McCormick Theological Seminary
Doctor of Ministry Program

Thesis Manual

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McCormick Theological Seminary  

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Introduction and Background

Every doctor of ministry programs asks of its students a "thesis project," a summative, research-based document that, in the language of the Association of Theological Schools, makes "a contribution to the understanding and practice of ministry."

More specifically, McCormick seminary is asking you to write a thesis in the practice of ministry—a comprehensive project normally conducted in the last year and a half of the doctor of ministry program and integrated fully into your course-of-studies and into your own place of ministry. In this project students have an opportunity to engage a critical challenge in their ministerial settings, discover new insights about the challenge and its context, develop robust theological frames and practical approaches that address the challenge, and evaluate their learning. Thesis projects and articles are designed to enhance students’ growth, benefit the congregation or agency in which students work, and teach the Church about effective ministry.

Successful completion of this project is a requirement for the McCormick Doctor of Ministry degree. This handbook guides McCormick DMin students through the process that they will follow in developing and writing their thesis articles. We suggest that you begin by becoming familiar with the entire manual, and then working through it section by section.

Key texts help form the foundations of the McCormick DMin thesis process, including:

- *Research Strategies: Finding your Way through the Information Fog*, by William Badke. iUniverse LLC. This book walks students through the complexity of research in electronic data bases and the internet. Though written for undergraduate students, it is a useful primer, especially for those of us who feel a bit overwhelmed by all that data.


The Goals and Objectives of a McCormick DMin Thesis

The McCormick DMin thesis is a process in which students wrestle with a particular challenge in their ministry. During this process, a student will write three papers: a preliminary proposal, a final proposal, and the final thesis article; each will be explained below. The final paper, the thesis article, is a 40-page document of publishable quality that focuses on a particular practice of ministry and is rooted in the student’s particular place of ministry.

The McCormick DMin thesis process is built on three clear goals and understandings of the purpose of a doctor of ministry program and degree:

1. **Your own continuing learning and increased effectiveness in ministry.** As you work on your particular and specific thesis project, you can expect to gain new insights about yourself and your capacities for ministry that will strengthen your own particular call and work.

2. **An enhanced life and work of the church or agency with which you are in ministry.** From the time of application, your church or agency was a clear, identified partner in the doctor of ministry program. Through the thesis process and other components of the DMin program, your church or agency can expect new means to grow in its ability to be more faithful and effective in its ministry in the larger world.

3. **A distinct contribution to the knowledge and the practice of ministry by other ministers and lay church leaders the wider church.** While your learnings come out of a specific context and are directed to a specific ministry, their application and learnings can be beneficial to the whole church. Through a thesis project that is cogent, creative, and constructive, other religious leaders can expect to find biblically and theologically grounded innovation in ministry that can be applied in their own places of ministry.

In the end, while the thesis project is by title a stated requirement for attaining the degree, it is in practice much more than that: not simply another hurdle on the way to fulfilling a list of degree requirements—just one more thing to do, one more item on the list—but an opportunity to bring together in a single piece your passion for ministry, your place of ministry, your unique giftedness and insights, and your theological convictions in a
unique contribution that serves your own ministry and the wider Church. In doing this work, you are becoming a doctor of ministry and a teacher of the church.

**The Logic and Structure of a McCormick Doctor of Ministry Thesis**

McCormick’s Doctor of Ministry thesis process has a particular logic and flow:

- **Situation**: Students face challenges in ministry for which they do not have all the answers. If you think that you do have all the answers for this situation, then find another focus for your thesis project. This project is intended to help you learn something that you do not already know.

- **Vision**: Students are not satisfied with the status quo in their ministry. Rather, they have hopes and visions for more vibrant and faithful ministry in their particular context. In most cases, these hopes and visions are rooted in theological convictions about what God is calling the church to do and be.

- **The Problem or Opportunity**: Often, there is a gap between where the student’s ministry is now and where, out of its vision and mission, the student dreams of taking the ministry. Ronald Heifetz calls this gap between reality and hope “the adaptive challenge.” McCormick has traditionally used the language of “impediments” to talk about the distinct hurdles that a minister needs to get over or around in the journey from here to there. Figuring out what constitutes this gap, and how best to bridge it, is the primary strategic work of a DMin thesis.

- **Research**: Rigorous, serious research will help you better understand your situation, frame your theological convictions more robustly, and understand how you might address the particular challenges embedded in your impediments or adaptive challenge.

- **Plan for Ministry and Interventions**: To engage a challenge for which you do not have all the answers, a student will want to devise a plan for ministry that they think will begin to address the challenge. Like a scientist engaged in research and development, a DMin student will identify a problem and, from their interpretations of varied research and multiple leadership experiences, begin to envision, or hypothesize, a unique solution. The actual practice of ministry related to the thesis project, then, is a way to test the hypothesis to see if it might bring the kind of deeper, richer, faithful ministry that is envisioned. Maybe it does. Maybe it doesn’t. Either way, a student and her/his readers can learn something. The something learned, and the story of how it was learned and evaluated, is the substance of the thesis in the practice of ministry.

You will review this process multiple times in the thesis process. You will discuss it at length in Research Methods, and you will talk about it again in Thesis Residency.
The Four Values that Characterize a McCormick DMin Thesis

At McCormick a DMin thesis is built on four values that shape both the thesis process and the thesis content:

1. **An integration of theory and practice.** We disagree with the traditional dichotomy between theory and practice, in which theories are the purview of the academic arena and practice a kind of lab session. The McCormick thesis process seeks the full integration of theory and practice, understanding practice as a privileged location in which new understandings and perspectives on ministry can be generated. Reflective practitioners find ways of seeing things whole, bringing theory, action, and reflection together.

2. **A distinctive emphasis on partnership.** A partnership approach invites the people in your context for ministry, as well as your peers, thesis advisor, and other members of the McCormick faculty, into a common and committed effort to do ministry with excellence as the work of the thesis project proceeds.

3. **A desire to make a difference for good in your location of ministry.** The reflection/action of the thesis project is ordered toward the transformation and/or deepening of faith and faithful practice in your context for ministry.

4. **A systemic approach to ministry that attends to the health of the whole congregation or agency and not just to its individual parts.** We invite you to look at the challenges you face in light of the organizational, cultural, political, or economic systems that shape your context and its dynamics. “Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it” (Hanna Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 196). Whatever your thesis focus or Doctor of Ministry concentration, McCormick will challenge you to think broadly and systemically about your context, opportunities, and responsibilities in ministry.

The McCormick DMin thesis is truly a "thesis in the practice of ministry," privileging neither theory nor practice, but seeking an intentional integration of the two in a way that contributes to the enhancement of the ongoing ministry of Christ's church.
The Thesis Process and Content, in Detail

A McCormick DMin thesis is scaffolded, or written in stages, with each stage building on the previous work. There are three major stages. The first stage involves writing a **preliminary thesis proposal**, in which the broad parameters of the thesis project are explored. Building on that first step, students then prepare a complete a **final thesis proposal** that carefully describes the student’s situation, the research that informs the situation and explores possible approaches to addressing it, and the plans the student has for addressing the situation. The third step is the **final thesis article**, the "thesis in the practice of ministry," a 40-page document that describes and analyzes the entire thesis project, from inception through implementation and evaluation. This article will draw deeply on courses taken, new research the student has conducted, and the student’s interventions, evaluation, analysis, and learnings. Each stage of the process is supported by course work and by McCormick faculty members.

Normally, the thesis process occurs over an eighteen-month period beginning with a required course in research methods and ending with a successful oral examination and submission of the final thesis article. Here is a brief outline of what falls in those eighteen months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept-October</td>
<td>M617--Methods class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Submission of the Preliminary Proposal (15 page paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>I648--Thesis Residency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Submission of the Final Thesis Proposal (30-40 page paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Submission of the first complete draft of your Thesis in the Practice of Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-February</td>
<td>Revising the Thesis in the Practice of Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-March</td>
<td>Oral Examination of an advisor-approved thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Submission of a revised and formatted Thesis Article in the Practice of Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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A more detailed calendar can be found later in this manual. What follows immediately here is a full narrative explanation of the process, framed by the key courses that guide the thesis process and the documents required for and out of each of the course that become your final and approved thesis article.
Stage 1: M617 and the Preliminary Thesis Proposal

The thesis process normally begins in the fall of the student's second year with the required course, M617 – Research Methods, which introduces an understanding of the broad practice of practical theology and provides students with the basic foundations of research skills and thesis project construction. From the preparation for Methods class through its final projects, students will be identifying and developing a specific focus for their thesis project, an outline of the research needed to shape their thinking about the project, and, finally, a usable narrative that will guide the development and execution of their ongoing work. This is process that produces the preliminary thesis proposal, normally 12-15 pages long and due approximately two months following the class.

Step 1.1: Identifying Potential Topics

Some people find it easy to identify a thesis project; others struggle. A few settle too quickly on a topic or area of concentration. Whether you think you know what your project will be or not, we encourage you to take time to discern a project that will serve and stretch your ministry, enhance the life of the organization you serve, contribute to the wider church or community, and broaden the Church’s understanding of ministry.

Before you make a final decision about the focus for your thesis project, we suggest that you talk and pray with your governing body, your AGM, and also spend time in reflection about questions like these:

- What are the strengths in your context for ministry? What human and institutional assets enhance the life and ministry of the church in your context?
- What opportunities do you see for new or expanded ministry in your context?
- What persistent itch in your context for ministry keeps nagging at you? What do you feel needs urgent attention because you cannot understand or address it effectively?
- What sorts of initiatives make sense for the organization you serve, in this chapter in its life? What are the next big issues or concerns that need to be tackled?
- What are the places of emptiness in this context? What things are missing or inadequately addressed?
- How do you understand the collective vocation of the organization you serve? How do you view the purpose of the church and its ministry in the particular place in which you minister?
- What are the two or three most compelling situations or issues before you? What grabs your interest? What connects to your passions? Addressing which issue or situation will make the biggest contribution to your context for ministry?
From conversations such as these, identify two or three potential thesis projects to develop your pre-course assignment for Research Methods. Again, don't lock into a single idea or project too soon.

A frequent mistake made by DMin students, one which makes the thesis process much more difficult, is putting the proverbial cart before the horse. They come to the Methods class with concrete plans in place for their thesis project. They have not yet done any research. They have not yet considered the questions above. They have not yet consulted others. What they have done is, often, simply decided for themselves, “I’m going to do this (________________________) for my thesis,” apart from consultation beyond their own impressions. Please resist this temptation. Your thesis project is research-based. It is not an exercise in intuition, however good yours might be.

The thesis identification process, in its entirety, invites a student to engage in a series of steps through which each student will identify and think through a challenge; research multiple sources that shed light on effective leadership; reflect theologically and biblically on their visions for ministry; and then—and only then—make concrete plans about how to proceed. We recommend that you trust the process.

*Step 1.2: Attending M617--Research Methods*

Like any other DMin course, M617--Research Methods will ask students to do pre-course reading and assignments. During the intensive class week, students will work individually and together to:

- become clear on the components of a McCormick thesis project;
- settle on a focus for their individual DMin thesis project;
- refine that focus into a researchable and do-able DMin thesis project;
- identify plans for the contextual, theoretical, and theological/biblical research necessary for a DMin thesis project.

Methods is the place where a student's ministry situation, and his/her vision for that ministry, are brought together with a structure and a method for research to points the student toward a viable these project. Students also begin at this time to identify possible ministerial approaches to the thesis situation and consider how their thesis project could be evaluated.

*Step 1.3: Drafting the Preliminary Proposal*

The course assignment for Research Methods is to write a 12-15 page preliminary proposal for the thesis project. This more formal preliminary proposal should evolve naturally out a student’s initial thoughts and the work done in Methods class.
There are seven elements in the preliminary thesis proposal:

1. **Context for Ministry** (4 pages)

   Provide a brief description of the church, agency, or organization in which you are doing ministry – include observations about the community in which it based and which it serves. Provide a broad overview of the challenges and opportunities for ministry that are part of the community’s life.

2. **Vision for Ministry** (1 page)

   What particular theological or theoretical vision underlies your approach to this problem? What’s your vision of a “positive” or “hoped-for” outcome?

   This element can stand alone in this position in the preliminary thesis proposal, or it can be folded into the following section, either at the beginning or at the end. The purpose of listing it uniquely is to ensure that it becomes an explicit part of the proposal.

3. **Statement of Problem / Opportunity** (2 pages)

   Between the reality of what is and the vision of what could be is the adaptive challenge, or gap, that you believe needs to be bridged in order for those whom you are serving to thrive. The problem should be stated as concisely as possible – ideally, in one sentence – with an additional three-to-six paragraphs of interpretation and/or explanation.

   Identifying this problem or opportunity in your ministry becomes the foundation of your thesis project, but it is also one of the most difficult parts of the process. Too often, students describe the challenge, or gap, and the impediments that stand between reality and vision in terms that are general and vague. “My congregation hates change,” is not the kind of gap or impediment with which you can actually work. What is behind this complaint, and what more do you need to learn in order to state it in a more actionable form? Perhaps the congregation has experienced a series of unresolved losses. Perhaps the congregation simply doesn’t have the expertise to do what needs to be done, and needs to learn new skills. Maybe people are afraid of something (what might that be?). Unpack your adaptive challenge. What are some of the more manageable, discreet pieces of the gap you need to bridge in order to accomplish your vision?

4. **Theological / Theoretical Assumptions** (2 pages)

   A thesis project is not simply a program to be implemented or a solution quickly devised. Rather, it is an innovative way forward built on the solid foundations of ministry: Bible, theology, the social sciences. As you do research and review the literature that describe how others have addressed a similar problem, you’ll be uncovering particular authors whose theories, theologies, and work are particularly helpful and critical to providing a focus for your study. This is the place to begin to name those sources and assumptions.
5. **Preliminary Research / Review of Related Literature** (6 pages)

As you do the work of section four, you will begin to gather a collection of materials that relate to and/or offer insights into the problem you have identified in your context. This section can be simply an annotated bibliography or a discussion of key insights related to your problem that you find in your research into the field; this will expand into a full discussion of key concepts in your final thesis proposal. Be sure to include at least some voices that are contrary to your primary perspective.

6. **Proposed Action or Intervention** (1 page)

Generate a one paragraph description of two or three potential intervention scenarios (one paragraph for each scenario) that you might use as the basis of an “action plan” for addressing the problem / opportunity you have identified in your context for ministry. In short, what might you do? How might you address the gap you have identified in a manner that is consistent with your vision and appropriate for your context for ministry? Based on your work during residency, one of these scenarios may become the intervention you will use in your thesis.

7. **Data Gathering and Analysis Plan** (1 page)

Do some preliminary reflection on how you might measure the “success” of each of your intervention scenarios. What kind of data will you need to gather in that process – how will you analyze it? What protocols will you follow in interpreting and making inferences based on the data? This should be very tentative – it’s basically intended to stimulate reflection on the data gathering implications for each scenario.

Your preliminary proposal constitutes the course project for Research Methods, as well as the pre-course writing project for Thesis Residency. (You may be assigned a book or two to read prior to Residency.)

Remember: at this point, your preliminary proposal should be considered just that: preliminary. You still need to do most of your research, which will presumably inform your thinking about your thesis project. You need to consult again with your AGM, your partner in this project, about this ongoing work. As you read about different practices and perspectives, you may find yourself reformulating your project. That is not uncommon. Keep an open mind and spirit as you work.

The McCormick DMin thesis provides an opportunity for you to engage in rigorous and disciplined reflection about the practice of ministry. You have a significant opportunity for learning in this project. You will get the most out of this opportunity if you trust the process, move through it one stage at a time, research new ways to understand and tackle the challenge before you, and resist the temptation to take short cuts.
Stage 2: I648 and the Final Thesis Proposal

The second stage of your thesis development process is I648--Thesis Residency and the production of the final thesis proposal. Thesis Residency is held during the January following the Methods course: an eleven-day, on-campus requirement that affords students an opportunity to refine their thesis topics, do in-depth research about it, and to advance significantly in framing the final thesis proposal.

Step 2.1: Drafting the Preliminary Proposal

The preliminary proposal, described above, is both the final step of the first stage of your Research Methods M617 course (resulting in the preliminary proposal) and the first step of Thesis Residency that results in the final thesis proposal.

Step 2.2: Attending I648--Thesis Residency

January in Chicago--what could be a better use of your time and energy than intensive, focused work on your thesis project? Think about it. It's 20-below-zero outside; it's not like you can go to the beach!!

Residency is a two-week period of intensive work on the thesis with your assigned thesis advisor, your peers, other McCormick faculty, writing consultants, and library resource persons. A McCormick faculty member will be assigned as your Residency guide, companion, and resource; that same faculty member will remain as your primary thesis advisor through the remainder of the project. Residency will include brief workshops, individual consultations, peer conversations about your work, lots of time for you to conduct your research, and the opportunity to actually get started on your writing. The objective of Residency is to complete development of the focus and structure of your thesis and put that into a 30-40 page final thesis proposal.

We know what you're thinking in response to those outcomes, and we want to talk about that for a moment. Many students, frankly, approach Residency with questions about its purpose and need. Why, students often ask, can’t I just go to my local library or do internet research on my own? Do I have to be here for eleven days? Do I have to stay here? Those are good questions, often asked and deserving of response. In of our forty years of experience in guiding DMin students through thesis projects, here’s what we've learned at McCormick: if you are like most students, you will look back at your time of residency with a mix of gratitude and relief, thankful for the concentrated focus, away from the demands of daily living and daily ministry, to do the heavy lifting of thesis work, and for the peer interaction and support that invariably deepens and expands your thinking. Residency is a remarkable opportunity and often becomes a treasured gift: the space and time for you to “get on the balcony,” as Heifetz might say; to take a broad look, then dig in to the challenges, all the while accompanied by peers who will support and encourage your efforts. Our experience tells us that, most often, what begins as a perceived burden ends as an experienced benefit.
Making Good Use of Thesis Residency: Again, you will have a McCormick faculty advisor to accompany through residency and the remainder of your thesis process. That faculty person will organize class time around these two tasks: the research that your thesis will require and the project formulation that will grow out of the research. Students will work collectively and individually with the advisor to (1) discuss and finalize ideas for the final thesis project, (2) do the research necessary to build the theoretical and theological foundations for the project, and (3) expand the preliminary proposal into the 30-40 page thesis proposal. By the time students leave Residency, they should have clarity about their individual projects, the research that will support it, and plans for carrying out and evaluating the ministry work that it entails. If you focus your time well, you may actually have the time to begin the actual writing of your final thesis proposal.

The kind of good, responsible DMin research you will undertake during and following Residency is multi-faceted. In these key areas, you will have focused time for discussion and development, and be pointed to key tools and practices that will equip you to do quality research in each area:

- **Contextual** research about your setting and/or organization, which will give you a fuller and more accurate picture of what’s going on in your particular situation. Demographic studies, neighborhood and congregational histories, denominational materials, and organizational analyses of congregational dynamics are among the useful approaches for this dimension of research.

- **Theoretical** research about the dynamics of your situation, which will also help you to understand what is going on. Theoretical research about leadership and ministry will give you some good ideas about how you might approach the challenges you face; theoretical research may also help you better understand your role and how you function in the situation. Learning from sociology and psychology, organizational development, leadership theory, and history, for example, are often useful in helping students to tease apart the dynamics within their situation, or understand such dynamics in a wider context.

- **Theological and biblical** research, which will help you to amplify and deepen your expression of the theological convictions that shape your vision for ministry in this situation. As you know from your first seminary degrees, there are many approaches a student can use to mine the riches of Christian tradition.

**Step 2.3: Writing the Final Thesis Proposal**

During residency, your primary goal is to complete the research you need to do, so that you can build on and expand your preliminary proposal into a full, final thesis proposal. The thesis proposal is a 30-40 page working document that pulls together your thinking in these areas:
- Your concerns, observations, and hopes about the situation or challenge you wish to address
- Research you have done about (1) this situation and the impediments you face; (2) the Judeo-Christian tradition and the convictions underlying your vision; and (3) ministerial practice or organizational leadership that helps to shape your final approach
- How your learning from these various dimensions of research connects into a coherent theoretical framework
- Your plans for your thesis project (an outline of the concrete steps you plan to take)
- Your plans for project evaluation

The **final thesis proposal**, then, becomes an expansion of your preliminary proposal, incorporating some of the writing that you did for the preliminary proposal with the new research and insights you are gaining. In the thesis proposal, which is normally due about two months after Residency, you will discuss the situation, your vision for it, some of the particular challenges you face in realizing that vision, your research, and your conclusions about the best way to address your challenges. This material will comprise the bulk of this paper. A final, small portion of the paper will also outline your plans for ministry and evaluation.

The following elements form the outline of your final thesis proposal. These page lengths are approximate, but we think they are pretty reliable.

1. **Situation Description (8-12 pp)**: Look back at what you wrote in your preliminary proposal about context, vision, and statement of problem. That thinking, informed by the more extensive research you have done during residency, should shape this section. Identify and discuss the realities of your current ministry and context, a vision you have for ministry in this place, and what stands in between the two (the problem, opportunity, adaptive challenge, gap, etc.). And then state clearly the focus of your thesis work. How, specifically, will you try to make a difference in your context for ministry, with this project?

2. **Research and Literature Review (13-17 pp)**: Write a literature review that tells your reader about the research you have done and how it informs your thinking about this thesis project. This section will likely be quite different from your preliminary proposal, but will probably build on the initial research plans you included in that work.

   The literature review is more than a cut and paste of your notes. You want to let your readers know how you have digested this research. A good literature review demonstrates that the author has covered a particular area of research, summarizes major arguments (often multiple sides of major arguments), and informs the reader about the foundational thinking on which the rest of the thesis is built. Research that has proven to be irrelevant should be omitted from the literature.
review. A few brief examples of well-done literature reviews can be found in the Appendix.

3. **Theoretical Framework (3-5 pp).** By the time your reader has plowed through the research section, s/he may have lost track of the big picture. In this section, you restate the big picture very briefly by answering three questions:

*What is this thesis trying to accomplish?* Briefly restate your challenge, vision, and the particular adaptive challenge or impediments that you are trying to negotiate with this thesis project. You may wish succinctly to repeat the problem statement that summarizes your thesis. This will feel repetitive, and it should. You are recapping here.

*Why? What theological convictions underlie your vision?* Here you get to preach for a page or two. Summarize and proclaim for your readers the theological and biblical convictions that motivate and shape your thesis project. You are recapping here, too.

*How are you going to go about addressing the challenge you face?* What ministerial theory(ies) do you employ in the construction of your plan? What makes you think that this practical approach is appropriate for the challenges you face? Be specific. This is where you are stating your hypothesis: given this situation, and given my theological convictions, this is the best plan for moving forward because it will effectively address the adaptive gap / impediments by . . . It is based on the theoretical arguments of Japinga, Tanzer, Kapp, Daniels, for example, or Calvin or Julian of Norwich or Mary Daly or (______).

This section is the first time we are seeing your hypothesis stated clearly. So, you want to articulate it succinctly, and you also want to clarify for your readers what larger conversations you engaged as you constructed this hypothesis. If a stranger picked up your thesis, and read only the theoretical framework, s/he should be able to understand your whole thesis project and the thinking behind it.

4. **Objectives and Strategies (maximum 6 pp).** Finally, the plan! What are your primary objectives and what concrete steps will you take to meet them? You can write this section as prose or an outline. Note: these objectives should be clearly related to the adaptive challenge/ opportunity that you identified earlier, because, in theory, you have to address the gaps and impediments in order to bridge the distance between the situation and the vision.

5. **Evaluation (1-2 pp.).** Identify the means or instruments you will use to determine if your objectives have been met. How do you intend to evaluate the accuracy of your original hypothesis, or the impact of your program or event? Did your plan work like you think it was going to? If so, how does the success of your project reinforce your learning along the way? If not, what have you learned about ministry? How might you do this project differently, if you had the opportunity to
repeat it? Here, it's not enough just to say we did something; it's also necessary to find a way to measure impact.

6. **Significance (1-2 pp.).** Identify the questions that you will use to determine the significance of this project. What in its design, implementation, and/or evaluation might be usable for other religious leaders?

7. **Abstract (1 p.).** Every thesis will need something called an abstract. You'll talk more about that in Methods and residency, but for now, this brief description. An abstract is a summary of your entire project framed in approximately the following way:

   - 1-3 sentences about your ministry challenge
   - 1-2 sentences about your vision and the theological/biblical convictions that motivate it
   - 1-2 sentences that comprise your problem statement (you’ve been working on this since Methods)
   - 1-2 sentences that summarize your theoretical approach to addressing your situation
   - 1-2 sentences that preview your concrete plans for ministry
   - 1 sentence that identifies your plans for evaluation

8. **Bibliography** of works cited

The final thesis proposal must be approved by your advisor before you launch into the actual interventions or programs you have envisioned.
Stage 3: I649 and the Final Thesis Article

By the time you have written your thesis proposal, much of the traditional, print-focused research will be complete. You have identified, researched, and critiqued your situation, as well as developed a research-based proposal about how to deal with it. All that now remains is for you to carry out and evaluate your thesis project, a process that will take about nine more months.

Step 3.1: The Actual Work of Ministry

After your thesis proposal is approved, it is time for you to do the work you have planned by implementing the plan for ministry that you outlined in the objectives and strategies section of your proposal. In most ministry settings this takes several months, because the project is a comprehensive one. Do your work with our blessing, and observe what happens as you carry out your project. What works? What does not work? What changes do you need to make along the way and why? What outcomes emerge from this project?

This brief caution: please do not arrange for or implement plans for your thesis project until you have received authorization from your thesis advisor. Step-by-step: it works best that way.

This is one of the shortest sections of the manual, but one of the longer parts of the thesis process. Ministry takes time. Your goal as you implement your plan is to pay attention. Keep track of your personal observations and evaluation of the project, and put formal evaluation procedures into place. Involve others in your ministry setting in evaluation, and do a careful job. In particular, keep track of what you are learning. All this observation and evaluation can feed into your final thesis in the practice of ministry. Stay in touch with your advisor, too; periodic conversations can be extremely helpful in sorting through the wealth of data you will be collecting.

Step 3.2: Write the first draft of a final thesis article

This is what you've been working toward--THE THESIS!!.

This is the final stage in the thesis process. Each seminary can design its thesis however it chooses, within some basic parameters established by the overall accrediting body, the ATS--the Association of Theological Schools. We call ours the final thesis article because, quite frankly, we are envisioning a 40-page article of publishable quality. Why this length and this format? Quite simply, we want this document to be a resource to you and to others, and we believe that it will be most accessible in this tightly written format, where the focus is on the key foundations, actions, and learnings of your work. Ideally your readers should be able to follow your thinking from the first to the last page. As they read, they should be able to understand how you framed your challenge, used research that helped you understand it better, constructed a cohesive and workable theory out of which a concrete plan for ministry emerged, which you then implemented and evaluated.
On November 1 following the completion of Residency, the first draft of your final thesis article is due to your advisor. This 40-page article builds substantially on the work you did on your thesis proposal, but reworked, reordered, and, in some cases, reconsidered based on the plans or programs you carried out. You will discuss the work of the previous year by putting ministerial practice into conversation with theory, and evaluating the work you have done. The focus of this paper should be on what you have learned about ministry, in light of your practice, theology, and theories, and what the implications of your learning might be for the wider Church.

Use the following outline to write your final paper. You may be able to use some of the writing you did for previous papers, but you will also need to do significant rearranging and redrafting of sections. The reading audience for your thesis is other religious leaders, so write appropriately. Note: the page lengths below should be considered plus or minus; they are general approximations, not absolutes, to be joined with your own creativity and imagination to form this highly-readable piece.

The Final Thesis Article Outline

Abstract (150 words)

Introduction (2 pp). Engage your readers by telling them what is in store for them as they read. Summarize the key content and learning of the thesis project, its significance for readers, and lay out the problem/adaptive challenge with which you wrestled and the vision you fashioned for the situation.

Theoretical Framework (4 pp). Discuss your vision for this project, the theological and biblical convictions that shaped the vision, and the ministerial theories you employed to frame your project. Much of what you wrote for the “theoretical framework” section of your thesis proposal can be used here, though you should edit it.

Background (6 pp). Discuss the background context that led to this project. Tell us about your congregation or agency, the cultural dynamics that shaped your thesis project, the particular challenges with which you were faced. Much of what you wrote for your “situation” section of the thesis proposal might be used here, though you may wish to edit it a bit.

Research and Literature Review (10 pp). Edit and organize your research into a readable literature review that helps us see how your research organized your thinking for this project. You will not necessarily include everything you read in this section; this section is not intended to be a book-by-book summary of your research, but rather an evaluated and integrated means to describe the way you are seeing and responding to the opportunity / challenge of the ministry context. Include those sources that helped you to illumine your situation; to construct your theological frame; to consider appropriate action in this setting; to design and implement your approach; and to evaluate your work.
Objectives, Strategies, and Implementation (12 pp). Now that you have prepared your readers to consider ministry in your context, outline the plan you developed and describe its implementation. Be honest. Tell your readers what happened, what worked or did not work, what needed to be changed and how you changed it, etc.

Evaluation and Learning (5 pp). Be honest again as you assess the ministry plan that you developed in your thesis proposal. Concentrate on your learning: what you learned along the way, what you have learned looking back on the project, what people in your setting have learned, what implications are the implications for others. If you were able to do this project again, what might you do differently? Reflection on your theological frame and how it worked in this project would also be appropriate.

Conclusion (1 p). Wrap it up. Point the way forward, from here to new ministry.

Bibliography of works cited.

Please understand that this outline is a recommended structure for your final thesis article, offered in this way to help ensure that you include the necessary elements. That said, like any outline, it is a guide, not a straightjacket; your own content and creativity will help shape this outline in ways that give your final thesis article a personality and style all its own. Does it have all the elements of a McCormick thesis? Yes, it must. Does it do so while also reflecting the place of ministry from which it comes and the personality of its author? We certainly hope so.

Step 3.3 Revision

Your first draft of your final thesis article will not be your only draft, but essentially the first of three significant drafts, each one improving on the last and more clearly and concisely making the case for your work.

The first draft of your final thesis article is due to your advisor no later than November 1. That doesn't necessarily mean that it's the first piece of writing your advisor has seen from you since March. We encourage you to remain in regular communication with your advisor during the execution of your plans and projects; by mutual consent, advisors may be asked for and provide interim comments on specific sections of the final thesis article as it is developed. But a draft of the full final thesis article is due at this time.

Please remember: your thesis project is a 40-page article. If you write 80 pages, or 60 pages, or 50 pages, no matter how wonderful you and your five closest friends think your writing is, you will be asked to edit and shorten your thesis.

Your advisor will provide comments on the first draft, as well as suggestions for revision and rewriting, in advance of a full second draft due no later than February 1, about a year
after Residency. This second draft is normally the draft that is presented to the faculty of McCormick for the oral examination process. Occasionally, however, students can miss the mark with the initial draft of their final thesis article, and a more extensive revision will be necessary. These are conversations for you and your advisor to have directly.

**Step 3.4 Oral Examinations**

In many places, the culmination of the thesis-writing process is a "thesis defense," an event that can strike fear in the hearts of students everywhere. At McCormick, we call this stage of the process the oral examination; here's why. We've designed the oral examination to be a thoughtful conversation aimed at continued learning. It is not meant to be a "defense" but rather a process in which you have the opportunity, as a budding "teacher of the church," to present your learnings in a way that allows everyone present to benefit. While the oral examination will almost certainly result in some additional requests for revisions from the committee, those revisions not ordinarily require major reworking or rewriting of the final thesis article. Advisors screen final thesis articles carefully before scheduling orals; when you are invited to go forward with the oral examination process, you can be fairly confident of a positive result.

Oral examinations are normally held in late February and early March. An examination will include you, your advisor, a peer learner in the DMin program, and a graduate evaluator. At the discretion of the advisor or the dean of the program, the committee may also include additional McCormick faculty or additional peers in the program. The oral examination process includes several stages:

1. **Scheduling:** The doctor of ministry office will coordinate the oral examination schedule; that process usually begins early in the calendar year. The DMin office determines the makeup of the examination committee, though student input is accepted. When you receive the final schedule, please confirm your dates with the doctor of ministry office. If scheduling disasters descend, please contact the DMin office.

2. **The Examination Itself:** The oral evaluation will be led by your thesis advisor and is normally about 90 minutes in length. In dialogue with you, the committee will engage in a critical analysis of the thesis, examining the coherence of theory and practice, the clarity of theological reflection, and the value of learnings and conclusions as a contribution to the knowledge about ministry. The committee will also help your growth in knowledge and skill and your plans for continuing growth in ministry. The committee may ask you to revise the thesis article to improve written expression, thinking about ministry, or technical format.

3. **Advisor’s Evaluation:** Your thesis advisor, after consulting with the committee, will summarize the evaluation and provide to you in writing any requested revisions.
Step 3.5 Final Revisions and Advisor’s Certification:

Your advisor will receive and review the final draft of your thesis article to confirm that any requirements set by the oral examination committee have been met. He or she will then submit a certification form to the DMin office. Your advisor has the final responsibility for declaring your thesis satisfactory. The completed thesis is the sole basis for a passing grade in I649, the final course credit necessary prior to graduation.

The doctor of ministry office will provide you the deadline by which the approved final thesis article must be submitted. At your oral examination, you will be given the exact date, which is normally in mid-April, as well as specific instructions on formatting and submission requirements. This is a firm and fixed requirement. No final thesis article can be accepted after the established deadline if the student wishes to graduate that year, and no exceptions can be granted.

What If I Just Can't Get My Thesis Done in Time?

Sometimes, life happens, and you can't make the schedule we have set for you (and you have adopted as your own). Then what?

If you cannot meet the March 1, November 1, or February 1 deadlines for the final thesis article leading into the oral examination, you may request an extension as follows:

- Apply in writing to your thesis advisor before the deadline; he or she will advise the DMin office. The extension will be granted and a new deadline will be established. While such an extension will be granted, please note that missing and extending any deadline runs a risk that, despite everyone’s best efforts, all requirements for graduation may not be met on-time.

- If you need a second extension, again apply in writing—this time to the Associate Dean for Doctor of Ministry programs, with a copy to your thesis advisor. Your letter should include the reasons for the delay and your revised, projected timeline. The Associate Dean will determine whether and on what terms to grant a second extension. This second extension will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances and with the understanding that graduation will be delayed.

If your thesis advisor identifies significant problems in your thesis proposal, s/he may ask you to rewrite. If you are asked to rewrite, you do not need to apply for an extension, as that will be granted automatically. Submit your rewritten material as soon as possible. Remember: please do not begin work on strategies until your thesis proposal has been approved and you have received authorization to go ahead.
Detailed Timeline

The process for developing and writing a McCormick thesis takes approximately a year and a half. Please confirm the dates in the following outline with your thesis advisor.

September 28 - October 2, 2015: Attend M617—Research Methods. The course focuses on the tools and practices of a practical theologian and thesis writer.

December 1, 2015: Submit your preliminary proposal and abstract to your Methods instructor. S/he will provide comments and will also provide a copy to your Residency instructor, who will also become your thesis advisor.

January, 2016: Attend I648—Thesis Residency. Prior to going home, submit to your thesis advisor your research review form. See the appendix for more information.

March 1, 2016: Submit a copy of your final thesis proposal to your thesis advisor, who can then give you final approval (and a grade for I648!). Grades for the thesis proposal are pass-fail. The proposal will also be filed with the DMin office.

NOTE: This date is a key marker in the process. To fall behind schedule at this point carries a potential domino-effect on the entire project. Please be attentive to this deadline and adhere to it.

November 1, 2016: Submit a first draft of your thesis article to your advisor for comment. This is intended to be a draft, complete in overall content but likely still needing specific facts or results and a polishing of the writing.

Note: Interventions that cannot be undertaken until the early fall, due to congregational or judicatory schedules, may require an extension of this due date.

The February 1, 2015, due date for a final thesis draft may not be extended, however, without potentially impacting a May 2015 graduation.

February 1, 2017: Submit an edited, firm draft of your thesis article to your advisor. S/he will then work with the DMin office for distribution to your oral examination committee. At this time, an oral evaluation date will be scheduled. Note: you may be asked to have submitted additional drafts prior to this deadline or following this deadline, as determined by the advisor in consultation with you.

February—March, 2017: Oral evaluations. The DMin office will schedule these evaluations in consultation with the thesis advisor and student. Further revisions to the thesis are likely following the oral evaluation.

April 15, 2017: Submit 1 paper copy and 1 electronic copy of your thesis article in its final form to the DMin office, along with the completed digitization permission forms, allowing your thesis to become part of an electronic database. Successful completion of this step will result in the final passing grade for I649.

May 7-8, 2017: Graduation Weekend!
Appendix I
Sample Literature Review

Literature reviews are not simply a bibliography, nor a annotated bibliography, nor a paragraph-by-paragraph summary of what you read in preparing a thesis project, and certainly more than a cut-and-paste job of your notes. A good literature review demonstrates that the author has covered a particular area of research, summarizes major arguments (often multiple sides of major arguments), and informs the reader about the foundational thinking on which the rest of the thesis is built. Research that has proven to be irrelevant should be omitted from the literature review.

In quantitative research, which will reflect the majority of McCormick thesis projects, literature reviews will include "a substantial amount of literature at the beginning of a study to provide direction for the research questions or hypotheses. Also, the literature review can introduce a theory—an explanation for expected relationships, describe the theory that will be used, and suggest why it is a useful theory to be examined." (Creswell, Research Design, p. 27)

What follows is a sample literature review, briefer than what you will offer in a McCormick thesis, but in keeping with the general style and nature in which we imagine a literature review. The sample is a small portion of an article written by McCormick professor of urban ministry Deborah Kapp. It models in very brief form the integrative and summative nature of a good literature review.
Improvisation is a rich term that describes varied forms of cooperation in music, theater, and other organizational settings (Becker 2000b). It is extemporaneous group action that can sometimes be quite innovative (Sawyer 2000). Becker argues, however, that jazz is not as inventive as some people like to think. Although new, spontaneous music may be played during a jam session, its creation occurs in an ordered context shaped by musicians’ previous experience, years of practice, and unstated norms and expectations that define the interaction (Becker 2000a). As he describes it, improvisation occurs in the interface between structure and uncertainty. Weick and Quinn concur. They contend that the improvisation practiced by organizational leaders is built on a well-defined institutional memory and repertoire of action; at the same time it occurs in the context of organizational instability (Weick and Quinn 1999). Just as jazz improvisation builds from routines of practice combined with creativity, organizational improvisation emerges in the ambiguity created by convention on the one hand and the unpredictability of the moment on the other (Ruhleder and Stoltzfus 2000).

Improvisers also work in settings that are shaped by rules of etiquette, a common and implicit set of expectations about how people will work together (Becker 2000a). Because improvisation is group behavior, it requires that people be willing to learn and trust others, but different kinds of interaction produce different rules (Carroll 1998). In jazz improvisation the rules dictate how people listen, give ground, and learn from each other (Becker 2000a). In improvisational theater the rules dictate that people be open to the moment, resist the urge to plan or assume a role, avoid conscious choices, and allow themselves to discover and react to discoveries as the group lets the moment unfold (Scruggs and Gellman 2008).

A key skill in any improvisational work, then, is paying attention. Being able to concentrate on the whole of the present action is essential (Francois 2006). Business leaders who improvise are poised to recognize and act on opportunities; they pay attention so they can build on openings that emerge (Meyerson 2003). Jazz performers listen attentively to themselves and others as they participate in improvisational music-making (Faulkner 2004). In order to improvise actors need to focus their awareness on process and the actions of people around them (Scruggs and Gellman 2008).

Robert Faulkner describes improvisation as “disciplined imagination,” a combination that he argues is built simultaneously on a repertoire of practiced, known activities, and a spontaneous and creative use of these activities (2004:96). His phrase describes well the kind of improvisation practiced in the emergency feeding programs analyzed in this paper. In these settings program supervisors draw from a repertoire of kitchen and leadership skills to negotiate the structures, routines, expectations, and unpredictability of supplies and volunteers, in order to get food to those who need it.

In the following sections of this paper I describe how improvisation in the kitchen and pantry occurs at the intersection of structure and uncertainty. I begin with an examination of the programs’ social contexts. I then identify how social structure and attitudinal factors shape creative work in these programs. First: the context….

...Deborah Kapp
Appendix II
Designing a Plan for Ministry

Clear objectives and well-designed strategies to achieve them are essential to the thesis. The research and reflection that precede this section build toward effective action in your ministry context. You have been engaged in critical inquiry with a view toward the practice of ministry.

At the outset it is helpful to distinguish between what we are calling “objectives” and what we are calling “strategies.” “Objectives” answer the question, What are you trying to accomplish? “strategies” answer the question, How do you propose to accomplish it? One describes intentions and the other describes actions.

Objectives and strategies must be designed and conducted in collaboration with others in your context of ministry. They are partners with you, also responsible for the ministry in your place, and (of course) some of your best insights and ideas will likely come from them.

Criteria

Considerations for designing objectives and strategies

1. Are the objectives and strategies appropriate to the situation?

Example: If your thesis project involves work with older adults in a congregation, you will want to consider the particular interests and needs of that age group in designing strategies. You have reflected on your own experiences and considered that of your aging parents; now you will likely want to consult with aging members in the congregation about the needs and interests they experience. In your social science research may have learned that persons in this age group are concerned about the developmental issue of generativity vs. despair. You can now design strategies in accordance with these discoveries. For example, you might plan activities to provide opportunities for older members to share the wisdom of their lived experience, occasions when they can tell the story of their life and faith, times for teaching and sharing with and contributing to the development of the student generation—occasions for "generativity."

Appropriateness is key for the design of strategies. In this example you would also want to consider the environment, economic factors, the norms and goals of the context, the history of the congregation, etc. You will need the help of others in your context of ministry in assessing whether a particular set of strategies is appropriate to the setting.

2. Are the objectives and strategies theologically sound?

Consider especially the relation between your objectives and strategies and the understanding of church and ministry that guide your thesis project.

Example: If your understanding of the church as the "priesthood of all believers," gives shape to your thesis project, you will want your objectives and strategies to be consistent with this model. Adopt a partnership in ministry approach that will complement your theological presuppositions.
It would hardly make sense to articulate a priesthood of all believers model of the church and then have the pastor or leader design, conduct, and evaluate the strategies without others' collaboration and involvement. You are seeking congruency, a good integration of intention and action, theology and ministry.

3. Are the objectives and strategies consistent with the ministerial theory you have identified as the basis for your thesis project?

Objectives and strategies should be clearly connected to the ministry theory you have articulated, because you have argued that this ministry theory shapes your approach to the situation you identified. If, for example, you have argued that religious leaders who want to deepen a congregation’s spiritual life must teach and support people in prayer, then your objectives and strategies should put that into practice. Do not create “disconnects” in your thesis article by discussing one theory in the first half of the thesis, and, in the second half, designing objectives and strategies that grow from a different theory. Be consistent.

4. How do the objectives and strategies lend themselves to evaluation?

Begin thinking about how objectives and strategies can be evaluated as early as possible. Of course, some outcomes are easier to evaluate than others—it is easier to determine whether attendance has increased or decreased following a change in service time than to evaluate changes in ideas and attitudes.

Suggestions

Keep the objectives and strategies clearly focused on the challenge addressed in the thesis. Try to focus your project clearly. Be reasonable, aware of the resources available and cognizant of the time frame and limits of the thesis project.

And don’t rush to practice. The demands of ministry often call for quick decisions and immediate action. We may move quickly to the "how to" questions without fully exploring the "what is going on here" and the "what is at stake in this" and the ever-present-but-all-too-seldom-asked "why" questions. The McCormick thesis invites a more prolonged reflective moment that (hopefully) will lead to more effective action. This is why we insist that you not conduct strategies until your thesis advisor approves them. We, as partners with you in this work, will help you determine when the groundwork has been completed and then design strategies. If the thesis is related to evangelism, for example, the "how to" question cannot be adequately addressed until we have answered questions about what we mean by evangelism and why we do evangelism.
Appendix III
Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is to determine if your objectives have been achieved and to assess the outcome of the strategies. You will also be able to assess the significance of the thesis as a whole and its implications, both for your own future work and for other readers. Evaluation in ministry is not primarily statistical, but interpretive, and it is one of the ways we are accountable for the ministry work we undertake.

You are creating a public document designed to share your learnings and contribute knowledge of the practice of ministry. By sharing the consequences and the significance of your thesis, you have the chance to inform the ministry of others.

Assessing Outcomes

The business of conducting the strategies is itself one of the outcomes of the thesis. So, first of all, consider the strategies in their own right, the manner in which they were carried out—not yet their impact; that will come later. How did they go? Were you able to carry them through as planned, or did you discover a second level of challenges that prevented you from carrying out your plans? What level of participation did you experience?

Next consider impact. In order to assess the impact, you need a good baseline reading of the situation as it existed, particularly in relation to the object of the strategies, the conditions you have addressed in the thesis project. You need a way to obtain the data against which the practice of ministry and its consequences can be measured. Consider the following questions when attempting to assess impact:

1. What new conditions now exist as a result of the thesis? What new behaviors, relations, programs, activities are there? What new populations are now involved and/or served? What new resources have been developed? What new attitudes do you find? In short, what has changed? Specifically, how has the former actual situation been transformed in the direction of the ideal situation you defined?
2. Is there now new knowledge that was not available before? What are the new perceptions, ideas, and attitudes in the context?

How do these outcomes compare with your intentions? Review your objectives and what your really hoped would occur; your objectives become a standard for assessing effectiveness. If your intentions and outcomes do not correspond, please do not disguise this fact. We expect faithfulness to the process and to the task and learning from it—not success. When things did not go as hoped, your full description of what happened and what you learned from what happened may be an even more valuable contribution to knowledge of the practice of ministry. As we evaluate the thesis, we are most concerned with whether or how your research and reflection were thorough and appropriate, that you tried something thoughtfully designed in partnership with others and aimed at redemptive transformation, and that you learned from it and can share what you learned in a usable form.
Methods of Evaluation

The four most common methods of evaluation are:

1. **Participant Observer Reports**: Using this method, you can observe and record what you others see and then analyze your findings. You will want more than one observer; you should not be the only one since your vested interest and ego involvement may affect your powers of observation.

2. **Interviews or Focus Groups**: Using these methods, you or other appropriate persons can interview people or groups in order to obtain their evaluation. This might involve yourself, your advisory group, governing board, and the persons most involved in or likely to have been affected by the strategies.

3. **Case Studies**: Using this method, you can analyze specific situations in depth. For example, you might do a case study of a board meeting before and after your strategies on "making meetings work" or employing Kersey-Bates personality typing. What behaviors and interaction patterns were there before; what do you see now? How do these compare?

4. **Instruments**: This method obtains slightly more objective, hard data. You might use surveys of attitudes before and after strategies (such as Lickert scales), or gather statistics on attendance or the level of participation in particular programs. Think about what would be the most useful data to have in order to assess the outcome, and let that guide your selection of an evaluative instrument.

Reevaluate the Elements of your Research

As you review your objectives and the extent to which they have been achieved and the outcome of the strategies, reevaluate the theoretical framework you have been using. Has your model of the church served well? If so, how did it do so? What were its valuable insights? If it did not serve well, why not? What were its weaknesses or pitfalls?

Work through the other elements in the theoretical framework in the same way, identifying strengths and weaknesses. Your research was intended to provide tools for understanding the context, the people, the challenge, and how best to move ahead in the situation. Did the results of your research really inform the thesis? How did it help, or mislead, you?
Appendix IV
Code of Ethics

- Conduct research that is worthy of the calling to which one has been called (loosely, Eph 4:1)

- Conduct research with integrity (honesty and openness about work, evaluation, impact; awareness of own social location)

- Maintain ethical and respectful relationships with people, honoring their diversity and dignity (respect for people who are different; secure informed consent when appropriate; maintain appropriate confidentiality)

- Maintain ethical and respectful relationships with institutions, honoring the integrity and legitimacy of an institution’s culture and ecclesiology

- Promote the common good
Appendix V
Research Review Requirements and Forms

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

Instructions:

Please submit this form and a brief abstract of your thesis proposal to your thesis advisor. The form should be submitted before you leave residency.

Investigator

Name:

Home Address:

City: State: Zip:

Home Phone:

Seminary Affiliation:

Status of Investigator (please check one)

- Faculty Member
- D.Min. Student
- Masters Student
- Administration or Staff

Faculty Sponsor (required unless the investigator is a member of the full-time faculty or administrative staff of McCormick Theological Seminary)

Name:

Field:

Seminary Phone:

Title of Project:

Purpose of Project (please check one)

- Faculty research to be submitted for external funding
- Faculty research not to be submitted for external funding
- Doctoral thesis or dissertation
- Masters thesis
- Class project
- Other
In conducting this research, will any of the following be involved? Indicate Yes or No.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Drugs or other controlled substances</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment of subjects for participation</td>
<td>___</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access of subjects for participation</td>
<td>___</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imposition of stress, above a level associated with everyday activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deception of subjects about any aspect of the research</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of subjects who could be judged to have limited freedom of consent (e.g., minors, the differently abled)</td>
<td>___</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any procedures that may put subjects at risk</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any risk to the confidentiality of data responses</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any circumstances likely to lessen subjects’ voluntariness in participating in the research</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A written consent form (if yes, attach copies)</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection over a period likely to exceed 6 months</td>
<td>___</td>
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Certifications:

1. I am familiar with the policies and procedures of McCormick Theological Seminary regarding human subjects. I subscribe to the standards of the Seminary and will adhere to its policies and procedures.
2. I am familiar with the published guidelines for the ethical treatment of subjects associated with my particular field of inquiry (e.g., those published by the American Sociological Association).
3. If changes in procedures involving human subjects becomes necessary, I will submit these changes for review before they are implemented.

Signatures:

Investigator: _______________________________  Date:  __________________

Faculty Sponsor: ___________________________  Date:  __________________

Please attach a description of the research project proposed, and address the following issues; brief responses to each issue will suffice. Submit to the Associate Dean of the DMin Program:

- Reason for the study and its significance to the area of inquiry
- Description of research protocols
- Description of the proposed subject population
- Potential risks
- Procedures to be used to obtain informed consent
- How subjects’ welfare will be safeguarded
- Assessment of potential benefits
Appendix VI
The First Five Pages of Your Thesis

There is a standard format to every McCormick doctor-of-ministry thesis, whether produced within the McCormick DMin program itself or the ACTS DMin in Preaching program. The following pages show the exact format required for the first five pages of your thesis.
McCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE TITLE OF YOUR THESIS:
THE SUBTITLE OF YOUR THESIS, EXTENDING,
IF NECESSARY, TO TWO LINES BUT NOT MORE

A THESIS IN THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

by
YOUR NAME HERE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY 2014

THIS DOCUMENT IS SUBMITTED WITH PERMISSION
TO MCCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
FOR ITS DISTRIBUTION TO INTERESTED PERSONS
ABSTRACT

Your Name Here

The Title of Your Thesis:
The Subtitle of Your Thesis, Extending,
If Necessary, to Two Lines but Not More

The body of your abstract statement should begin here. The abstract statement is a single paragraph (no additional paragraph breaks or line spaces) as defined in the thesis manual. It should not, under any circumstances, extend to a second page. It must fit on a single page and with the margin and type size parameters provided. The abstract is a short document used throughout the thesis process to frame and articulate your entire thesis in the space of about a page. It will help with putting your first ideas on paper. It becomes especially significant at residency when it is used to introduce your thesis ideas to faculty members and other students. Finally, it will serve as the introduction to and summary of the final thesis article. It will provide a brief, succinct introduction to your thesis work and so form the foundation for your conversations.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (optional)

This is your opportunity to thank your spouse and kids for putting up with your grumpiness while writing; to thank your congregation (and, perhaps, certain key individuals in it) for their time, encouragement, resources, and prayerful support in the development of this thesis, and to thank the dean for being so smart and gracious and anything else nice you’d like to say about him. This is an optional page. Please treat it with respect, and please limit yourself to no more than…

…25 lines.
You may begin your thesis project here. Start right in; no further titles are necessary, unless you feel the use of subtitles will help guide the reader through the thesis.

Some additional style guidelines (the full complement of which you can find in the style guide—only key ones are listed here):

- The body of the thesis is double-spaced. Each beginning of a paragraph is indented.
- Margins are a standard 1-inch on all sides. Note the narrower, 2-inch side margins for the abstract, table of contents, and acknowledgement pages.
- Typeface is 12-point Times New Roman or its equivalent.
- Pages should be numbered, beginning with the number 1 on this page. Numbers should be bottom-centered. The abstract, table of contents, and acknowledgements pages are numbered ii through iv. There is never a number on the title page.
- Numbering should continue through the bibliography and all appendices. The exception is if an appendix is a product that was printed and numbered separately.
- Do not put line-numbers down the side of your pages, as you see here. This is done here for illustrative purposes, to aid in your own document design.
- You may choose footnotes or endnotes. Footnotes are preferred unless they are numerous or lengthy, taking significant page space. All citations, however, must conform to the Turabian style in *A Manual for Writers*.
- A quote of four lines or less should remain in your running text; a quote of five lines or more should be presented as an indented block and be single-spaced.

That’s all there is to it. Remember, your thesis project is a 40-page article. If you write 80 pages, or 60 pages, or 50 pages, you will be asked to edit and shorten your thesis.

If you have further and specific questions about style, McCormick Theological Seminary draws on the guidelines in *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th Edition, by Kate L. Turabian (copyright © 2013 by the University of Chicago).