany the internship. Internships may be granted for one credit hour for a one-month internship, 2-3 hours of credit for a semester-long experience and up to 6 hours of credit for a yearlong experience. An internship can be an effective means for achieving and documenting desired outcomes relative to a student's degree program.

Clinical Pastoral Education

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is an elective learning opportunity available to all students enrolled in degree programs (and is required for the Master of Divinity with a Specialization in Pastoral Care and Counseling). CPE is an intensive program of supervised learning through clinical practice, which occurs in the context of a hospital, parish, or agency setting. Students accepted into the program develop an individual learning contract, engage in small peer feedback sessions, receive ongoing supervision and assessment, and do detailed reporting of pastoral encounters. The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) or the Canadian Association for Pastoral Education (CAPE) grants CPE credit only to students who contract with a supervisor or center approved to provide CPE instruction. Educational outcomes for CPE are listed in the Appendix.

Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy and Master of Arts in Counseling Readiness for Practicum (Supervised Therapy)

Working with individuals, couples, and families through the on-site Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic, marriage and family therapy/counseling students receive clinical experience and supervision while clients from the community receive affordable therapy. Several supervision formats are used, including direct observation, live videotape and case consultations.

While it is expected that almost all of our students will begin practicum in the fall semester of their first year, we realize that some may not be ready to continue in this process. A critical issue here is that the counseling and therapy programs director and faculty are ethically bound to protect the welfare of the clients seen by students in the MAMFT and MACO programs. This includes decisions about student participation in clinical activities.

If a student's work in practicum is below the minimum level, or if the student exhibits behavioral or performance characteristics inconsistent with standards for behavior in a clinical practicum (as presented, for example, in the programs' Policies and Procedures Manual) the student will be counseled by his or her clinical supervisor in consultation with the Counseling & Therapy Programs Director and the Sioux Falls Seminary Vice President of Academic Affairs. This counseling should inform the student that his or her privileges of participating in that clinical practicum are at risk of being terminated for the reasons explained to the student.

In some unusual circumstances, the student's participation may be terminated for just cause. The student is given written recommendations for rectifying the problem, along with a deadline by which this must be accomplished. At the designated deadline, if the behaviors have not been satisfactorily changed in the manner described to the student, the student will be informed that practicum privileges have been withdrawn. Upon successful completion of the recommended changes, the student's practicum privileges may be continued or reinstated.

Internships for the Marriage and Family Therapy Program

Students in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program may apply for internships. Completing a one-semester internship during a student's last year is an option for persons in the MFT program. This internship allows students to focus their clinical efforts in a number of specific areas. Students must meet evaluation criteria in order to enter into internship relationships with willing agencies. The Director of the Counseling and Therapy Programs and appropriate faculty assess evidence of these criteria through coursework, therapy supervision results, and supervisor evaluations.

Successful completion of an internship represents a significant advancement in the preparation toward meeting the objectives and outcomes of this degree program. Supervision evaluations and mentoring therapist meetings will be used to assess this milestone.

Informal Learning

In conclusion, the seminary recognizes that integration of knowledge, skills and spiritual formation occurs within the context of community. This replicates the process that occurs within the faith communities our graduates will serve. While we may as a theological school create, use, and refine many ways to assess the achievement of our mission, many learning opportunities occur within the "unwritten curriculum" of the school. Students, faculty, administration and staff live in community and by natural process assist in the formation of each other. Student participation in student government, chapel services, volunteer ministry participation, prayer leadership and many other activities teach and encourage spiritual formation and skill development.

Although not always assessed as part of a formal process, this reality is considered to provide important value toward achieving the mission of Sioux Falls Seminary.

Doctor of Ministry Degree Program

Introduction

The Doctor of Ministry program prepares experienced ministers for the practice of ministry at an advanced degree of competence commensurate with a doctoral level of educational achievement. An enrolled student is engaged in an ongoing program of academic and professional assessment. This assessment approach enables the program to meet the seminary's mission and assures that graduates have obtained this level of educational achievement.

The Doctor of Ministry student begins this process at admission and proceeds through the assessment process in a series of four phases. The Entry Phase, Project Proposal Phase, Candidacy Phase, and Project Phase are integrated and progressive. Three significant milestones are built into the program to assure that a student is advancing in the knowledge, skills, and personal development commensurate with program objectives and outcomes. These milestones are the admission process, candidacy, and final competency interview.

Successful completion of the program provides experienced ministers with resources and opportunities that will enable them to achieve their full potential as ministers through advanced theological education. In addition, the doctoral level work they produce advances research and practical application in the broader field of ministry.

Entry Phase: Admissions and Field Colloquium

Admission and acceptance into the Doctor of Ministry degree program is the Entry Phase of the assessment plan. Admission requirements are clearly communicated to students who apply, and applicants are reviewed by the Doctor of Ministry Committee of the faculty. Provisional admission will be granted in some cases to persons who do not possess a Master of Divinity or its equivalent. The Director of the Doctor of Ministry program and the applicant develop a plan to eliminate any Master of Divinity deficiencies. The Director consults with the Academic Dean for the Seminary as the plan is proposed. Basic deficiencies must be remedied by the time of the candidacy phase.

A significant component of the assessment process for the admission or Entry Phase is the completion of the "Personal and Vocational Report." This detailed self-evaluation report asks for a response to such personal data as leadership ability; ability to communicate; self-motivation; management of time; intellectual growth; relation with others; impression on others; ability to cope with pressure, tension, conflict, criticism, failure, and success; spiritual life; and exemplification of Christian virtues. Enrollees are

further asked to list the various tasks of ministry in which they are involved and to evaluate their proficiency in each, including strongest and weakest aspects. Strategic importance is attached to the formulation of the enrollee's immediate and long-range goals with an analysis of how the candidate anticipates that the Doctor of Ministry program will contribute to the achievement of these goals.

Advisement

Advisement as a component of the assessment process for Doctoral of Ministry students is designed to provide academic guidance and evaluation, skill development and evaluation, and personal/professional guidance and evaluation. Faculty, Project Developers, and On-Site Supervisors are secured at strategic points in the four phases of the program. Qualifications of these advisement personnel are found in the Doctor of Ministry Handbook.

Educational Structure and Assessment

The Doctor of Ministry degree program is formulated on the basis that enrollees, as practicing ministers, should have different types of learning opportunities available to them. In the Entry Phase, Orientation or Field Colloquium offers an opportunity for the student and faculty to assess personal motivations for learning, professional development as a growing minister, and the structure of the degree program. The student is challenged to gain a holistic view of the Doctor of Ministry program as an integrated growth process and to utilize self-evaluation, feedback, and supervision as tools for becoming a more effective minister of the gospel.

Seminars cover three primary emphases of the doctoral curriculum. These emphases relate to the development of the minister as a professional person, as a mature biblical and theological thinker, and as a skilled practitioner. Field and Candidacy colloquia provide opportunities for the student to develop his or her own theory of ministry and the design of a field ministry project.

Self-evaluation reports and statements of career goals during admission provide in-depth opportunity for introspection. The student is assessed throughout this process through traditional grading procedures, in-seminar feedback, peer group process, and individual evaluations. Students are also encouraged to avail themselves of career development testing and counseling.

Candidacy Phase: Project Prospectus

Three significant assessment opportunities occur in the Candidacy Phase for a doctoral student. Students revise their admissions “Personal and Vocational Report” for a faculty committee. This gives the candidate and candidacy interview participants an opportunity to reflect on the growth and outcome achievements that were developed at the beginning of the degree program. Students give an oral analysis of a case study related to ministry for the interview. This assignment provides the student with an opportunity to demonstrate his/her ability to analyze assumptions and symptoms, arrive at an underlying cause, and propose prescriptive remedies and preventive plans. Finally, a faculty committee reviews, modifies and approves or rejects the Project Prospectus. An on-site supervisor either approves or rejects a completed project before the Competency Interview.

Project Phase: Project Report and Competency Interview

Faculty review and evaluate the major project and thesis report at a final interview. A statement of theory of ministry and 6-8 fully supported positional statements are submitted and reviewed. The interviewers may ask the candidate questions concerning professional growth and personal development. The Project Report and the candidate’s defense form the largest objective source for outcome assessment and successful completion of the Doctor of Ministry Degree.

The exit interview is structured so that the student may provide a personal review of the program. In addition to on-going feedback throughout the student’s experience with the program, this personal review is obtained, recorded, disseminated, and viewed as critical information in reviewing the Doctoral Handbook and the program’s effectiveness of meeting the degree program objectives as well as the mission of Sioux Falls Seminary.

Conclusion

Our mission is “*to equip servant leaders for the ministries of Christ in the church and in the world.*” This mission is in essence also shared by all the denominations our student body represents. We continually work on the collaborative relationship with those denominations as well as any licensing agencies that will ensure a successful ministry/career for our graduates. Communication regarding the knowledge, skills, and personal and professional maturity required to achieve ordination or licensure is considered as degree programs are reviewed and changed.

“Seminary Milestones: A Plan for Academic and Professional Assessment at Sioux Falls Seminary will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Curriculum, Assessment, and Academic Policies Committee (CAAP) in consultation with the Director of Student Life and Assessment. A printed version of the plan will be available in the offices of the Academic Vice President and Dean, Director of Academic Services and Registrar, and the Director of Student Life and Assessment. A PDF version of the entire document will

be available on the seminary web site, and a modified printed version will be included in the “Growth Manuals” for each student.