



ST VLADIMIR'S ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Doctor of Ministry Project Guidelines

Table of Contents

Section 1: The Doctor of Ministry Project

- a) What is a D.Min. Project?
- b) Expectations for the D.Min. Project
- c) ATS Requirements for the D.Min. Project
- d) Defining a Research Problem: Topic, Question and Significance
- e) Research Elements of the D.Min. Project

Section 2: The Project Proposal

- a) Purpose
- b) Elements of a Project Proposal
- c) Criteria for Evaluating the Proposal: Process of Approval

Section 3: Research and Writing

- a) General Notes About Research
- b) Research Chapters
- c) General Notes About Writing
- d) Working with your Advisor
- e) Final Presentation
- f) Criteria for Evaluating the Written Project
- g) D.Min. Project Timeline
- h) Final Process for Library Processing

Appendix 1: St Vladimir's Seminary Institutional Review Board--Questions for Proposals of Research on Living Subjects (IRBQ)

This document has been adapted from the “Doctor of Ministry Project Guidelines”¹ from Reformed Theological Seminary with permission.

¹ http://www.rts.edu/Site/Academics/Degree_programs/Dmin/Charlotte/Dmin-guide.pdf

The Doctor of Ministry Project

What is a D.Min. Project?

The final written project in the D.Min. program is the culmination of the student's academic work in the program. The final project involves a disciplined plan of independent research that results in a written piece that demonstrates student expertise in an area of practical theology. All of the reading, writing and course work in the program is intended to help prepare the student for the final project.

The D.Min. project is similar to a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation in a number of ways, but it is also distinct from a traditional academic paper in theology or religion. The similarities to a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation relate to the kinds of research — biblical, theological, historical, etc. The project differs from them in scope and purpose, or focus of research. The distinction that Turabian (2.2.2) draws between “applied research” and “pure research” is helpful here:

“We call research *pure* when it addresses a conceptual problem that does not have any direct practical consequence, when it only improves the understanding of a community of researchers. We call research *applied* when it addresses a conceptual problem that does have practical consequences. You can tell whether research is pure or applied by considering the significance of your project: is it about understanding or doing?”²

For example, research that examines the history of the “Liturgy of the Word/Liturgy of the Eucharist” paradigm and critiques it from an Eastern Orthodox perspective, is pure research. On the other hand, research that analyzes the role of imagery in festal hymnography in order to develop a homiletical resource for preaching at festal liturgies, is applied research.

While a DMin project need not make a sharp distinction between understanding and doing, the DMin project focuses on solving a particular problem and generating new knowledge regarding the practice of ministry, and in some cases, the project will include a new model of ministry. The D.Min. uses theoretical research to generate new knowledge regarding the applied practice of ministry.

² Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* Revised by Wayne C. Booth et. al. 9th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 18-9.

Expectations for a D.Min. Project

The D.Min. project is more than just a hoop to jump through in order to get the degree. The goal of the project is to enhance the skills of the student in a specialized area of ministry and benefit the Church. Through concentrated research and reflection on one area of ministry practice, the student becomes an "expert" in this specific area. Through the research and writing process a student gains increased ability as a competent researcher and written communicator.

The D.Min. project should demonstrate a competent level of theoretical knowledge in the field studied and a thorough knowledge of ministry practice in that area. The finished project should demonstrate the clear integration of theory and practice. While the written project should be acceptable to the academic community, it is also addressed to the Church. The outcomes of a D.Min. project will be applicable in the student's ministry and in the larger Church. This practical outcome may be innovative or it may be an upgrading or modification of an existing ministry.

ATS Requirements for the D.Min. Project

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the accrediting agency for D.Min. programs, stipulates these requirements:

The Doctor of Ministry degree provides a variety of student learning and formational experiences that include peer learning, self-directed learning, research-based learning, and field-based learning. The degree culminates with a written project that explores an area of ministry related to the student's vocational calling, utilizes appropriate research methodologies and resources, and generates new knowledge regarding the practice of ministry.³

In order to meet these required standards, students utilize appropriate D.Min. project research methodologies that provide acceptable parameters. When a topic is selected students carry out research in a number of areas in order generate new knowledge regarding the practice of ministry. This is the intended outcome of the project.

³ ATS Standards of Accreditation, approved 06/2020, 5.4.

Defining a Research Problem: topic, question and significance⁴

Selecting a Topic

There are several ways to approach selection of a project topic. One may begin by reflecting on a problem, need or challenge in one's ministry setting. What area of ministry needs urgent attention in my parish or ministry context? Or, the initial idea may be more personal: Is there an area of ministry practice where I urgently need more expertise? Normally, projects that command the most personal interest yield the strongest results. Look for a topic, problem or question that is extremely interesting for you. Whatever approach one takes, a key issue is asking oneself: Will the urgency of this topic sustain my interest throughout the process? Compelling motivation to research a given topic and answer a question is essential to bringing the project to completion. Discuss your interests with other students, your professors, IRB members, colleagues in ministry and parishioners.

Focus and Simplify

The more narrowly you focus the topic, the easier it will be to define the question, and the easier it will be to complete the project. Conversely, broad, unfocused topics are unmanageable, and are extremely difficult to complete. Here are some examples of broad, unfocused versus narrow, focused topics:

Broad, unfocused	Narrower
Substance abuse	Addiction recovery in parish settings
Parish finances	Financial stewardship and ministry to the poor
Marriage	Pastoral counseling for married couples

Recognize, from the very beginning of the process, that there will be good questions and interesting ideas that you will have to leave out of the proposal. Don't worry, you can research and write on these topics later. The best research goes into great depth on a narrow topic.

⁴ Turabian, 17. See also Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Wipf & Stock, 2011), 14-20.

Defining the Question

After one has determined the topic, one must form the question. A good research question is

- clear: provides adequate detail so that the intended audience can understand it without additional information
- focused: specific enough so that it can be adequately addressed within the allotted time and length of the project
- concise: expressed in the fewest possible words
- profound: cannot be answered with “yes” or “no,” but requires synthesis and analysis of ideas and sources to compose an answer
- arguable: potential answers are open to debate rather than simply a restatement of accepted facts
- inspiring: the researcher cares about the question passionately enough to see the project through to completion⁵

For example, you may be interested in youth ministry (topic) and the specific question you want to answer is “After high school, why do young people stop attending church services?” This is a specific problem, but it requires validation. What data validate the statement, “young people stop attending church services”? Also, which young people are being referred to? While you may initially identify a problem based on anecdotal evidence, or gut instinct, the presupposition underlying the question must be validated by the research of others, or by your own research.

Another key question is: are the necessary resource materials to research this topic readily accessible to you? One may not be able to answer this question until significant library research has begun. Looking through the catalog of the Florovsky Library, the ATLA journal database and academia.edu (in addition to other online databases and library resources) are good places to start.

Demonstrate Significance

Finally, you need to demonstrate the significance of the problem. Explain what you hope to accomplish through your solution to the problem. Demonstrate significance by considering the *practical outcome* you envision as a result of the research. Beginning with the end in mind, the student can then back up and consider what research components will be necessary for this anticipated outcome.

For example, here are two example research problems:⁶

⁵ This list is based on “How to Write a Research Question,” George Mason University, The Writing Center, accessed on August 27, 2020, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/how-to-write-a-research-question>.

⁶ Turabian, *Ibid.*

Topic: I am working on youth ministry

Question: because I want to find out how many young people from parishes of the Orthodox Church in America regularly attend church services in college and through their twenties

Significance: so that I can generate new knowledge for teen ministry that inspires deeper commitment to the liturgical and sacramental life in the Church.

Topic: I'm working on addiction recovery in parish settings

Question: because I want to find out if Paula Freedman's Addiction Recovery Workbook can be adapted to an Orthodox Christian context

Significance: so that I can improve outcomes for members of the addiction recovery group in the parish I serve.

Research Elements of the D.Min. Project

There are multiple areas of research that are necessary for the D.Min. project. In order to have a viable topic, the student must be convinced that there are adequate research materials for all the required fields that relate to the topic. Projects will not all research the same areas, however, the following are typical fields of research for an acceptable project:

1. Biblical Research: demonstrate how Holy Scripture—directly or indirectly—guides and informs this approach to the topic.
2. Patristic and Historical Research: what does the Orthodox Christian Tradition (patristic works, liturgy, iconography, hagiography, etc.) say about the chosen topic. Include primary and secondary sources.
3. Contemporary Literature Review: assess relevant publications from the last 10-20 years that relate to the topic. In some cases, it will not be possible to provide an exhaustive review, however, engage the work of major contemporary authors writing on this subject.
4. Field Research: normally D.Min. projects include this component in order to test the real-world applicability of new knowledge in applied ministry. In many ways, the field research component is what differentiates a D.Min. project from other kinds of doctoral-level research projects. Such field research normally involves two kinds of research:
 - a. Examination of Existing Models— reviewing contemporary models of ministry may provide ideas for the student's own projected ministry outcome. For example, if the study is hoping to develop a leadership training manual for deacons, the student would need to examine current deacon training materials

to evaluate them for strengths and weaknesses. Normally such evaluations of strength or weakness must then be validated by research on living subjects.

b. Research on living subjects (surveys/questionnaires/interviews)— since the D.Min. project focuses on generating new knowledge in ministry, and since ministry consists in serving living people, projects normally include research on living subjects. This may be a matter of gaining insight, or evaluating materials. Sometimes materials may have a test run as part of the project; in this instance, students may do a pre-test/post-test survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the materials being "tested." **All research on human subjects must first be approved by the Institutional Review Board, and must conform to ethical norms for such research.**

When determining the viability of a particular topic it is advisable that the student consult with the D.Min. Director, professors, and the Librarian of the Florovsky Library for assistance in identifying and accessing adequate resources. When a student has completed preliminary research and crafted a viable research problem, then it is time to begin writing the Project Proposal.

The Project Proposal demonstrates that you have a viable plan for conducting research and completing the project. For each component of the research, you will argue for why you have proposed a specific focus for that area. For example, in the historical section, you must justify why your research on a specific era, person or theme is relevant to your research problem. In each section make an argument for why these materials will provide what you need to carry out the project.

The D. Min. Project Proposal

Purpose

Work on the D.Min. project begins with a quality proposal. The project proposal is a blueprint of the research plan for the entire project. It is a formal document presented to the assigned advisor and second reader for evaluation and approval. The proposal outlines the anticipated research model that the student will utilize to study the chosen topic and report on findings. The proposal is intended to provide a roadmap for the student's research and writing for the duration of the project process. You will prepare the initial draft of your proposal in TW 500: D.Min. Project Research, Analysis, and Writing. After preparing an acceptable draft proposal, a DMin project advisor and second reader are assigned by the Academic Dean, the proposal is then revised, and approved by the advisor and second reader.

Research and Writing Guides

Students at the project proposal stage have already done a good deal of research and writing, and it is reasonable to assume that one has a basic grasp on the research and writing process. However, even for the most accomplished researcher, a review of

standard guides on academic research, methods of analysis, and writing is strongly recommended in order to help clarify stages of the process, and strategies to ensure long-term success. These resources include, but are not limited to the following:

- William Badke, *Research Strategies: Finding your way through the information fog*, 5th ed., (Bloomington IN: iUniverse, 2014).
- Anol Bhattacherjee, *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*. 2nd ed. (2012; published under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License).
- Wayne C. Booth, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock).
- Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* Revised by Wayne C. Booth et. al. 9th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

Project Proposal

1. A Concise Title

While a final title for the completed project may different, it is important to think carefully about the initial proposed title. The title communicates the focus of your research and desired outcome.

2. Problem: Topic, Question and Significance

*Where are we now?*⁷ This element is important for defining carefully the parameters of your study. Specificity will delimit the focus and provide reasonable boundaries for the research. When the problem statement is clear, the student will be less inclined to stray from the project's stated purpose and follow "rabbit trails" that while interesting do not contribute significantly to the topic.

When drafting the problem, a good rule of thumb is, "Make it so narrow, that my advisor will ask me to broaden it."

3. Research Elements

*Where are we going?*⁸ While the problem normally articulates one question, a number of sub-questions are necessary to fully address the problem. These questions will help the student to make selections of resources that directly contribute to addressing the problem. Specific and concrete ideas of what the student hopes to discover through researching a particular field are essential for a successful D.Min. project. A separate list

⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 10.

⁸ ibid.

of research questions should be included for each area of inquiry — biblical, patristic/historical, current literature, etc. What are you seeking to find out in each component of the research? How do each of them relate to the primary question as stated in the problem?⁹

4. Research Strategy

*How are we going to get there?*¹⁰ The research strategy section offers an overview of the whole project. Here, the student will need to demonstrate how each research component contributes to the whole. There should be a coherent research plan that is logical, with all parts connecting to one another. Here the student justifies the components of the research strategy, including the research methods it employs, and argues for their necessity for successfully completing the project.

To ensure an effective research strategy:

- Identify the research problem clearly and justify its selection, particularly in relation to any valid alternative designs that could have been used,
- Review and synthesize previously published literature associated with the research problem,
- Clearly and explicitly specify hypotheses [i.e., research questions] central to the problem,
- Effectively describe the information and/or data which will be necessary for an adequate testing of the hypotheses and explain how such information and/or data will be obtained, and
- Describe the methods of analysis to be applied to the data in determining whether or not the hypotheses are true or false.¹¹

5. Proposed Outcome of the Study (new knowledge regarding the practice of ministry)

*How will we know when we get there, and now that we are there, what have we learned?*¹² At this point, the student delineates ideas about where the research will likely lead. A projected outcome will include a specific application to the practice of ministry. This element should include as much detail as possible in this early stage of research. Clarity here will have an impact on all parts of the research that will flow into this part of the project. For example, the practical outcome of the research may consist of (but not be limited to) a set of outlines, a study guide, training manual, or a series of sermons.

⁹ See: Sensing, Chapter 3.

¹⁰ Sensing, 10.

¹¹ “Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Types of Research Designs,” USC Libraries, accessed August 26, 2020, <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchdesigns>.

¹² Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 10.

6. Chapter Summaries

For each chapter, a short summary paragraph describing the basic content of that chapter is required for a project proposal. Again, specificity is key. For example, in the biblical chapter, list the particular texts (primary and secondary) that will be examined. The literature review chapter should mention the key authors and ideas to be surveyed.

7. Research on Living Subjects: Surveys, Questionnaires, Interview Questions

Normally D.Min. projects include research on living subjects. Since ministry is practiced within communities, some component of the research will normally be conducted on the people who are being served in the particular ministry. Before you can begin working with living subjects, your proposal must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that your research follows ethical norms for research on living human subjects. To help facilitate this process, complete the document “Questions for Proposals of Research on Living Subjects” (IRBQ, see below). This list of questions serves two purposes: 1) it is a checklist to ensure that you have included all of the relevant information in your proposal; 2) it is a high level summary of your research process that helps the IRB to review your proposal. *All information in the IRBQ should also be in your proposal.* Also, Include copies of your informed consent form and all surveys/questionnaires/interview questions as attachments to the proposal.

8. Timeline

The timeline should include every part of the project process from approval of the project proposal to the oral presentation in the final summer or fall term, and the final submission deadlines. The proposed timeline should include a realistic timeframe for research/writing of each chapter. *Please see page 19 of this handbook for deadlines.*

9. Bibliography

It is expected that the preliminary bibliography in the proposal will include a minimum of 50 sources. These sources should include books, essays and journal articles (in roughly equal proportion). For the purposes of the project proposal the bibliography should be organized by categories of research —biblical, historical, contemporary literature, methodology. This allows the advisor to see what the student has identified for each research component. Once your proposal is approved, you will need to combine the sections into one unified bibliography for the actual project.

Criteria for Evaluating a Proposal

1. Focus of topic
2. Clarity of writing
3. Evidence of competent, adequate preliminary research
4. Adequate bibliography for each research component of the project

5. Coherence of research strategy
6. Significance of the proposed outcome (i.e., a new model for ministry)
7. Chapter outlines are sufficiently detailed
8. A reasonable timeline

Process of Approval

1. In TW500: Final Project Research, Analysis and Writing, student constructs the draft project proposal.
2. The Academic Dean assigns an advisor, and second reader based on topic and faculty availability.
3. Student revises the draft project proposal with guidance from her or his advisor regarding research method or methods and sources.
4. The revised proposal is approved by the advisor, and submitted to the second reader for approval. (Based on the response from the second reader, the advisor may require the student to make additional modifications to the proposal.)
5. Student submits the revised proposal, including all information related to research on living subjects (surveys, interviews, etc.) to the SVS Institutional Review Board for approval.

Advisors and Second Readers

Your advisor is your primary contact for the process of research and writing. He or she will provide you with guidance throughout the process and you should be in regular contact with your advisor. The second reader has a much narrower role in the process and is **only** involved in approving the project proposal, and evaluating the final version of the project.

Research and Writing

General Notes About Research

The key to good research is access to excellent resources. Familiarize yourself with the SVS library and online catalog; ask for assistance if you need it. Learn how to use the ATLA index which allows you to search online for essays and journal articles. While you are working on your research, investigate libraries in your area. If there is a theological school or university nearby, they may have resources you need. A letter of introduction from the SVS librarian can also be provided upon request. The public library can also be a rich source of materials; take advantage of their inter-library loan services to borrow books as needed.

When collecting material, keep meticulous notes on the bibliographic data you'll need later to document your sources. If you don't correctly record information for footnotes and bibliography the first time, it can be very time consuming to repeat the process later. Your final written project will be inspected for correct citations, so do it right the

first time. There are a number of electronic tools available to assist in the research and writing process, such as Nota Bene and Scrivener.

As a doctoral student you have academic freedom to interpret and apply your research according to your convictions. It is expected, however, that you interact with the Orthodox Christian tradition as part of your research. Students are free to make their own conclusions, but are required to give evidence of being conversant with the Orthodox tradition and interacting with it.

Project Chapters

The project should follow the academic style of citation found in the latest edition of Turabian. If the style of the [*St. Vladimir's Seminary Press House Style*](#) differs from Turabian, the SVS style sheet is to be followed. Most chapters in a D.Min. Project are in the 20-30 page range at minimum. If a chapter gets too long, it is suggested that the writer consider breaking it down into two chapters. While it is typical for projects to have one chapter devoted to each research component, it is possible to have more than one chapter in a given field if it is essential to the project. There is no minimum or maximum number of chapters in a D.Min. Project, but *typical projects are between 100-200 pages in length, consisting of five to seven chapters.*

The following framework is a *suggestion* for how chapters of project might be organized. Your proposal need not follow this pattern precisely.

INTRODUCTION

Introductions may be significantly different according to the purposes of individual projects. There are a variety of ways that an introduction may be written. In some projects, the introduction is a few pages at the beginning of chapter one. Other authors prefer to have a separate introduction due to the amount of background material which must be reported as the context for the whole study. The introduction is the place for the writer to share the story of his or her personal interest in the topic and why it is deemed to be important. Introductions are also a good place to describe the research process for the reader. Typically, the introduction is written last, after one has completed the research and writing of the whole project. The length of the introduction is at the discretion of the author.

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL CHAPTER

In this section, students explore the biblical/theological foundations that undergird the approach to this topic. Students should be conversant with the multiple disciplines related to biblical studies and be able to utilize them in the research process. It is expected that the student is able to do graduate M.Div. level exegetical work, including the use of biblical languages where appropriate.

HISTORICAL/PATRISTIC CHAPTER

The D.Min. Project requires that students ask the question: What has the Eastern Orthodox tradition (along with the tradition to which you belong if different), said about these things? There are a number of ways to approach answering this question. One may answer this question synchronically, diachronically, or by focusing on a figure or figures. A combination of one or more of these strategies may also be appropriate. The key is to develop a robust research strategy in the D.Min. Project Proposal and then stick to that strategy. Whatever strategy one chooses, it is essential to explain these choices in the written project. The SVS faculty are available to assist you in thinking through the options and finding the resources.

It is important that this chapter contain both primary and secondary sources. When consulting secondary resources, pay attention to the form as well as the content. Reading good scholarship helps one to write good scholarship. Keep good records of your research. Whenever possible, use hard copy texts for citations.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE REVIEW CHAPTER

As you survey the literature you will discover the key players in current discussions. These key persons are where you should concentrate the research. The expectation is that you can rehearse the standard account of thinking in this field within the chapter. If your area of research is not being addressed within the Orthodox Christian community, identify the principal figures who *are* addressing the topic, and consider those within the Orthodox community who are addressing topics that are relevant to your area of inquiry. Journal articles will assist you in identifying these major contributors to the body of knowledge.

It is important to remember that a literature review chapter in your D. Min project is not an annotated bibliography nor is it a series of book reviews. You should not sequentially rehearse the data in one book or journal article and then move to the next book. The expectation is that you will synthesize the materials from multiple books/journals around particular themes and then write the chapter based on these themes. In this way you make the material yours rather than simply rehearsing the contents of one book after another. Journal articles in the field may help you to come up with a good outline for the chapter. It is not plagiarism to borrow structure, but it is to steal words. (see *Turabian*¹³ 7.9-7.10)

When writing the literature review, it is appropriate to reserve your comments on the material to footnotes and/or a summary section at the end of the chapter. Your purpose in the chapter is to report what experts are saying about your topic. Your perspective as an experienced ministry professional is important and your evaluation of the surveyed

¹³ *Ibid.*, 81-4.

material is necessary. However, to write well in an academic paper, one should be careful to “share one’s opinion” sparingly except in appropriate portions of the paper.

ANALYSIS OF MINISTRY MODELS CHAPTER

When it is necessary to incorporate a study of existing models, it is important to structure the analysis carefully. For example, if one plans to review several models for small groups, the researcher would need to create a consistent pattern of analysis so the review is even-handed and coherent. Select several sub-groups (e.g. small group leaders, group dynamics, timeframe, materials, etc.) and evaluate each small group model using these same categories. It may be necessary to digress from this pattern of analysis at some points, but, consistency makes for strong research. In this section the writer might interject more personal perspective as part of an evaluation of these models.

In order to compare and contrast existing models it may be necessary to quote from material in the written body of the project. Whenever quoting material in the body of the project, keep in mind the following guidelines from Turabian (7.4),

“Quote for these purposes:

- The words themselves are evidence that back up your reasons.
- The words are from an authority who backs up your claims.
- The words are strikingly original or express your key concepts so compellingly that the quotation can frame an extended discussion.
- The words express a claim you disagree with, and to be fair you want to state it exactly.”¹⁴

If you are quoting from unpublished sources, it will be important to obtain permission from the authors to quote their materials in the D.Min. Project; and quotations of published materials must be cited following standard guidelines. Should it be necessary to include large portions of certain materials, they may be included as an appendix to which the author could refer in the text. The University of New England provides helpful guidelines on when and how to use an appendix.¹⁵ When to quote, and how much to quote, is a judgment call that the writer must make, but as a rule of thumb, a block quote in the body of the project should never exceed 300 words. The key is to ensure clear communication through good writing. *Always keep the reader in mind.*

REPORTING ON SURVEYS, QUESTIONNAIRES, INTERVIEWS

¹⁴ Ibid., 77-8.

¹⁵ “Writing essays, reviews, and reports: appendices,” University of New England, accessed on August 23, 2018, https://www.une.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/392156/WE_Appendices.pdf.

If the student is using field research in the project, the research must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once a proposal has been approved by the Advisor and Second Reader, the student submits the proposal along with the Questions for Proposals of Research on Living Subjects (IRBQ) (see attached) and all relevant documents (informed consent form, surveys, etc.) to the Program Director for IRB review.

Clear reporting of the collected data is critical. Consistency of recording, collection and reporting on questionnaires is required so that fair inferences may be drawn from the results.

The student may want to seek assistance from someone with expertise in this area of research, examine questionnaires by others to glean ideas for both structure and questions, and observe how others report the data. Consult the SVS library to peruse previous D.Min. Projects that have utilized surveys, questionnaires and interviews. Be reserved in reporting results from questionnaires. Unless one is an expert in statistical analysis, be tentative in reporting results, pointing to “what may be indicated” in the study. If necessary, consult with a statistician or a researcher with expertise in data collection and analysis.

Some helpful books for designing and conducting valid surveys are:

- *The Survey Handbook* (2nd edition) by Arlene Fink
- *Studying Congregations* edited by Nancy Ammerman et.al.

It may be appropriate to schedule follow-up interviews after collection of surveys is completed. Personal interviews often turn up more information since surveys may not always ask the right questions. Interviewing “experts” should be based on a consistent set of questions that are presented to each person interviewed. This is especially important for writing up the results of the interviews. Note in Turabian (17.6.2) how one is to document interviews in footnotes and bibliography.

Students including surveys of minors are required to gain parental approval. Further information on this can be obtained from the IRB.

NEW KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY CHAPTER

The outcomes chapter marks the culmination of the D.Min. Project as a whole. Each research chapter has been structured to contribute to this practical section of the project. Here the student answers the “so what” question, applying the research to the contemporary practice of ministry. This “hands on” section must show clear connections to the writer’s own ministry context and be applicable to the larger church.

Creativity is encouraged in this chapter; students may use charts, graphs, outlines, slides, pictures, electronic media, etc. For example, this might include a set of sermon

outlines, church school lessons, a training manual, weekend retreat schedule, handbook, etc. Appendices that relate to this chapter may also be appropriate.

The presentation of material in this chapter may take a variety of forms, but there must also be a written narrative section which explains the materials presented. The reader should be clearly guided through the practical section so that these ministry materials could potentially be used by others and transferrable to other contexts.

CONCLUSION

This part of the written project may be a separate chapter or the last section of the final chapter. Here the student should summarize the work of the project and underscore the final outcomes of the totality of the research. A good conclusion will also suggest future areas of research that relate to the topic. What important issues were raised in the study that the writer was not able to pursue due to the parameters of the study? Are there lingering questions you have about the subject that you were not able to adequately explore? A good researcher acknowledges that the last word on the topic has not yet been written.

General Notes about Writing

As an academic research project, it is most appropriate to write in the third person. An exception to this general rule is the use of first person in the introduction, conclusion and sometimes in explanatory footnotes—in these instances the writer is bringing personal perspectives to bear on the subject and not reporting research data.

Do not use online sources unless they are the only way to access certain content material. In an academic work, citation should be from credible published sources that one can find in a library. Even though historical texts, for example, are available in electronic versions or online, students should locate “hard copies” of these materials in standard editions for purposes of direct quotations in a D.Min. project. In instances where an online resource is utilized, footnotes and bibliographic entries must be created according to the standards found in Turabian.

Use quotations sparingly and only include long passages when absolutely necessary. A proper quotation is used only for a poignant statement from an author that is crucial to the discussion. It is always preferable to summarize an author’s arguments and then use a footnote at the end of the section to indicate the source. Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity; when in doubt, add a footnote at the end of a paragraph. Quotes should never be used to rehearse facts that are common knowledge in a field.

At the end of each chapter, it is helpful to have a brief summary section which rehearses the primary conclusions of the research. In addition, a few comments about the ways this chapter will contribute to new knowledge regarding the practice of ministry can be

useful. The last paragraph of a chapter should contain a transition which bridges the current chapter into the next chapter. This segue paragraph helps tie the whole project together for the reader.

Before one submits a full draft of the project, it is *strongly* recommended that the student hire or recruit someone with writing expertise to review the whole project (an English teacher for example). This person may review the written work for grammar, vocabulary and style. Another set of eyes looking for typos is also necessary. N.B.: **Your faculty advisor is not your editor!** Your advisor expects a “clean” copy of the project draft. A solid project gives attention to presentation as well as content. Consult Turabian and the SVS style sheet on formatting as you do your research so that you get the formatting correct from the beginning. Sloppy or inconsistent work will be returned for revision.

Working with your Advisor

1. As soon as your Advisor is appointed, send him or her the proposal you wrote in TW 500.
2. Work with your advisor to refine and revise proposal based on his or her specifications. *Provide monthly progress reports to your advisor.*
3. Submit chapters (one at a time) to your advisor unless otherwise instructed. *Chapters must be clean, fully edited, as you intend them to appear in the final version.*
4. Incorporate revisions as instructed by your advisor into the full draft. If substantial revision is needed on a chapter, the advisor may require that the revised chapter be submitted for preliminary review prior to the final full review of the project.
5. When the student has revised each chapter following the directions from the advisor, these should be collated into a full draft, with the required formatting for binding, along with the title page, contents, bibliography, etc. See [Thesis & Final Project Page on SVOTS.edu](#) for style guide. *The full draft must be reviewed and approved by the advisor prior to the final submission to the Office of the Registrar.*
6. Submit the **advisor approved** version of the full draft to the Office of the Registrar by the stated deadline in order to be eligible for graduation. *If your advisor has not approved the project, you may **not** submit it to the Office of the Registrar.*

Comprehensive Project Review

The Comprehensive Project Review of the D.Min. Project will take place during the summer or fall term of the third year of the program. Although along the way the student will have received their advisor’s comments on specific chapters, the Comprehensive Project Review will be a more comprehensive look at the whole project, including additional feedback from the faculty and members of the D.Min.

Cohort. The Advisor and Second Reader may ask the student to incorporate additional revisions (major or minor) into the final copy of the Project before it is officially approved. The Comprehensive Project review includes the following:

1. Students will make a brief presentation of the Project
2. The Advisor/Reader will review the project to ask clarifying questions, consider implications and encourage further discussion on the topic
3. Faculty and students present may also ask questions and participate in discussion

Criteria for Evaluating the Written Project

1. Thoroughness of research
2. Clarity of communication
3. Integration of theory and practice
4. Application to the practice of ministry
5. Writing mechanics (i.e., correct use of grammar, spelling, vocabulary)
6. Footnotes and bibliography in correct style
7. Document formatting

D.Min Project Timeline

This timeline is provided as a general guide. Not all elements may need to occur in the exact order listed, but the general flow should follow what you see listed. When in doubt, contact your project advisor or the D.Min. Director.

Fall 2024 TW500

- Full project proposal is due at the end of the course, and this is the basis for the grade.
- Students may be in informal contact with professor/s whom they would like to advise their projects. However, project advisors will only be assigned upon a student's successful completion of TW500. **Students do NOT pick their own advisors.** (The "supervisor" member of your ERC is NOT your project advisor.)
- Advisors are assigned by the Academic Dean.

Spring recess: 2025

- Student gains approval from advisor and reader and approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research on living subjects.

Summer 2025: TS501

- Prerequisites: approval from advisor and reader; approval of the IRB
- Fieldwork, surveys, data gathering (this is the primary benchmark for completion of TS501)
- Should the summer be an inopportune time to do fieldwork, the student should look to complete fieldwork during the spring recess. *The final fall term is too late to be doing fieldwork.*
- Literature review
- Regular contact with the cohort: synchronous or asynchronous status updates to maintain cohort integrity and peer accountability in the research process.

End of Summer or early Fall Term: Presentation of preliminary results from fieldwork and research

- Mandatory student attendance
- Project advisor and reader normally attend presentation; all DMin faculty welcome
- It is not expected that a draft of the project is due at this time.
- This is normally a synchronous teleconference without an onsite requirement
- Objective is to receive critical feedback that can be incorporated into the final project

Fall 2025: TS502

- Regular contact with the cohort for peer review of draft writing done asynchronously to maintain cohort integrity and leverage accountability in the writing process (Editing a colleague's work helps the student to be a better writer, and it should also save the advisor/reader from doing heavy editorial lifting) The advisor will also be kept in the loop for these regular draft submissions.
- Completion of the project and submission of Advisor approved version by the December deadline (see Academic Calendar for dates).

Commencement: Fr. Alexander Schmemann Memorial Lecture (Feast of Three Hierarchs)

Public Presentation

- Graduates present their projects to the public through SVS sponsored webinars
- These will be scheduled throughout the winter and spring following commencement in order to maximize public participation

Continuing registration: students requiring additional time to complete the project will be assessed continuing registration fees for each academic term (summer and fall) beyond the final academic term of the cohort.

Library Copy

The D.Min. project in its approved form—and on white, acid-free bond paper—is to be deposited with the librarian prior to graduation. (Students may elect to have the Seminary print the D.Min. project for a \$100 fee.) This copy will be bound (for which reason the left margin must be 1.5 inches), and will be added to the library collection. Once the printed copy has been submitted to the library, no changes of any kind will be permitted.

St. Vladimir's Seminary Institutional Review Board
Questions for Proposals of Research on Living Subjects
IRBQ

1. What is/are your key research questions?
2. What are the objectives and purposes of this research? Describe the research you will perform in order to justify the validity or effectiveness of the new model of ministry you are proposing.
3. What research methods do you plan to use? Describe in detail.
4. What questions do you plan to ask? (If you are using a questionnaire or structured interview, please include a copy of it as an Appendix to your proposal.)
5. How do you plan to begin your research?
6. Whose consent will you need to obtain? What documents will you use to explain your work? (Attach a completed Informed Consent Form)
7. What is your relationship to the people who will be part of the project?
8. What recruitment or invitation procedures do you plan to use?
9. Will subjects who participate in the project be anonymous? If not, how will you assure the privacy of the participants? (This relates to #4)
10. How do you plan to physically protect the data? (e.g. backup copies) How will you protect confidentiality of the data? If the data will be stored after the conclusion of the project, how will it be stored, and for how long? Will it be destroyed at some point, if so, when and how?
11. How and where will the research be reported?
12. Will any of the subjects be minors (under 18 years of age)? If so, how will you obtain parental consent?
13. Will any of the subjects be members of vulnerable populations (cognitively impaired, institutionalized, imprisoned, etc.)? If so, what additional protections does the research procedure provide them?
14. What are potential benefits for persons who are part of the project?
15. What are potential risks for persons who are part of the project, including physical, mental, or social discomfort, harm, or danger? How will you respond if any participant has adverse effects as a result of your research?
16. Will the project involve any deception of participants? If so, how? Why is deception necessary? What procedures will you use to debrief participants?
17. What alternative procedures are available to a subject who wishes to withdraw or who is harmed by the project?
18. Is IRB approval required by any other institution? If so, please attach your proposal (for the other institution) as an Appendix and describe the procedure and timeline for approval. (The answer here is almost always "no" for the SVS DMin)