

# EATFE RECOMMENDED 2018 STANDARDS FOR FIELD EDUCATION

Adopted by the Evangelical Association of Theological Field Educators (EATFE)  
at the January 16-18, 2018 biennium.

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## SECTION ONE: Preface & Introduction

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### PREFACE

The *EATFE (Evangelical Association of Theological Field Educators) Recommended Standards for Field Education* was developed by an assigned task group, between the January 2016 and January 2018 biennium meetings of the EATFE caucus. The first draft was presented to the EATFE members who attended the ATFE (Association for Theological Field Education) 2017 biennium. In October 2017, the final draft was emailed to the EATFE members for consideration. Comments and responses were collected. At the January 2018 biennium, following further discussion and modification, these standards were adopted by the assembled group, January 16-18, 2018, at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama.

This document is an update and expansion of the original ***EATFE Recommended Standards for Field Education*** created at the EATFE biennium in January 1994.

While EATFE is an association of individuals from across the world, and a caucus of ATFE (Association for Theological Field Education), it is not an accreditation agency. However, these ***EATFE Recommended Standards for Field Education*** seek to match the **Association of Theological Schools (ATS)** Field Education Standards with best practices for meeting those ATS Field Education requirements.

## INTRODUCTION

This most recent version of recommended standards recognizes that the educational landscape has dramatically changed since the original EATFE standards were created in 1994. We as theological field educators seek to articulate and recommend standards for excellence in theological field education appropriate to our given times and contexts. As evangelicals particularly concerned with the supremacy and authority of the scriptures and the spiritual rebirth, we seek to advocate best practices for our discipline, for the glory of God.

Specific new developments and concerns include:

- A variety of educational delivery systems. With the advent of the Internet and subsequent versions of online education, many seminary degree programs are now offered online, either partially or in full. Thus, standards for field education must take these delivery systems into consideration, making the best use of them (high-tech) while retaining the core values of personal instruction and interaction (high-touch).
- More women and minorities are enrolling in theological education than ever before. Standards therefore, must take into consideration both the contributions of and the obstacles facing these, and other groups, as they pursue theological training and field practice. Evangelical women, in particular, often have fewer field education or vocational options within the church because a high percentage of evangelical churches espouse a complementarian view of women, thus not allowing women into senior leadership roles.
- Lower enrollment and FTE status within theological education. Standards need to maintain excellence in pedagogy while acknowledging that operating budgets may have declined from previous years.
- Competition. In certain churches, denominations, or networks, classical theological education is not or is no longer valued. In addition, many large-church networks are developing their own theological training programs and schools. Often having greater resources and convenience, students in these church programs may become clergy without attending seminary.

- Increased tuition and student debt. This often affects the pace at which students attend seminary. In addition, many more students must work, at least part-time, to pay bills while attending seminary, thus increasing personal and family stressors.
- Greater variety of ministry opportunities and approaches. Increasingly, students are drawn toward ministry in less-traditional contexts. The number of parachurch and creative-access ministries has exploded in recent decades. Thus, Field Education requirements must evolve to support and prepare students for these ministries, as well as the local church.
- Bi-vocational ministries. While church-planting often requires pastors to work bi-vocationally, more ministers are choosing to have a foot in both the church and marketplace, for ministry purposes. Field Education standards need to adjust for these realities and potentialities.

With these and other factors at play in our current theological educational scene, we must be vigilant, be aware of, and make appropriate adjustments for them. While these factors present serious challenges, they also bring great opportunities for innovation and improvement of our practices and procedures.

In addition to best practice models conceived to meet ATS Field Education Standards, most sections of this document also include potential processes for implementing these best practices.

## **SECTION TWO: Current ATS Standards Related to Field Education**

### **ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS (ATS) GUIDING STANDARDS**

Many of the Guiding Standards are lengthy and complex. Only those portions related specifically to Field Education have been included in this document. These show as **bolded** text within each section and relate to students' development of ministry skills and knowledge, and spiritual and character development.

#### **GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS**

##### **Standard 3 The Theological Curriculum: Learning, Teaching, and Research**

###### **3.1 Goals of the theological curriculum**

###### **3.1.1:**

"In a theological school, the overarching goal is the development of theological understanding, that is, aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to a responsible life in faith. Comprehended in this overarching goal are others such as deepening spiritual awareness, growing in moral sensibility and character, gaining an intellectual grasp of the tradition of a faith community, and **acquiring the abilities requisite to the exercise of ministry in that community. These goals, and the processes and practices leading to their attainment, are normally intimately interwoven and should not be separated from one another.**"

### 3.1.2:

“More narrowly understood, the curriculum is the array of specific activities (e.g. courses, **practica, supervised ministry, spiritual formation experiences**, these) explicitly required in a degree program....the curriculum should be seen as a set of practices with a formative aim—the development of intellectual, spiritual, moral, and **vocational or professional capacities**....”

### 3.2.1 Learning

#### 3.2.1.2:

“Learning should cultivate scholarly discourse and result in the ability to think critically and constructively, conduct research, use library resources, **and engage in the practice of ministry.**”

### 3.3 Characteristics of theological scholarship

#### 3.3.1 Scholarly collaboration

##### 3.3.1.2:

“These include courses, independent study, the library, student and faculty interaction, **congregational and field settings**,...”

## EDUCATIONAL STANDARD

### ES Educational Standard Applicable to All Degree Programs

#### ES.1 Degree programs and nomenclature

##### ES.1.2 Basic programs oriented toward ministerial leadership

###### ES.1.2.1:

“Third, they provide opportunities for **formational experiences** through which students may **grow in those personal qualities essential for the practice of ministry**—namely, emotional maturity, **personal faith, moral integrity, and social concern**. Fourth, they assist students in gaining the capacities for entry into and **growth in the practice of the particular form of ministry to which the program is oriented.** “

#### ES.4 Distance education

##### ES.4.1 Definition:

“Distance education is a mode of education in which a course is offered without students and instructors being in the same location. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous and employs the use of technology. Distance education courses may consist of exclusively online or other technologically assisted instruction or a blend of intensive classroom and online instruction. In all cases, distance education courses shall ensure regular and substantive interaction of faculty with students.”

##### ES.4.2 Educational design, resources, and institutional procedures

###### ES.4.2.3:

“According to the relevant degree program standards, distance education programs shall seek to **enhance personal and spiritual formation**, be sensitive to individual learning styles, and recognize diversity within the community of learners. Courses shall require regular and substantive interaction **between teachers and learners and among learners to ensure a community of learning.**

###### ES.4.2.19:

“The credits awarded for a hybrid or blended distance education course will count toward residency for those degrees that require residential instruction only if the majority of instructor-directed learning occurs in situations **where both faculty and students are in person** on the school's main campus or at an extension approved for the school to offer the full degree.”

## DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS

### Basic Programs Oriented Toward Ministerial Leadership

#### Standard A Master of Divinity (MDiv)

##### A.1 Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

###### A.1.2 Primary goals of the program

###### A.1.2.1:

“The goals an institution adopts for an MDiv degree should be related to the institution’s mission and foster students’ knowledge of religious heritage, understanding of the cultural context, **growth in spiritual depth and moral integrity**, and **capacity for ministerial and public leadership**.”

##### A.2 Program Content

###### A.2.5 Capacity for ministerial and public leadership:

“The program shall provide **theological reflection on and education for the practice of ministry**. These activities should cultivate the capacity for leadership in ecclesial and public contexts.”

###### A.2.5.1:

“The program shall provide for courses in the **areas of ministry practice** and shall ensure a constructive relationship among courses dealing primarily with the **practice of ministry** and courses dealing primarily with other subjects.”

###### A.2.5.2:

“The program shall specifically provide for **training in professional and ministerial ethics**.”

###### A.2.5.3:

“The program shall provide opportunities for education through **supervised experiences in ministry**. The experiences should be of **sufficient duration and intensity to provide opportunity to gain expertise in the tasks of ministerial leadership** within both the congregation and the broader public context and to reflect on interrelated theological, cultural, and **experiential learning**.”

###### A.2.5.4 :

“Qualified persons shall be selected as **field supervisors and trained in supervisory methods and the educational expectations of an institution**.”

###### A.2.5.5:

“The institution shall have **established procedures for selection, development, evaluation and termination of supervised ministry settings**.”

#### Standard B Master of Arts in [specialized ministry] (MA in [specialized ministry]), or Master of [specialized ministry] (MRE, MCE, MPS, etc.)

##### B.1 Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

###### B.1.2 Primary goals of the program

###### B.1.2.1:

“Primary goals for this kind of degree include (1) the capacity for **critical and constructive theological reflection** regarding the content and processes of the areas of specialized ministry; (2) **skill in the design, implementation, and assessment of ministry in these specialized areas**; (3) **an understanding of the various disciplines that undergird the area of specialized ministry**; and (4) **growth in personal and spiritual maturity**.”

##### B.2 Program Content

###### B.2.1:

“Degree programs oriented toward specialized ministerial leadership should provide instruction in the wide range of theological disciplines as well as those disciplines critical **for the practice of the**

**specialized ministry.** Learning outcomes shall encompass the instructional areas of religious heritage, **cultural context, personal and spiritual formation, and capacity for ministerial and public leadership in the designated area of specialization.**”

**B.2.3 Cultural context:**

“The program shall provide instructional settings and opportunities for students to gain understanding of the context of the specialization in the broader range of **ministerial practice and the purposes of the church** and to develop appropriate understanding of the broader social context in which the specialized ministry is performed, including **diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic contexts of ministry.**”

**B.2.5 Specialization:**

“The program shall provide **structured opportunities for students to gain understanding and skill in practice related to the areas of specialization, to acquire the capacity to design and maintain effective practices and programs in the areas of the specialty, and to develop skill in assessing the efforts and contributions of the specialized ministry.**”

**B.2.5.1:**

“The program shall provide students with **supervised experiences in the area of specialization.** These experiences should **be of sufficient duration and intensity to provide opportunity to gain expertise in the tasks of ministerial leadership and to reflect on the interrelated theological, cultural, and experiential learning.**”

**B.2.5.2:**

“The theological school shall **select qualified persons as field supervisors and train them in supervisory methods and the educational expectations of the institution.** Schools shall also have a **procedure for selection, development, evaluation, and termination of supervised ministry settings.**”

## **SECTION THREE: 2018 Revised EATFE Standards**

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### **PROGRAM DESIGN AND ADMINISTRATION**

- ❖ Refer to ATS Guiding Standards: 3.1.1; 3.2.1.2; 3.3.1.2; ES.1.2.1; A .2.5; A.2.5.1; A.2.5.3; A.2.5.4; A.2.5.5; B.2.1; B.2.3; B.2.5; B.2.5.1; B.2.5.2.

#### **PROGRAM DESIGN**

**I. FIELD EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTCOMES SHOULD REFLECT:**

- The school’s institutional mission.
- The school’s theological convictions and commitments.
- The degree program objectives.
- Biblical standards for ministry leadership.
- Denominational and/or local church standards for ministry leadership.
- The basic knowledge, skills, and character necessary for vocational competency.
- The challenges and opportunities of ministry in changing cultural contexts.
- Opportunities to practice ministry in safe learning environments without fear of failure.

## II. EXPECTED STUDENT-LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM FIELD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- Genuine devotion to Jesus Christ, understanding of and passion for the gospel, love for the Church, solid grounding in the Scriptures, and godly character.
- Healthy understanding and embrace of ministerial identity, capacity for faithful servant leadership, appropriate interpersonal skills.
- Ability to think theologically about the practice of ministry, integration of theological learning and ministry practice.
- Basic competency in ministry skills and practices.
- Ability to exegete ministry contexts and to minister in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways.

## III. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING FIELD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Since Field Education is a required and vital component of the collaborative-learning and the action/reflection processes in the M.Div. and M.A degree programs, these elements need to be considered when creating a Field Education program.

- Basic pre-requisite courses should be designed to orient students toward ministerial leadership that requires fieldwork as a formational experience.
- Students need venues where they can learn to integrate what they are learning in the classroom with what they experience on site. Field Education is intended to provide both opportunities for practice and reflection.
- Appropriate Field Education options should be allowed for students with extensive pre-seminary ministerial experiences. These experiences may include opportunities like completing CPE training, working in community mental health agencies, teaching in public and private schools. These options should offer the students expanded professional and personal development.
- The field experience should be of sufficient intensity (hours per week) and duration (weeks per term). Generally that would mean at least 10 hours per week, for a total Field Education experience of approximately 400 hours; keeping in mind that both *length of time* and *depth* are important.
- Written or digital documentation should include at least:
  - A learning covenant between the student, supervisor/mentor, church or agency, and the school, at the beginning of the field experience.

- A self-evaluation by the student and an evaluation by the mentor, at the end of the field experience.
- A Field Education Handbook for use by students and mentors, to help guide the Field Education process.
- In addition, some schools use profiles that evaluate the student's gifts, personality, interests, needs, etc., usually in partnership with a Counseling department. It is vital to follow legal guidelines to protect student confidentiality e.g. FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act).
- Field Education should include regular reflection experiences in collaborative groups of students and/or mentors and school faculty, including some case-study processing. Specific guidelines to direct these group experiences will need to be created.
- Field Education courses should be given significant academic credit using an appropriate form of assessment, designated by the Field Education office.
- Where students are not planning for vocational-clergy ministry, Field Education should provide appropriate ministry training for marketplace-ministry or other desired vocational settings.
- Approved placement sites should be able to provide sufficient opportunity and resources for students to function as ministers-in-training; where students can experience the full array of ministry experiences and/or experiences appropriate to the student's learning goals.
- Mentors/supervisors should commit a minimum of one hour per week for theological, ministry, and personal reflection with the student. In addition, **if possible**, lay committees or another form of grouping at the ministry site should be a part of the Field Education experience.
- Programs should include opportunities and immersions for students to experience cultural, ecclesiastical, and theological diversity during their Field Education experience.
- The Action/Reflection model should be implemented, in order to enhance learning in the ministry context.
- Internet chat programs (e.g. Zoom, Google Hangouts) should be used, where possible, for face-to-face small group interaction, as well as providing a means of supervisory dialog, when in-person campus options are not available.
- A synthesis-vocational-dialogue paper (or similar) should conclude the Field Education experience to demonstrate student learning as a result of the Field Education experience and what it contributed to their ministry and spiritual formation.

- Residential Field Education programs should include site visits to local venues that include community care sites, hospitals, churches, and multicultural settings. In addition, classroom visits by local pastors, chaplains and recruiters will help students with vocational identity. On-line programs should use video-chat rooms to bring resource people into the classroom, or guide students toward site visits near their living locations.

## ADMINISTRATION

### I. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Providing appropriate administration for the Field Education program will determine the overall success of the program. Appointing a qualified director, receiving appropriate financial resources, developing and assessing curriculum, and implementing and evaluating training materials are crucial administrative functions.

The following are recommended administrative necessities for a successful Field Education program:

#### A. PROGRAM DIRECTOR:

- Should possess or be pursuing a research (preferred) or professional doctoral degree.
- Should be an elected member of the faculty, whether full or administrative.
- Should be a credentialed minister, in good standing with her or his denomination or local church, and possessing sufficient ministry experience to provide effective guidance, counsel, and instruction to those preparing for ministry vocations.

**Note:** This may prove difficult for women who are complementarian or in a complementarian school.

#### B. BUDGET

- Field Education programs should, as a minimum, have financial resources allocated for: salaries for personnel, staff travel, hospitality for mentors, training materials, maintaining an office, and honoraria for guest resource persons.

#### C. CURRICULUM

- While praxis is the primary curriculum of Field Education, additional “practice-of-ministry” readings, experiences, and resources (e.g. learning to perform a funeral or wedding, or various liturgical practices) should be included in the student requirements.

- The Program Director and the Field Education Office should review the curriculum every three years to determine the effectiveness of student achievement and learning.
- The Field Education Handbook should be updated annually by the Program Director, to maintain a high quality Field Education program, reflect current trends in ministry practice, and to streamline forms, processes and procedures.

#### D. MENTOR TRAINING AND STUDENT ORIENTATION

- Orientation and mentoring materials/programs should be evaluated every three years by the Program Director and Field Education Office to determine effectiveness and adjust for emerging ecclesial and pedagogical developments.
- Mentors and students should be trained in various methods of theological reflection, mentoring, and experiential/situated learning models.

#### E. CURRICULAR/STAFF ADVOCACY

- The Program Director should have a faculty voice into curricular decisions; advocating for the Field Education curriculum content and the number of credit hours dedicated to the Field Education program.
- The Program Director should serve as the advocate for staff concerns and needs within the Field Education program.

### II. FIELD EDUCATION MENTORS AND SUPERVISORS

#### A. MENTORING AND SUPERVISION DEFINED

- It is recognized that each school chooses its own term for the Field Education site person, whether mentor, supervisor or something else. However, the tasks of the Field Education site persons are similar in serving students.
- A mentor/supervisor is the on-ministry-site person who models ministry, guides students in theological reflection, and fosters student growth for ministry. They exhibit an active concern for not only ministry knowledge and skills acquisition by the student, but also for the student's spiritual formation and growth of character.
- Mentoring is critical to the formation and development of students as ministers. Mentors often provide a final, "safe" ministry environment where the student can practice and develop spiritual, theological, and ministry

acumen from which to launch into future ministry. The goal for seminary graduates is that they would depart with a sense of self-efficacy and confidence. This can best be attained through successful and formative mentored internships.

## B. QUALIFICATIONS

- All mentor/supervisors shall be currently active (with rare exception) and competent in the area of ministry for which they are certified or approved.
  - “Competency” as a supervisor is defined as having experience and proven effectiveness in the ministry areas in which they will supervise students. Typically this will mean five years of involvement in these areas of ministry, or an alternate amount as determined by the seminary.
  - Retired mentors or supervisors may also serve in this capacity if approved by the Field Education department on an as-needed basis.
  - Schools may determine whether the pre-requisite years of ministry may include part-time ministry work.
- Mentors/supervisors should have educational backgrounds appropriate to the needs of the ministry, the context and the responsibilities of being a mentor. In particular, a mentor/supervisor shall be able to assist the student in the integration of, and theological reflection on, academic and ministry experience.
- Mentors/supervisors shall have a ministry degree (e.g. M.Div. or M.A.) or at least some equivalent advanced biblical training (e.g. 4-year Bible school). At the same time, it is recognized that other graduate degrees or even life experience can achieve a similar result. In such cases, the school shall have evidence of such before it certifies or approves the mentor/supervisor.

## C. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF BEST PRACTICES FOR MENTORING AND SUPERVISION

### 1. SELECTION

Mentors/supervisors should be a model of the student’s faith tradition and in a context of active spirituality to be able to nurture students in that tradition. However, in some contexts and situations, this standard may not be attainable or even suitable (e.g. cross-cultural, non-parish or institutional ministry situations). In such cases the mentor/supervisor should nevertheless be supportive of the student’s faith tradition and deemed professionally qualified to give supervisory leadership within the particular field experience. In addition, in such cases the school should give consideration to involvement and supervision by Field Education faculty or others to aid the student in interpreting their field experience in a theological framework.

- Mentors/supervisors shall work cooperatively with the school in fulfilling the requirements of Field Education by completing documentation, training sessions, tasks within deadlines, and other requirements set by the school.
- Mentors/supervisors must agree to adhere to the school's and FERPA compliance policies.
- The mentor/supervisor and the ministry site must be approved by the Program Director and/or Field Education Office. However schools should not formally assign students with mentors. The students should seek out their own mentors and sites, and then seek approval from the Field Education Office.

## 2. TRAINING

- Mentor/Supervisors shall be trained in mentoring methods as well as in the educational expectations of the institution.

Each school shall determine the length and frequency of training. It is recommended that initial mentor-training span at least 4-6 hours, facilitated and/or taught by Field Education faculty or staff.

- Distance learning models, where a mentor cannot attend campus training, will need to create training modules that fit within their instructional format, with *training-completion responses* being returned to the Field Education office.

## 3. DEVELOPMENT

- Recertification of supervisors/mentors should be required at least once every five years. The school will determine the length and content of the recertification process.

## 4. EVALUATION

- Each school should have an evaluation process for Field Education classes or ministry units. Standard class evaluations may or may not be appropriate depending on whether there is a classroom component of the Field Education experience or not.
  - If the Field Education class/semester has a classroom component, a standard course evaluation may be appropriate. The Field Education staff should be free to adjust existing evaluations or create their own.
  - Students should be evaluated in their ministry experiences by both themselves (self-evaluation) and the mentor (mentor/supervisor evaluation).

- The school may also wish to receive congregational feedback from people exposed to the student's ministry and/or their lay committee (as applicable). A congregational form will need to be created, distributed, collected, and returned to the Field Education Office.
- Evaluation forms should include such topics as progress in meeting learning objectives, helpfulness of mentoring sessions, progress in spiritual formation, handling of difficult situations, growth in maturity, facility in theological reflection, skills learned/developed, responses of people to their ministry, readiness for ministry, satisfaction in ministry context, and satisfaction in the mentoring relationship.
- Students should be given the opportunity to evaluate their mentors either at the end of their time with them or at appropriate points during the ministry relationship.

## 5. TERMINATION OF MINISTRY SITES OR MENTORS

- Written evaluations and private conversations with students and/or supervisors are important in determining the continuing suitability of mentors or of Field Education situations. In consultation with the student and/or mentor, Field Education directors should have the discretion to terminate a Field Education site or relationship. Generally students and supervisors should be encouraged to work through any difficult situation and aim to finish the term well. In some cases, however, immediate termination might be necessary (to protect the health and safety of the student, for example).
- Either the mentors or the students, after discussion with the Field Education Director may request termination of a ministry site, mentor or student.

## D. SOME TRAINING RESOURCES

- *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education*, edited by George M. Hillman, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008). A creation by EATFE Field Educators.
- *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide to Seeking and Giving Direction* by Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).
- *Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey* by Randy D. Reese and Robert Loane (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

## E. SOME EXPECTED CHALLENGES

- **Diversity in evangelical schools**—Guidelines will need to be adjusted according to denominational and/or cultural considerations.

- **Non-denominational seminaries**—It is recommended that non-denominational seminaries, while not subject to denominational credentialing requirements nevertheless be aware of, and able to articulate appropriate measures of competency and readiness for ministry, to their students.

## **SPIRITUAL/CHRISTIAN FORMATION**

❖ Refer to ATS Guiding Standards: ES.1.2.1; A.1.2.1; A.2.5.2

The ATS standards require that schools place an emphasis on spiritual formation. In many schools, spiritual formation is already happening in a variety of contexts: the classroom, chapel, student development, field education, etc. However, in some contexts spiritual formation is deemed primarily to be the domain of field education. Therefore, the following is offered, in conjunction with ATS requirements, to ensure that students understand the necessity of merging knowledge and vital piety in the context of ministry, bringing head, heart and hands into perfect union.

### I. SPIRITUAL/CHRISTIAN FORMATION DEFINED

- Spiritual Formation may be defined as: “The process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.” (*Invitation to a Journey: a roadmap for spiritual formation* by M. Robert Mulholland, IVP Books, 1993, 2007)
- Spiritual Formation of students is foundational to field education and should be integrated throughout all phases of learning and praxis, of action and reflection in the program.
- NOTE: Since Spiritual Formation is at the core of ministry, this section is included in this EAFTE Standards document. Additional topics such as *theological reflection, understanding cultural contexts, pastoral identity, etc.* are also important to Field Education. However, many external documents have been written to cover those topics so they are not included here.

### II. EXPECTED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES TO DEMONSTRATE SPIRITUAL FORMATION

- Students should regularly participate in a vital small community of Jesus-followers.
- Students should demonstrate lives modeled after the life of Jesus in the New Testament and the commandments to “...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27 CEB)
- Students should show evidence of self-care in spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational areas.

- Students should demonstrate the ability to help people, in their ministry setting, to be spiritually formed.

### III. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR BEST PRACTICES TO ENCOURAGE STUDENT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

- Mentor training should include guidelines for how to assist students in their spiritual growth during their regular mentor-student sessions.
- Students should create a document (e.g “Rule-of-Life”) composed after self-evaluation, looking at areas of spiritual strength and areas where spiritual growth is needed. This written document becomes a commitment to work with God to bring growth to all areas of one’s life. Part of the student’s implementation of this document is experimenting with various spiritual disciplines to discover which are most effective in assisting spiritual formation.
- Working with their mentor, students should create a Ministerial Reflection Group. The MRG should be three to five, non-clergy persons who can ideally meet monthly at the ministry site with the student. The mentor would not attend since this is to be a confidential group where the student can ask questions, reflect on experiences, and receive guidance, in carrying out their Field Education experience. In non-congregational settings, alternative feedback groups may be offered.
- Students should meet with an accountability group of peers on a regular, face-to-face basis for theological and ministry reflection from their field experiences. This will usually include some case-study work.
- In the evolving world of academia, the use of face-to-face interaction between students and faculty is vital, yet challenging. Depending on an institution’s instructional model, creativity will necessitate discovering options for these face-to-face meetings such as using video classrooms like ZOOM, Google Hangouts, or Go-to-Meeting.

### IV. SOME TRAINING RESOURCES

- *Crafting a Rule of Life: an invitation to the well-ordered way* by Stephen A. Macchia (IVP Books, 2012).
- *Invitation to a Journey: a roadmap for spiritual formation* by M. Robert Mulholland, (IVP Books, 1993, 2007).

# DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND DISTANCE LEARNING

❖ Refer to ATS Guiding Standards: ES.4.1; ES.4.2.3; ES.4.2.19

## I. DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND DISTANCE LEARNING DEFINED

- Delivery Systems are the various means by which educational learning is distributed and participated in. Some examples are weekly, campus classrooms; intensive weekend events; on-line instruction; or some hybrid combination of the above.
- “Distance education is a mode of education in which a course is offered without students and instructors being in the same location. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous and employs the use of technology. Distance education courses may consist of exclusively online or other technologically assisted instruction or a blend of intensive classroom and online instruction. In all cases, distance education courses shall ensure regular and substantive interaction of faculty with students.”  
(ATS Educational Standard ES.4.1)

## II. EXPECTED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

- Students will have the opportunity to regularly and fully participate with other students, the professor, and their mentor/supervisor via synchronous and/or asynchronous modes.
- Corporate theological reflection should be part of the field education experience.

## III. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF BEST PRACTICES USING DISTANCE LEARNING

Recognizing that Distance Learning is still a relatively new medium for teaching and learning, we acknowledge that schools will utilize a wide variety of potential platforms and methods. As The Association of Theological Schools has now approved fully online degree programs, we want to affirm these best practices for Distance Learning in Field Education, whether synchronous, asynchronous, or blended/hybrid.

- Face-to-face reflection, wherever possible, is preferred, both between students, and students and their mentor.
- Whether a class is fully online—students working when convenient (asynchronous) or blended (having opportunities for synchronous engagement in addition to asynchronous)—students should be required to regularly engage with each other and the professor. This allows for a community of learners to develop in the classroom that benefits all involved.

- Recognize that technology is simply a tool. It can be used to either help or hinder the ability of students and professor to engage one another. Always seek to use it for the purposes of communal engagement.
- Technology should always be used redemptively, for the spiritual formation of the students.
- If utilizing an entirely asynchronous environment, students should be required to regularly demonstrate mastery of the class material and growth in ministry skills. This may best happen through chat-room posting or video recording.
- Whether using an asynchronous or synchronous platform, creatively seek to use teaching elements that move beyond just reading or listening to a lecture, or writing in response to questions. The use of video segments, electronic portfolios, blended classrooms, small group interactions, etc., all serve to further the teaching/learning endeavor.
- Case studies provide enrichment opportunities for students to “experience” additional, difficult situations that they may not face during their limited Field Education time. Thus, case studies are often a major portion of Field Education, whether in face-to-face synchronous group settings or in online asynchronous environments. However, constant and intentional interaction is essential to maintain student engagement in the case study reflection; using a weekly rhythm.
- Processing case studies in an asynchronous setting is especially challenging and time consuming. A weekly rhythm of asynchronous case study work by a Field Education group might include a schedule similar to the following (using a Monday through Friday week):
  - MONDAY
    - The case-study **presenter** posts the case study into the appropriate classroom forum by noon. For additional reflection time, this might be done one week in advance of its presentation to the class.
  - TUESDAY
    - The **non-presenting** students and professor read through the case study and make a list of clarifying questions, posting them by noon.
    - The **presenter** responds to the clarifying questions by midnight.
  - WEDNESDAY to THURSDAY
    - All **non-presenting** students and the professor discuss the case, using the reflection directions presented by the professor (e.g. theological reflection, personal experience that applies to the case, Christian formation issues, the performance of the **presenter** in the case setting, etc.).
    - The **presenter** may not join the discussion.

## FRIDAY

- The **presenter** rejoins the discussion by describing what insights she or he learned from the class. They may also ask clarifying question of the **non-presenting** students.
- For the online process to work, it is essential that each student contribute to the class nearly every day. This is usually a greater class commitment than when using a face-to-face environment. However, if learning is to take place in a comparable way to the face-to-face setting, ample time commitment is required.
- It may be necessary to divide the class into more than one case-study group, if the number of students processing a single case becomes unwieldy. This will require additional time commitment for the professor, to participate in multiple class groups.

## LEGAL ISSUES

Over the years there has been much discussion among Field Educators as to how to meet legal requirements for placing students in ministry sites. The concern is how to best protect the legal rights of all persons involved in the internship process: the persons to whom the students will be ministering, the students in the Field Education programs, the schools who send out students to minister, and the ministry sites where students perform their ministry.

Since there are no simple answers to such complex issue, this section will only provide basic guidance and suggestions for the care of people involved in the Field Education experience and meeting legal requirements. With great variance in state and local laws it will be imperative for each Field Educator and school to work with their legal team to create the tools for everyone's best welfare.

### I. LEGAL ISSUES DEFINED

- Legal issues are those issues that relate to abiding by laws for the protection of all persons involved in the process of seminary students doing practical ministry internships in a ministry setting.
- Legal issues are primarily concerned with confidentiality and liability for the Field Educator's department and school, for the Field Education students, for the persons to whom the students will minister, and for the students' ministry sites.

## II. SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

Again, because of varying laws, these guidelines are only a starting point for each school and Field Education department. They should be cleared by a legal team familiar with local and state laws before implementation by a Field Educator.

- A “rule-of-thumb” is that liability rests with the organization that the student is working with, thus the Field Education department does NOT “place” students into internships or at field sites. Instead Field Educators are connectors.
- If the Field Education site pays the student, the students are employees of that organization.
- No student information may be released without the student’s written permission.
- Guidelines need to be written that define, at least, the following:
  - How does placement happen?
  - In what situations should termination occur—with a mentor, with a ministry site, or for a student? And what is the process for termination?
  - What is the code of conduct for all parties involved in the Field Education experience? (Title IX compliance would be expected in issues such as sexual harassment and abuse.)
- Consider third-party certification (e.g. *SafeGatherings.com*) for all students who will be serving in settings with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Certification frequently includes, in addition to background checks, training in abuse prevention and boundary awareness.
- Background checks of each student should be automatically completed. Many schools do background checks as part of the enrollment process. A decision needs to be made about who does the background checks of students serving in Field Education. It might be the school, the field site, or both.
- Consider using a waiver (sometimes called “Assumption of Risk”) document that the Field Education student signs, the field-site representative signs, or both. Some schools have such documents in place that can be viewed as examples.
- Consider providing “professional liability insurance” as would be done for students doing internships in a counseling program. A good insurance broker can help provide discounted and group rates.
- Schools that serve in the student-ordination process will have some different responsibilities than schools that do not, and so must be aware of those obligations and how to meet them appropriately.

- Guidelines must be in place concerning the housing, maintenance, and release of a student's Field Education records. Keeping confidential records is vital.
- Student Field Education records should be maintained for a specific number of years. Five years is the usual standard. At the five-year point (or whatever time a school chooses) the records must be disposed of in a confidential manner (such as shredding).
- Guidelines must be in place for responding to agencies seeking confidential information on students—from reference forms, from Field Education records, or via verbal responses.

Schools involved in the ordination process may be asked to answer questions of a student's character. Students should approve such disclosures beforehand.

Schools not involved in the ordination process will usually only answer general questions about classes that students completed, along with the Field Education records, if approved by the student.