

EMORY UNIVERSITY 2021-2023 Assessment Report for Educational Programs
Assessment Period Covered: September 1, 2021 – May 31, 2023

Program: Doctor of Ministry Program	Date Submitted: May 19, 2023
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I. PROGRAM MISSION

The Doctor of Ministry is designed for experienced ministers who want to strengthen the connection between theology and ministry practice. The program provides ministry professionals with advanced training and the skills necessary to analyze ministry practices through sustained biblical, ecclesiological and theological reflection, and to discern, shape and disseminate new practices in the service of the gospel. The curriculum is designed for experienced ministers—those who have received their MDiv and have at least three years of experience—offering two tracks, Church Leadership and Community Witness and Biblical Interpretation and Proclamation.

II. PROGRAM CONTEXT

The Doctor of Ministry is a part-time, mostly-remote professional doctoral program for practicing religious leaders to deepen their theological study. Approximately thirty students complete the degree each year, and there are ordinarily 90-100 students in the program at any given time. Students are in one of two tracks: Church Leadership and Community Witness (“Track 1”), or Biblical Interpretation and Proclamation (“Track 2”).

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. articulate a theoretically-integrated and theologically-grounded understanding of oneself as a reflective practitioner
2. analyze a ministry setting, using appropriate research methods and exhibiting contextual sensitivity
3. publicly interpret and disseminate discoveries in the church and to the broader community
4. engage in collaborative approaches to ministry with other reflective practitioners
Track One: Church Leadership and Community Witness
5.1. articulate an integrated model relating to church leadership or community witness

5.2. design, implement, and evaluate an original and research-based ministry project that applies this model in response to a critical issue in church leadership and/or community witness

Track Two: Biblical Interpretation and Proclamation

6.1. articulate a coherent theology of Scripture that informs ministerial practice in the realms of teaching and/or homiletics

6.2. design, implement, and evaluate an original and research-based ministry project that applies this theology in response to a particular issue in one's ministerial context

IV. ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

ASSESSMENT for Student Learning Outcome 2:

“Analyze a ministry setting, using appropriate research methods and exhibiting contextual sensitivity.”

Proposed Method of Assessment:

The DMin director will review a sample of eight papers from two courses in Spring 2022: DM 711 (Understanding Community, “Track 1”) and DM 721 (Scripture, Theology, and Practice, “Track 2”). Each of these courses feature an assignment that requires students to conduct research in their ministry settings. We may use instructor rubrics and/or augment those with rubrics generated for this assessment report. (It is important to note that these criteria are for assessment purposes and were not used to grade the papers in the course and were not available to students when they wrote these papers.)

Achievement Target: At least 80% of students in the sample will meet or exceed expectations. At least 25% will exceed expectations.

Summary of Assessment Results:

Although these assignments evaluated other important learning, review for this report focused on the demonstration of contextual analysis in each of the eight sample papers, analyzing them according to outcome #2. Each paper were assessed in terms of three criteria, taken from the language of the outcome, itself: its description of the ministry setting, its use of appropriate methods, and its demonstration of contextual sensitivity. Papers that exceeded a criterion were allotted three points, those that met the criterion were allotted two points, and those that failed to meet a criterion were allotted one point. Of the eight papers reviewed, six met or exceeded expectations (averaging assessment on all three criteria). This falls just short of our achievement target of 80% meeting/exceeding expectations, although 25% (two out of eight) exceeded expectations. An analysis of the two assignments follows.

In the final paper for DM 711: Understanding Community, the course in “Track 1,” students were asked to “write with theological and sociological sophistication about (their) community context” using skills of qualitative research and social analysis explored in the course. Students most often excelled in their demonstration of contextual sensitivity, largely in part due to emphasis on understanding their own social location in relationship to that of people in their ministry settings. Half of the students described explicitly how research methods helped them come to these conclusions, and demonstrated how the data they gathered complicated or

challenged their previously-held perspectives. All four of the sample papers met or exceeded expectations, with one just barely doing so. The distribution of how the sample papers performed on each of the three criteria is as follows:

Sample	Ministry Setting	Research Methods	Contextual Sensitivity	Average	
1	2	1	2	1.67	Does not clearly describe methods, how methods inform description. Somewhat anecdotal.
2	3	3	3	3	Demonstrates how methods and frameworks helped them to see more deeply.
3	2	1	3	2	Nice use of concept of reflexivity, awareness of social identity. Not confident that new data would change proposed intervention.
4	3	3	3	3	Excellent, thorough description of methods used, and how methods supported both reading the context and awareness of researcher reflexivity.

In the final paper for DM 721: Scripture, Theology, and Practice, the course in “Track 2,” students articulated their own “theologies of scripture,” only one component of which was to describe “your understanding of your congregation’s theology of Scripture and the extent to which it is the same as or differs from your own.” In order to complete this portion of the assignment, students are required to interview or survey three congregation members and then conduct a focus group conversation with them. This particular aspect of the research was more fully presented to their colloquies (student-led discussion associated with the course), so the final papers were more suggestive and focused more on their personal theologies of scripture. Half of the papers described some research methods in very broad strokes, and all of the papers described the basic theological leanings of the students’ ministry settings in general terms. Only half of the papers in this sample met expectations *specific to Outcome 2*, and one of those, only marginally so. Although this is perhaps appropriate in an assignment that does so much (not only analyzing settings), it does leave open the question as to whether students in this track are prepared for a more thoroughgoing analysis of their contexts. In final projects, students in Track 2 sometimes struggle to provide thorough descriptions of their contexts, moving quickly to theological claims and theoretical frameworks.

The distribution of how the sample papers performed on each of the three criteria is as follows:

Sample	Ministry Setting	Research Methods	Contextual Sensitivity	Average	
1	2	1	2	1.67	Reference to colloquy assignment
2	2	2	2	3	States that they conducted "multiple interviews, small groups"
3	1	1	1.5	2	Unclear what context is. Some hint of awareness of difference between theology of scripture and that of congregation.
4	1	1	1	3	Almost no reference to congregation.

A review of the more fulsome colloquy assignment (delivered orally in Zoom and thus not available for assessment purposes after the fact) obliquely described in a student paper would perhaps yield better insights. The instructions for that colloquy assignment are rather detailed:

As an initial step in writing the 6th element (“your understanding of your congregation’s theology of Scripture and the extent to which it is the same as or differs from your own”) of your theology of Scripture project, you will present a summative analysis of your congregation’s theology of Scripture in a colloquy session. You should think of this presentation as a public draft of your analysis of this aspect your congregation’s theology: it should be designed to stimulate conversation with and feedback from your peers.

To prepare for this colloquy session you should do the following:

- Interview 3 individuals in your congregation
 - The goal of this interview is to ascertain how people in your congregation think about certain elements of a theology of scripture – namely, elements 1-3 & 5.
 - Of the three individuals you interview, one should be ordained, two must not be on staff, all should be people that you regard as having important roles in the church and as having a good theological/scriptural acumen.
- Develop and distribute to these three congregants a pre-interview questionnaire designed to help assess their understanding.
 - The questionnaire should pose questions that ascertain how your congregants think about elements 1-3 & 5 listed above.
 - You may refer to the scriptural passages listed above, if you think it helpful.
- After getting the questionnaire back from your congregants, gather the three together for a meeting to discuss matters further. You can use this time to explore questions more deeply, clarify answers on the questionnaire, etc.
 - NB: in this interview do not attempt to influence your congregants to hold a given position or belief, just identify what positions/beliefs they hold. This being the case, be sure to author a questionnaire that is neutral and allows your congregants to express their beliefs in an open and safe manner.
- Identify your congregation’s (or denomination’s, if that is more appropriate) historical or traditional perspectives about these same elements. Then analyze how the perspectives of your congregants are the same as or differ from the historical/traditional perspective of your congregation/denomination.
- Present the main themes or insights that emerged for you from these interviews as you think about articulating your own theology of Scripture.

In order to help organize your thinking about these interviews, you will prepare a short presentation for our colloquy sessions. As mentioned above, you should think about it as a public draft of your results and analysis that is designed to stimulate conversation with and feedback from your peers. As such, it should include:

1. a copy of the pre-interview questionnaire distributed to participants
2. an overview of the participants, including a summary of the results of the pre-interview questionnaire;
3. a statement of your congregation’s or denomination’s historical/traditional perspectives about the above-named elements of a theology of scripture;
4. a presentation of the main themes or insights that emerged for you from these interviews as you think about articulating your own theology of Scripture.

Your colloquy presentation may be relatively informal but it must be clear, detailed, and organized. You should consider incorporating simple graphics to, e.g., display the results of the pre-interview questionnaire and encapsulate your own questions/challenges as you reflect on how best to engage congregants on questions of authority in these passages. These can be shared during the Zoom colloquy session using the screen share function.

You will have 30 minutes for your presentation. Of those 30 minutes, 20 should be given to your presentation, and 10 minutes should be given to a discussion of that presentation by your classmates.

Although the recognition that a different assignment might yield more thorough evidence of contextual analysis skills does account somewhat for the relatively low achievement numbers on this outcome for this particular course, review of final papers for this course *does* give us some sense for how students are *integrating* these congregational analysis methods. And it appears that some may struggle to integrate the data gathered via survey, interview, and focus group into a larger project.

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Program:

In the summer of 2023, the curricula for the two tracks in the Doctor of Ministry program are being reviewed and proposals for new curricular themes will be considered by a faculty task force. The challenge for a professional doctorate in ministry will remain, however: How shall religious practitioners utilize research methods to thoughtfully analyze the professional contexts in which they are conducting research and for which they are designing and implementing integrative projects? And how shall such methods be taught and demonstrated?

Since the conception of the re-launched DMin program, this has proved a lively question, particularly in the Biblical Interpretation and Proclamation track. What are the research methods appropriate to these tasks of textual interpretation and homiletics? How much attention should be paid to the particular contours of a professional context in order to develop a grounded yet also theologically and theoretically sophisticated project?

The director of the program will share this assessment report with the task force as they evaluate our current curriculum and imagine its next implementation.

ASSESSMENT for Student Learning Outcome 5.2:

“Design, implement, and evaluate an original and research-based ministry project that applies (an integrated model relating to church leadership or community witness) in response to a critical issue in church leadership and/or community witness.”

Planned Method of Assessment:

Based on our 2018 assessment report and inadequacies identified in the rubric on the “innovation” criterion, the DMin director will develop new criteria that better assess (or more clearly articulate) expectations for design, implementation, and evaluation. Working with a sample of four final projects, the DMin director and the relevant faculty consultants will use the new rubric to evaluate final projects’ success in designing ministry projects.

Actual Method of Assessment:

Utilizing *existing* rubrics completed by DMin director and project consultant, assess four sample projects (20%) on the criteria of “innovation” and “critical discourse” to determine the degree of integration between research and practice. We did not develop a new rubric for this purpose. This outcome (5.2) and the next one assessed (6.2) are specific to the current curriculum, which may very well change (with new outcomes specific to the new tracks), so this assessment report will be used to identify improvements that can be made with regard to the general objective of supporting students’ development of a project that integrates research and practice.

Achievement Target:

75% of projects will meet or exceed expectations on relevant criteria. 25% of projects will exceed expectations on relevant criteria.

Summary of Assessment Results:

In short, we met our achievement target. Papers that exceeded a criterion were allotted three points, those that met the criterion were allotted two points, and those that failed to meet a criterion were allotted one point. We averaged the assessment of the project consultant and the DMin Director. Of the four papers reviewed, all met or exceeded expectations on both criteria evaluated (innovation and critical discourse). Indeed, half of the sample even exceeded the expectations.

For reference, the rubric used (see Appendix 1) to evaluate these projects contained the following language to evaluate how well students did on the two relevant criteria:

Innovation:

- Exceeds Expectations: The innovation relates directly to the problem. The innovation plan is feasible and clearly describes the why, who, what, how, and when. There is a well-developed plan to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation.
- Meets Expectations: The innovation plan may be too ambitious and/or leave some questions about the why, who, what, how, and when unanswered. There is expressed intention to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation.
- Does Not Meet Expectations: The paper does not describe a clear or feasible innovation. Intention to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation is vague.

Critical Discourse:

- Exceeds Expectations: Shows critical engagement through theological reflection and significant literature review.
- Meets Expectations: Reports theological reflection and summarizes literature review.
- Does Not Meet Expectations: Lacks appropriate theological reflection and/or literature review.

	Innovation	Critical Discourse
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Sample	Project Consultant	DMin Director	Average		Project Consultant	DMin Director	Average
1	3	3	3		2.5	2.5	2.5
2	3	1.5	2.25		2.5	2	2.25
3	3	2.5	2.75		3	3	3
4	3	2	2.5		3	3	3

Students tended to score slightly lower on the innovation, often due to ambiguity or vagueness in their plans. (This very well might be accounted for by the fact of the COVID-19 pandemic.) Although these students tended to do pretty well in terms of consulting and incorporating scholarly literature, *most* students struggle to identify points of convergence and/or critique between their ministry projects and the scholarly literature they read. The very strongest projects demonstrate a facility with integrating theory, theology, and practice, but DMin students sometimes struggle to do this. *The rubric does not really measure that integrative aspiration.*

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Program:

These recommendations for improvement are written for the benefit of the next incoming DMin Director and the DMin Curricular Task Force:

1. Although DMin final projects in Track 1 tend to perform very strongly on the individual criteria of innovation and critical discourse (as well as contextual description, which was not assessed here but has historically been a strong suit for students in this track), the work of integration proves somewhat difficult. Rarely do students identify how their projects contribute to, give exceptions to, or complicate current scholarship frames the questions at hand. This is true in both tracks and perhaps points to a need for a DMin outcome that is not track-specific that more clearly explains what such integration looks like.
2. The rubric is, perhaps generally speaking, too broad and does not adequately measure what constitutes a project that “meets expectations.” We had many acceptable but not exemplary projects this year that were assessed as “exceeding expectations.” The wording of the criteria for “meets expectations” needs to be revised so that it better acknowledges the successes of the project and does not read as if students “lost points.” Likewise, “exceeds expectations” needs to better reflect projects that went above and beyond the stated requirements.
3. Perhaps a little surprising was the fact that some students fared better on the criterion of critical discourse (compared to previous years) than they did on the innovation design. We attribute this to stronger and more systematic integration of research skills into the curriculum and co-curricular offerings.

ASSESSMENT for Student Learning Outcome 6.2:

“Design, implement, and evaluate an original and research-based ministry project that applies (a coherent theology of Scripture) in response to a particular issue in one’s ministerial context.”

Planned Method of Assessment:

Based on our 2018 assessment report and inadequacies identified in the rubric on the “innovation” criterion, the DMin director will develop new criteria that better assess (or more clearly articulate) expectations for design, implementation, and evaluation. Working

with a sample of four final projects, the DMin director and the relevant faculty consultants will use the new rubric to evaluate final projects' success in designing ministry projects.

Actual Method of Assessment:

Utilizing *existing* rubrics completed by DMin director and project consultant, assess two sample projects (20% of total number of projects) on the criteria of "innovation" and "critical discourse" to determine the degree of integration between research and practice. We did not develop a *new* rubric for this purpose. This outcome (6.2) and the one assessed above (5.2) are specific to the current curriculum, which may very well change (with new outcomes specific to the new tracks), so this assessment report will be used to identify improvements that can be made with regard to the general objective of supporting students' development of a project that integrates research and practice.

Achievement Target:

75% of projects will meet or exceed expectations on relevant criteria. 25% of projects will exceed expectations on relevant criteria.

Summary of Assessment Results:

In short, though the sample was small, we met our achievement target. Papers that exceeded a criterion were allotted three points, those that met the criterion were allotted two points, and those that failed to meet a criterion were allotted one point. We averaged the assessment of the project consultant and the DMin Director. Of the two papers reviewed, all met or exceeded expectations on both criteria evaluated (innovation and critical discourse). Indeed, one paper clearly exceeded expectations on the innovation and slightly exceeded expectations on critical discourse.

For reference, the rubric used (see Appendix 1) to evaluate these projects contained the following language to evaluate how well students did on the two relevant criteria:

Innovation:

- Exceeds Expectations: The innovation relates directly to the problem. The innovation plan is feasible and clearly describes the why, who, what, how, and when. There is a well-developed plan to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation.
- Meets Expectations: The innovation plan may be too ambitious and/or leave some questions about the why, who, what, how, and when unanswered. There is expressed intention to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation.
- Does Not Meet Expectations: The paper does not describe a clear or feasible innovation. Intention to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation is vague.

Critical Discourse:

- Exceeds Expectations: Shows critical engagement through theological reflection and significant literature review.
- Meets Expectations: Reports theological reflection and summarizes literature review.
- Does Not Meet Expectations: Lacks appropriate theological reflection and/or literature review.

Sample	Innovation			Critical Discourse		
	Project Consultant	DMin Director	Average	Project Consultant	DMin Director	Average
1	3	3	3	2	3	2.5
2	3	1.5	2.25	2.5	2	2.25

Surprisingly, students in Track 2 seemed to struggle a little more (not just within this sample, but in the cohort of ten students in this group) with critical discourse than with the innovation. This may be related to one of the conspicuous absences in the Track 2 final projects: an explicit statement of a “theology of Scripture” as applied in the innovations. If they more explicitly wrote about this, they would necessarily engage more scholarly literature. Some students are focused on the preaching or teaching innovation without first establishing a theological or theoretical framework for dealing with the biblical texts. Sample 1 was an exception, drawing on a variety of hermeneutic and interpretive approaches to design an adult study series. Sample paper 2 was really a project in preaching. The biblical theology and interpretation was secondary, if dealt with at all.

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Program:

These recommendations for improvement are written for the benefit of the next incoming DMin Director and the DMin Curricular Task Force:

1. For DMin final projects in Track 2, the work of integration proves somewhat difficult as well, although in a different form. Rarely do students identify how their work in biblical interpretation (two full semesters are focused on biblical interpretation!) relates to their innovations in ministry. As mentioned above, the struggle to integrate theory/theology and practice is present in both tracks and perhaps points to a need for a DMin outcome that is not track-specific that more clearly explains what such integration looks like.
2. The rubric is, perhaps generally speaking, too broad and does not adequately measure what constitutes a project that “meets expectations.” We had many acceptable but not exemplary projects this year that were assessed as “exceeding expectations.” The wording of the criteria for “meets expectations” needs to be revised so that it better acknowledges the successes of the project and does not read as if students “lost points.” Likewise, “exceeds expectations” needs to better reflect projects that went above and beyond the stated requirements.
3. Although this outcome states that students should be able to apply their “theology of Scripture” in their final projects, the rubric does not measure this aside from the expectation that students engage scholarly literature. Which some of the students do very well, but others sometimes struggle. A new rubric for this track or one like it should outline how this works more explicitly.

V. FACULTY INVOLVEMENT: Describe how your faculty members were involved in this year’s assessment procedures.

Faculty teaching courses relevant to outcome 2 supplied assignment instructions. The Senior Director of Digital Learning collected a random sample of papers. The director of the DMin program reviewed sample papers for outcome 2, and final projects for outcomes 5.2 and 6.2 (in consultation with feedback from six project consultants) and wrote this report.

VI. What is your assessment plan for the next cycle?

*I here note, again, that the DMin curriculum is being revised this summer, and a new Director taking office July 1, 2023. I have listed below the outcomes that we would **expect** to measure in the ordinary rotation in our next report, which will be due in summer 2025. The actual outcomes, however, may change, as well as the means of measurement.*

Outcome: 3: publicly interpret and disseminate discoveries in the church and to the broader community	
Method:	Achievement Target:
Method:	Achievement Target:

Outcome: 5.1: articulate an integrated model relating to church leadership or community witness 6.1: articulate a coherent theology of Scripture that informs ministerial practice in the realms of teaching and/or homiletics	
Method:	Achievement Target:
Method:	Achievement Target:

VII. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

If you have supporting documentation, you may include it in the same file as the report, but please be sure that all relevant data are contained within the text of the report. If you have questions about what should or should not be included with the report, please contact Andrea Barra (andrea.barra@emory.edu) in the Office of Planning and Budgeting.

VIII. REVIEW PROCESS

Please forward your 2021-2023 assessment report to the chair of your department for review and signature. This review will ensure that the information included in this report is accurate and that your program is engaged in a systematic process of continuous improvement.



6/2/2023

Department Chair

Date

IX. SUBMISSION OF REPORTS

Please submit reports to **Andrea Barra, Associate Director of Assessment** via Microsoft Form link <https://forms.office.com/r/8u47ydjy06> by June 1, 2023.

WRITTEN COMPONENT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does not meet expectations
Problem	Addresses the ministry context clearly and comprehensively; and provides thorough evidence of the problem, its consequences, and its root causes.	A specific problem is identified that is somewhat connected to the ministry context. The reality of the problem may be supported by subjective evidence.	The problem may be outside of the scope of ministry. Insufficient evidence given to support the reality of the problem. May not demonstrate a clear understanding of the problem to be addressed.
Innovation	The innovation relates directly to the problem. The innovation plan is feasible and clearly describes the why, who, what, how, and when. There is a well-developed plan to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation.	The innovation plan may be too ambitious and/or leave some questions about the why, who, what, how, and when unanswered. There is expressed intention to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation.	The paper does not describe a clear or feasible innovation. Intention to develop, implement, and evaluate the innovation is vague.
Contextual Description	Clearly articulates the context of the project, such as ethnic background, age, gender, church organization, geography, etc.	Somewhat articulates the context of the project, such as ethnic background, age, gender, church organization, geography, etc.	Vaguely articulates the context of the project, such as ethnic background, age, gender, church organization, geography, etc.
Critical Discourse	Shows critical engagement through theological reflection and significant literature review.	Reports theological reflection and summarizes literature review.	Lacks appropriate theological reflection and/or literature review.

Appendix A

Audience	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the audience and anticipates and addresses alternate points of view. Engages an appropriate audience with a clear call to action.	Demonstrates an understanding of the audience and purpose of the project. Addresses an appropriate audience with a call to action.	May not appear to be directed at any particular audience or only written for the DMin committee. May not address a clear audience or make a call to action.
Style	Logically organized with appropriate transitions. Uses precise vocabulary and syntax. Language is appropriately complex and purposeful. Is free of grammatical errors.	Uses general vocabulary. May express ideas wordily. May have several grammatical errors.	May be difficult to follow. Language may be vague, abstract or trite. Many grammatical errors.