

Student Guidelines

Introduction

The Supervised Practice of Ministry (SPM) is an educational experience designed to help you train for service in the church with the assistance and supervision of qualified mentors. SPM involves time and effort spent in a field setting plus preparation for and reflection upon the experience in regular sessions with the field supervisor, the lay committee, and periodic written assignments turned in to the Director of Field Education and Placement.

Purpose of SPM

SPM serves several major purposes within the seminary curriculum. It fosters integration within the matrix of serious study, spiritual formation, practical skills for ministry and previous experience. It also serves as a valuable arena to test and confirm one's vocational call.

Integration - Ministry is a vocation which draws upon the wisdom and increased competence of experience, as well as the clarity of thought gained from study and reflection. It is inherently a combination of theory and practice, concepts and skills, ideas and relationships, critical reflection and action. SPM serves to integrate the learning gained from biblical studies; systematic, historical, and practical theology; and church history. Students should be prompted to think through the theological values underlying their preaching, teaching, programs, and other aspects of ministry.

Experience and Skills - While ministry cannot be reduced to skills and activities, skills are needed to interpret and communicate the Christian faith and tradition. In SPM, students are given opportunities to perform tasks which draw upon and develop skills necessary for ministry under the guidance of a more experienced colleague, the supervisor. The lay committee has the opportunity to give support and feedback as you learn and gain experience in new areas of ministry.

Ministry Gifts - SPM enables students to identify, confirm, and develop their gifts for service to the church. It can also help you discover important areas for additional work as you seek to develop increased competency. The student, seminary, supervisor, and lay committee work together to set intentional learning goals. Within the SPM context you will have the opportunity to receive helpful feedback and affirmation in the areas where you demonstrate genuine ministry gifts. You will also gain valuable feedback and support in those areas that need further strengthening.

Vocational Call - SPM allows you the opportunity to test different facets of ministry and see if you are suited for them. This is a valuable help as you seek to determine your own sense of call. Along with the ongoing assessment by denominational committees overseeing your candidacy process, the seminary SPM program can help guide and prepare you for your future ministry. A call is not just an inner conviction, but is something which must be tested and confirmed by other members of the Church. The ministry setting is a natural place to evaluate your readiness for ministry.

Requirements

Supervised Practice of Ministry (SPM) and Field Education Courses (FE) are integral parts of the UDTs curriculum. The SPM settings and FE courses provide numerous opportunities for seminary students to integrate theological reflection and pastoral leadership practice. At the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, SPM is viewed as a formative experience where each student, with the guidance and support of faculty, trained supervisors, and committed laity, can develop the skills and capacities for a life of joyful service to Christ.

The SPM placements and FE Courses will enable students to:

- Develop the capacity for integrating theological reflection and the practice of Christian ministry
- Develop skills and capacities for faithful and joyful Christian ministry; and
- Develop a holistic understanding of the pastoral vocation wherein ministry, relationships, personal spirituality, and self-care are held in a creative and faithful balance

Students should begin to plan their SPM in the junior year, in advance of the actual SPM experience. Ordinarily, students should not begin SPM until their middle year. Conferences with the Director of Field Education during this planning stage are advised.

Four credits of Supervised Practice of Ministry plus four credits for the completion of the four Field Education Courses are required for the Master of Divinity Degree. The Supervised Practice of Ministry requirements may be fulfilled through placements during the academic year or summer or through longer internships. During the fall and spring semesters, Supervised Practice experiences are coupled with Field Education Courses. Students may register for SPM only after their first full year of study.

SPM must be undertaken in an approved SPM setting and must include supervisory conversations at least every other week. Evaluations are provided by supervisors, lay committees and students themselves. In completing the four credit SPM requirement, students focus on areas of pastoral ministry such as preaching, visitation, teaching, counseling, or evangelism. Up to two credits of Supervised Practice of Ministry may be earned through participation in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). Normally, at least two credits of Supervised Practice must be earned in a parish setting. A maximum of 12 credit hours in SPM/FE may be taken in the Master of Divinity program.

Please read these requirements carefully and consult with the Field Education Office if you have additional questions.

Placement in the SPM Setting

In the current program, you are not placed in the SPM position by the Field Education and Placement Office. Available positions are advertised and you are responsible to identify and apply for placement within an approved position. Students are also encouraged to develop their own experiences, to create the type of learning situation that would most effectively contribute to your educational goals. Every position created by student initiative must be developed in consultation with the Director of Field Education and have official approval before the student can enroll for SPM credit.

All approved SPM positions are announced to eligible students. Those who are interested are to respond directly to the church or agency per site requirements. Interviews for the positions shall be held by the minister/supervisor and/or other persons with responsibilities for the site. Interviews may be held at the seminary or at the site of the position. If the interview is conducted a significant distance from the UDS campus, expenses for the student(s) should be paid by the church or institution. If the interview is at the seminary, the Field Education Office may help arrange the interview schedule and facilities.

After the interviews, the representative(s) of the employing church or institution should contact the student who has been selected, offering her or him the position, and should notify the Field Education Office that the invitation has been extended. Students are expected to reply to the invitation with reasonable promptness and to keep the Field Education Office informed of their replies.

In the event that the first round of interviews does not result in a satisfactory placement, the Field Education Office will endeavor to identify other potential candidates and help in working out the placement of each student in an approved SPM setting.

Financial Arrangements

In setting the terms for remuneration, the student is free to negotiate with a church/institution and serve for any stipend upon which both agree. However, the seminary considers the following guidelines to be minimal. For all the categories of employment, the employing church or institution is encouraged to contribute to the Social Security payments of the student.

Minimum payment of \$400.00 per semester. As a guideline for churches/institutions who want a student to work for 10-12 hours per week, \$10.00 or more per hour should be considered, plus transportation expenses, housing (if needed), and some consideration for food costs.

For a part-time student pastorate (normally 20-30 hours per week), the church should consider a salary usually in the range of \$850.00-1,400.00 per month, plus housing, utilities, automobile transportation, expenses, medical insurance and, if possible, the denominational pension plan.

For a summer internship (normally full-time), the church or institution should consider a salary of \$850-1,400 per month, plus housing, utilities, automobile transportation expenses, medical insurance, and some consideration for moving expenses.

For a 9-15 month full-time internship, the church or institution should consider \$850-1,400 per month salary, plus housing, utilities, automobile expenses, moving expenses, medical insurance and the denominational pension plan, if possible. In addition, the student will need funding for round trip expenses to the seminary in spring for the Intern Week.

For Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), usually no stipend is offered for the basic unit. If students choose to take CPE after the basic unit has been completed, they may be offered stipends by the hospital/CPE site. For this information, students should check with the professor in charge of CPE for a list of all the positions available with their current fees and remuneration. In addition, students should consult with the UD Student Accounts Office for information about the various fee structures and options for receiving transcript credit for the CPE work completed. Students should be aware that there is a limit to the number of SPM credits that can be counted toward graduation.

Tuition

Supervised Practice of Ministry (SPM) tuition is identical to that of any other course in the curriculum during the regular semester. For summer SPM the tuition is one half the normal rate charged; however, financial aid from the seminary is not available. Please consult the UDTS Catalogue or the Student Accounts Office for current tuition rates.

Supervision

Students have both an academic advisor (assigned for the duration of their degree program) and a field education supervisor each time they take SPM. In addition, the Director of Field Education is available for consultation at any time. In all of these cases, these are persons who enable the student to reflect upon and learn from the practice of ministry. "Supervision is an extended conversation at regular intervals in which the student and the supervisor engage in detailed analysis of concrete examples of ministry in an effort to further the student's competence" (Gordon Charlton). Such learning happens on the campus and in the field setting.

The Director of Field Education and Placement encourages theological reflection upon the practice of ministry. He or she reviews the learning contracts, student agreements, midterm reports, and final evaluation to ensure that the goals are suitable and the student is making progress. The final responsibility for grading rests with the Director of Field Education and Placement.

The SPM Field Supervisor is a senior ministry colleague with at least three years of ministry experience who is usually on-site or at least familiar with the ministry site, and who has consented to be a sounding board for the student. Out of tradition, we use the term supervisor. That tends to carry the connotation of a hierarchical business relationship. That is not what we have in mind. We prefer to think of this role as one of a mentor. The veteran minister's experience and insight, honed over the years in the ministry, are being drawn upon to shape the development of a junior colleague.

A student may not register for an SPM course without having an approved field supervisor. Supervisors need to be approved in advance of the SPM so that there is ample opportunity for training. Thus, students must give their supervisor's name to the Field Education Office a minimum of six weeks prior to the first day of class for the given term.

Supervisory Meetings

Students will be asked to report their work to the SPM supervisor each week. The supervisor's task is to assist students in the analysis of and reflection upon that work. The student and supervisor meet for a minimum of one hour bi-weekly in a

supervisory conference in which the student reports on progress toward the learning objectives and the supervisor assists in the analysis of the student's work. Supervisor and student should agree early in the term as to what the basic agenda of their meetings will be. However, agendas for individual meetings may well vary according to current needs. Suggested areas to cover:

1. **Current issues or congregational concerns.** For example, the student may be faced with a first Funeral, a delicate marriage counseling situation, or the practical details of starting a visitation program.
2. **Theological reflection on ministry.** What are the theological issues at stake in a given situation? What theological values are represented? What is the student's sense of ministry? How does the student see himself or herself as a minister, including gifts, role, etc.? Are the student's preaching and actions in line with his or her theology and denominational tradition? For example, if the student believes in the priesthood of all believers and especially equipping the laity, is he or she doing that or carrying out a "lone ranger" ministry? Here, the use of case studies and verbatims is a helpful way to spark deep reflection on a ministry situation.
3. **Progress toward the goals identified in the Learning Covenant.** Although one does not want to establish a rigid pattern of routine accountability, it is appropriate to discuss the progress of difficulties related to the learning goals.
4. **Spiritual growth.** It is appropriate to ask a student about his or her own spiritual life. What is the student doing, such as regular Bible readings and prayer, to nurture spiritual growth? In what areas is spiritual growth evident? What is he or she learning about God's grace, faithfulness, and love? In what areas is your prayer support needed? Please take time to pray for each other.
5. **Personal and professional development.** For example, discussion may cover working out a ministry pattern that nurtures marriage and family relationships, that avoids burnout, and that provides for continuing education and growth. Within this context, topics might include personal financial planning and stewardship, time management, clergy ethics, etc. The supervision sessions may also entail long range planning for the church, for administrative skill improvement, sermon series or seasonal strategies, and so on.