

A Guide to Writing a Doctor of Ministry Research Project Paper Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Nature and Purpose of the Research Project Paper

The Research Project is conceived as an effort in creative ministry, to be developed and carried out in relation to the student's context of ministry. It takes a significant approach to a problem or area of study related to the theory and practice of ministry. It is a demonstration of student's ability to relate his/her own practice of ministry to fundamental theories in the classical disciplines and the behavioral and social sciences, as appropriate to the topic, and found in the Seminary curriculum.

It involves the application of a theology of ministry and data from original research to a particular aspect of professional practice in such a way as to develop, implement, and evaluate an original, investigative research project that promises to make a significant contribution to the practice of the ministry. The purpose of the Research Project Paper is to demonstrate professional, doctoral-level excellence in the student's ability to contribute to the practice of ministry through original research, design, implementation, data-analysis, writing and evaluation.

The Research Project Paper will incorporate work from published journal articles, monographs, and books but it can also include other scholarly artifacts such as film and other audio, visual and graphic presentations, and application-oriented documents such as policy briefs, curricula, business plans, computer and web tools, pages, and applications, etc., so long as they are also described and analyzed in a scholarly context.

The Research Project Paper should reflect the student's ability to do the following:

- Critically analyze the relevant literature
- Use and describe in detail the appropriate methodology for the scholarly work undertaken
- Conduct Social Science research and present findings that result in a significant and original contribution to knowledge
- Verify knowledge claims and sources meticulously
- Locate the work of the Research Project and its findings within the broader field or discipline
- Communicate the scholarly work and analysis effectively

Coursework Phase

The student will work closely with her/his First Reader as the research and writing progresses. Your First Reader will, in consultation with you, the D.Min. Associate Dean, and other faculty as needed, to assign a Second Reader to your Project. Drafts of the **Prospectus** will be submitted to the student's Track Leader, First Reader, Second Reader, and (where necessary) the D.Min. Associate Dean for review and revision. While in the Coursework phase, the student must meet with and submit drafts of the evolving **Prospectus** to her/his Track Leader during Seminars 2, 3, and 4. Please make sure you are in contact with your Track Leader to **proactively** set meetings with your Track Leader during Seminars 2, 3, and 4. The Track Leader may ask other members of the D.Min. Committee and/or broader faculty, as needed, to review **Prospectus** drafts. Also, please be in contact with **the library staff** during the drafting process (Seminar 4) to work on proper formatting and use of citations in the Research Project Paper. Bobi Bilz (bbilz@lpts.edu) is the coordinator and intake person for the library thesis review process. The actual

review will be assigned to and conducted by one of the librarians who will work with you throughout the rest of the process, including final approval of the document.

Candidacy Phase

Student will move into candidacy phase once his/her Prospectus is approved by the first and second reader and the project is registered. He/she will be in full research and writing mode. When the student has written a first draft of the **Research Project Paper**, he/she will submit that draft to the First Reader, who will then review the Paper and make recommendations for revisions. The First Reader will also include the Second Reader in reviewing drafts of the Research Project Paper. A copy of the draft will also be submitted to the library staff for formatting and style/citation review.

Often, multiple drafts of the Research Project Paper are submitted to your readers for their comments and suggested changes. The revision process will continue until the First Reader, the Second Reader, the D.Min. Associate Dean, and the Candidate agree that the Paper is ready for a successful **Oral Defense**. Once that determination is made, an **Oral Defense** date will be set.

The Oral Defense

At the Oral Defense, the Research Project Paper will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- The Project should be significantly shaped by engagement with the **classical theological disciplines**: biblical studies, theology, ethics, pastoral care, church history, and the **social sciences** (sociology, anthropology, etc.).
- The Project should demonstrate how such theological reflection is inseparably related to **Christian Practice**.
- The Project should clearly articulate its **theological and practical significance** in relation to the challenges of the specific practices of ministry covered in the Track, and in terms of a specific context of ministry.
- The Project should make a **significant and original contribution**, in content and argument, to the area of professional ministry.

Present at the Oral Defense will be the Holy Spirit, the Candidate, the First Reader, the Second Reader, the D.Min. Associate Dean, and snacks!

Once the **Research Project Paper** is approved by your **readers and its formatting approved by the Library**, your work is complete. Recommendations for graduation will be formally presented to the whole seminary faculty for approval.

Graduation follows certification by the Registrar that all degree requirements have been met and subsequent action taken by the faculty to recommend to the Board of Trustees that your degree be conferred.

Date: July 15, 2021