

GUIDELINES FOR DMin PROGRAMMES



To be used as a supplemental resource to the Standards and Guidelines for Global Evangelical Theological Education (SG-GETE) <https://icete.info/resources/sggete/>

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1 - Introduction

INTRODUCING THE DMIN

There are different types of professional doctorates in global theological education. This set of guidelines focuses on the Doctor of Ministry (DMin).

The Doctor of Ministry (DMin) programme is a doctoral level qualification which utilizes the professional ministerial experience of the candidate in this structured process of learning. The practice-based setting of the student is a central component of their research project (also called dissertation or thesis). In the DMin programme, the student works both theory and practice of Christian ministry towards enhanced competencies for both the individual and the wider profession. The holder of a DMin is a researching professional, who extends the boundaries of reflective Christian ministry practice.

The DMin started in the USA as a degree that built on the MDiv in the early 1970s and spread in popularity there. Other theological institutions outside of North America began to offer the degree as well, especially those connected to institutions in the USA that were offering the degree. Today, although there are institutions Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East offering the DMin, there are significantly more in Asia. For various reasons the DMin is not presently available in Europe.

FOUNDATION

DMin programmes within evangelical Christian institutions are founded on an understanding of knowledge that is more than academic. In the Bible, acquiring and exercising wisdom involves a combination of faith, reason and action. It requires:

- right belief and committed trust in the living God ("the fear of the LORD is the first principle of wisdom"),
- creative and humble use of the rationality God has granted to humans made in his own image, and
- appropriate living in the world to reflect God's calling and participate in God's mission.

DMin programmes, therefore, pursued on such a foundation, will be biblical, rational and missional. For a Christian, doctoral study is one dimension of what it means to "love the LORD your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength."

RELATIONSHIP OF DMIN TO MDiv

The DMin builds on the foundation of the MDiv or its equivalent. DMin programmes are more focused than the MDiv and nurture deeper investigation and research on ministry-based areas and issues. The distinctive trait of a DMin programme is the integration of theory, theology, application and practice of ministry.

RELATIONSHIP OF DMIN TO PHD

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is designed to advance the knowledge base of a discipline through rigorous research and academic writing. The Doctor of Ministry (DMin) is designed to advance both the theory and practice of Christian ministry through research. The focus of the DMin is to nurture reflective practitioners.

2 - Benchmarks for Professional Doctorates

[adapted from Beirut Benchmark for Professional Doctorates]

Within such a framework of Christian identity and commitment, the Doctor of Ministry will be awarded to students who are church members, and are recognized and experienced practitioners in Christian ministry, commended for faithful discipleship and recognized leadership, and who have demonstrated the following qualities through appropriate examination and peer-level professional review:

- 1 Comprehensive understanding, having demonstrated a breadth of systematic understanding of the theory and practice of practical ministry relevant to the Christian community of faith and mastery of the skills and methods of research appropriate to that field.
- 2 Critical skills, faithfully exercised, having demonstrated their capacity for critical analysis, independent evaluation of primary and secondary source materials, and practice-based research. Students must show ability to maintain an appropriate critical distance from their own professional context, and capacity to integrate academic knowledge and professional practice at doctoral level. A commitment to exercise such skills on the foundation of biblical faithfulness to Jesus Christ and his church.
- 3 Serious inquiry with integrity, having demonstrated the ability to conceive, design and implement a substantial project of research into, and critical analysis of, current and previous ministry practice, and ability to generate mutual critique with thinkers and practitioners from outside their immediate ministry context, resulting in a sustained and coherent thesis, and to do so with Christian and scholarly integrity.
- 4 Creative and original contribution, having produced, as a result of such disciplined inquiry, a creative and original contribution that: (a) extends the frontiers of knowledge, (b) generates new perspectives, approaches or paradigms in ministry practice, and (c) enhances the integration between theological reflection and Christian ministry practice and so merits publication in national or international professional literature.
- 5 Contextual relevance, having shown their capacity, in the course of their doctoral programmes and in their expectation of its future potential, for biblically-informed critical engagement and applied ministry practice within the realities of their cultural contexts.
- 6 Ability to communicate, having shown an ability in communicating about their area of expertise to peer-level academic and professional audiences, and, where appropriate, to non-specialists in local Christian communities and the wider society in culturally relevant ways, including their mother tongue, for example through teaching, preaching or writing.
- 7 Missional impact, having shown that they are committed, able and can be expected, to use the fruit of their doctoral study, the skills it has given them and the opportunities it affords them, to promote the kingdom of God and advance the mission of the church (both local and global), through significant enhancement of theory and of ministry practice in transformational service and Christ-like leadership, to the glory of God.

3 - Typical DMin Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- 1 Demonstrate comprehensive and foundational understanding regarding the Bible, theology and practice of Christian ministry.
- 2 Further develop critical thinking skills to analyse primary and secondary resources and faithfully integrate these ideas with practical ministry realities.
- 3 Attain skills to conceive, design and implement a substantial practice-based research project of inquiry.
- 4 Produce creative and original contribution to knowledge, applicable to the practice of ministry.
- 5 Be contextually relevant and critically engaging with cultural and societal realities.
- 6 Be able to communicate their area of expertise to academic and non-academic audiences.
- 7 Have missional impact locally and globally.

4 - Ministry Research Projects

(adapted from DMin Survey 2022 information, handbooks).

Scope and Focus. Research projects (also called dissertation or thesis) focus on pastoral, leadership, and ministry issues and challenges. The length of the research project is approximately 40,000 to 50,000 words in the body of the work (excluding bibliography, footnotes, appendices). The length of the ministry research project must take into consideration the language used and standards in regional contexts.

Ministry Research Project learning outcomes. The Ministry research project should demonstrate the student's ability to identify a specific topic in ministry, organize an effective research model, use appropriate resources and evaluate the results, and should reflect the student's depth of theological insight in relation to ministry (ACTEA doctoral programmes standards, 2011).

Researchers will be able to:

1. Acquire knowledge, understanding and theory of particular area of ministerial practice.
2. Identify, understand and engage with contextual ministry issues.
3. Acquire skills for application-oriented research.
4. Develop sound reflective ministry practices.
5. Articulate implications of findings to the local and kingdom community.

Nature of the Research Project. This is a practice-based and application-oriented research for a ministry setting that:

1. Is problem, need or opportunity oriented, contextually grounded.
2. Involves field research (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods) on a relevant contextual ministry issue.
3. Demonstrates good integration of theological reflection and ministry practice.
4. Formulates innovative ministry practices for local and kingdom ministry.

5 - Standards and Guidelines for DMin Programmes

In addition to the SG-GETE, the following standards and guidelines are applicable to DMin programmes in the specific labelled sections.

A 3.5 – Human resources for research doctoral level programmes. Faculty, educators and dissertation project supervisors should possess doctoral degrees (professional or academic) with several years of teaching practical ministry and research experience. Some key committee members may not possess doctorates.

In exceptional cases and where flexibility is granted by local accrediting agencies, a limited number of teachers and supervisors without experience is allowed, provided that they are mentored by more experienced faculty members.

A 5.1 – Student services. Specific administrative and academic support is in place for DMin students that is tailored to their communication needs and to the nature of their studies.

B2.2 - Outcomes and fitness for purpose. DMin programmes possess clearly articulated learning outcomes that address four areas: (a) advanced biblical-theological integration, (b) in-depth contextual and ministry competency, (c) critical thinking, and (d) personal and spiritual maturity. These outcomes are to be regularly evaluated, with results discussed by faculty and used to improve learning.

B2.3 - Curricula and syllabi. Programmes learning outcomes directly inform curricula, syllabi and research. There are specific programme descriptors and guidelines for students, teachers and supervisors. The programme design includes a combination of instructional courses and directed research.

B2.5 - Content, level and feasibility. For professional doctoral programmes, institutions ensure that students are sufficiently prepared for independent research work and are adequately supported, guided and supervised during the dissertation or research project phase.

B2.7 – Context. Curricular content and delivery modes are contextually appropriate and address the challenges and opportunities of the stakeholders’ social and religious environments. Graduates are prepared for different vocations, within various social and cultural contexts, and areas of service.

B3.3 - Course design and delivery. Learning activities and delivery strategies are designed to foster active student learning, peer learning, and formational experiences. Cohort models may be considered to build a learning community.

B3.4 – Variety. A variety of approaches can be utilized which include peer learning, self-directed learning, enquiry-based learning, research-based learning, flipped classroom strategy, use of interactive seminars and educational podcasts. Appropriate consideration is given to new technologies that enhance delivery. Approaches to assessment are also varied and tailored to learning outcomes.

B3.6 – Assessment. In addition to a research project or dissertation, assessment tools may include key assignments and reviews.

B4.1 – Admission. For the professional doctorate level (DMin) the candidate must have completed either the MDiv level or its equivalent in an accredited degree programmes. Exceptions can be made by documenting that the applicant has (a) a master’s degree that is accredited in an area related to his study, (b) significant and sufficient biblical and

theological knowledge and ministry experience, (c) a clear ministry calling, (d) and the ability to interact academically and spiritually in his or her studies and with fellow students.

The candidate (a) has completed a thesis or other academic work demonstrating superior academic ability from an accredited master's degree programmes, (b) has significant ministry experience, (c) has demonstrated leadership abilities, and (d) be conversant in the use of technology and have the means to access electronic resources. The candidate has support from his or her congregation and family to participate in the programmes and has time available to complete the programmes.

B4.2 – Progression. Students begin with an orientation that is tailored to provide an overview of the DMin programmes taking into consideration the requirements of the programmes.

B4.4 - Graduation and certification. The evaluation of dissertations and research projects for doctoral programmes, in addition to internal evaluators, may include external evaluators to insure credibility of the programmes.

Within a framework of Christian identity and commitment, the doctoral qualification will be awarded to students commended for faithful discipleship and recognized leadership, and who demonstrate the following qualities through examination at some level.

B5.2 – Credits. Institutions define the expected student workload through the system that is most suitable for their context and students. Depending on national frameworks, total credit allocation may, or may not apply to doctoral level programmes. If a regional accrediting agency uses the Carnegie credit system, the total credits in a DMin programme will have the equivalent of a minimum of 30 course and dissertation credits, (with each course credit representing 40 learning activity hours of 50-60 minutes each). For agencies using the ECTS credit system, this would translate approximately to 45-54 ECTS (25-30 hours of teaching/learning hours per ECTS credit).