

# **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

7/1/2025



**UNITED**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
OF THE TWIN CITIES

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# INTRODUCTION

This handbook is the authoritative reference for all policies governing the academic and community life of a student at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. The handbook also provides information on United's day-to-day procedures, institutional structures, and campus life. Information related to academic program curricula and requirements are contained in United's *Academic Catalog*. The most up-to-date versions of both the *Student Handbook* and *Academic Catalog* are available online on the United website at <https://unitedseminary.edu> as well as United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas.

Policies may be changed at any time by action of the appropriate committees and councils. Should new policies be adopted or current policies amended during the course of the year, the community will be notified via Monday Morning and by email. Individual offices may make procedural changes during the course of the year and will explain such changes as necessary by similar means. Policy and procedure changes will be published in the next semiannual edition of the handbook.

The Dean of the Seminary can address questions or concerns about the academic policies and procedures outlined here. Questions or concerns about policies and procedures in other areas of life at United should be directed to the relevant administrative office.

The Student Handbook is published twice annually—in January and July—by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Seminary. Your comments and suggestions are always appreciated.

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# United's Mission, Vision and Values

## Our Mission

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities prepares innovative and compassionate leaders for the equipping of churches, other faith communities, and society toward justice and peace.

## Our Vision

United will be recognized as a progressive Christian seminary that engages its multifaith world respectfully to create a beloved community both within the seminary and beyond.

## Our Values

United values:

### ***Community***

- **Building upon its heritage** as a seminary of the United Church of Christ
- **Ecumenical engagement** as an expression of the unity of the church
- **Interreligious engagement** that embraces religious diversity
- **Intercultural engagement** that appreciates a multiplicity of lived experiences

### ***Commitment to Intersectional Justice***

- **Racial justice** that dismantles every aspect of white supremacy
- **Sexual and gender justice** that affirms and values every person
- **Eco-justice** that cares deeply for all living beings and our planet
- **Economic justice** that builds sustainability and wholeness for all

### ***Creativity and Curiosity***

- **Rigorous academic studies** as an expression of the human spirit
- **Formative practices** that shape spiritual, ecclesial, and community leaders
- **Integration of arts and theology** that awakens imagination and intellect
- **Public witness** for the common good

# ADMISSIONS

## Application Deadlines

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis throughout the year. Final application deadlines for each term are as follows:

Fall term: **July 1**

Spring term: **December 1**

The Admissions office structures its recruitment efforts to encourage applications for fall term (the most popular term of enrollment) by **May 1**. This allows incoming students to be eligible to receive information about—and thereby apply for—the maximum amount of financial aid available.

## Criteria for Admissions

### Master of Arts Degree Applicants

Applicants for the Master of Arts degree are expected to meet the following criteria:

1. is a graduate of a regionally accredited undergraduate institution with a B.A. or a B.S. degree;
2. possesses a grade point average for the B.A. or B.S. degree of at least 3.0 on a scale where A = 4.00;\*
3. demonstrates strong analytical and reflective thinking and writing skills; and
4. expresses vocational and academic goals that are compatible with the vision and mission of United.

There are no limits to admission based on religious affiliation, age, race, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, or physical ability or condition.

\* The Director of Admissions reserves the right to consider applicants with grade point averages lower than 3.0.

### Master of Arts in Leadership, Master of Arts in Ministry, and Master of Divinity Degree Applicants

Applicants for Master of Arts in Leadership, Master of Arts in Ministry, and Master of Divinity are expected to meet the following criteria:

1. is a graduate of a regionally accredited undergraduate institution with a B.A. or a B.S. degree;\*
2. possesses a grade point average for the B.A. or B.S. degree of at least 2.75 on a scale where A = 4.0;†
3. demonstrates strong analytical and reflective thinking and writing skills; and
4. expresses vocational and academic goals that are compatible with the vision and mission of United.

There are no limits to admission based on religious affiliation, age, race, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, or physical ability or condition.

\* MAL, MAM and MDiv degree applicants who cannot submit an official transcript from an undergraduate institution showing an imminent or completed degree but demonstrate readiness for graduate level work may be considered for admission. The applicant **must** submit an additional statement indicating life



experiences, skills, and other education received that has prepared them to succeed in a graduate education environment.

A bachelor's degree from a college or university that is accredited by a member of CHEA ([www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)) is required by BCCI ([bcciprofessionalchaplains.org](http://bcciprofessionalchaplains.org)) for certification as a board certified chaplain or associate certified chaplain.

† The Director of Admissions reserves the right to consider applicants with grade point averages lower than 2.75.

## **Doctor of Ministry Degree Applicants**

Applicants for the Doctor of Ministry degree are expected to meet the following criteria:

1. is a graduate of a regionally accredited undergraduate institution with a B.A. or B.S. degree;
2. completed an ATS-accredited MDiv degree or equivalent\*;
3. possesses a grade point average for the MDiv degree of at least 3.0 on a scale where A = 4.0;†
4. has significant ministerial experience that enables the applicant to engage as a ministry peer with other students in the DMin program; and
5. expresses dissertation/project proposal goals that are compatible with the vision and mission of United.

There are no limits to admission based on religious affiliation, age, race, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, or physical abilities or conditions.

\* Applicants who have not completed an MDiv degree from an ATS-accredited institution but have completed an accredited master's degree or its educational equivalent in an area related to their ministry setting or vocational calling may still be considered for conditional acceptance to the Doctor of Ministry program if they are able to demonstrate competency equivalent to the MDiv degree in each of the following areas:

1. the ability to thoughtfully interpret scripture and the theological tradition of one's ministry context,
2. the capacity to understand and adapt one's ministry to the cultural context,
3. a basic self-understanding of one's ministerial identity and vocational calling, and
4. a readiness to engage in ongoing personal and spiritual formation for one's ministry.

Applicants conditionally admitted to the DMin program must complete additional master's coursework as determined by the Dean of the Seminary in order to gain full admission to the program.

† The Director of Admissions reserves the right to consider applicants with grade point averages lower than 3.0.

## **Certificate and Non-Degree Status Applicants**

Applicants for certificate and non-degree status applicants are expected to meet the following criteria:

1. is a graduate of a regionally accredited undergraduate institution with a B.A. or a B.S. degree\*;
2. demonstrates strong analytical and reflective thinking and writing skills; and
3. expresses vocational and academic goals that are compatible with the vision and mission of United.

There are no limits to admission based on religious affiliation, age, race, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, or physical ability or condition.

\* Certificate applicants who cannot submit an official transcript from an undergraduate institution showing an imminent or completed degree but demonstrate readiness for graduate level work may be considered for admission. The applicant must submit an additional statement indicating life experiences, skills, and other education received that has prepared them to succeed in a graduate education environment.

## Minnesota Department of Health Immunization Record

Except for specific exemptions, all students born after 1956 must provide proof that they are vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, and rubella before enrollment.

## United Alum Applicants

When considering applicants to the Doctor of Ministry program who graduated from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities within five years of the Doctor of Ministry application, the admissions office reserves the right to include materials from the applicant's existing student records at United.

The admissions office reserves the right to request additional materials or information (beyond those outlined above) in determining the fitness of an applicant for any degree, non-degree, or other educational offering.

## International Students

International students will be held to the same admission standards outlined above for their specified degree program at United. In addition, international students are required to:

- complete an interview with the Director of Enrollment Management or another member of the Admissions Committee,
- submit a letter of financial support in order to begin the visa application process in their country of residence/citizenship, and
- submit a photocopy of the front (biographical) page of a current passport.

International applicants whose first language is not English will additionally be required to submit evidence of English language proficiency. Typically, this entails official TOEFL iBT or paper-delivered test scores of 80 or higher, with at least 20 in reading and 20 in writing; or demonstration of strong use of the English language in written documents and communications with the United admissions office.

## Technology Requirements

All United students are expected to be competent in the use of computers, the Internet, email, and word processing software. United requires that all members of the United community use their seminary email addresses (example@unitedseminary.edu) for official seminary communications such as registration and financial information, and correspondence between students, faculty and staff. Students are expected to monitor their United email inbox regularly for new messages.

All students must have access to a minimum level of technology in order to access and submit required course materials online. Both residential and distance students will also need to use the Zoom videoconferencing tool to complete at least some of their course requirements. Students are therefore required to have the following minimum technology in a private space such as their home. Access at a public space such as a library or cafe is not adequate.

- a reliable broadband wired or wifi Internet connection with minimum 1.5 Mbps actual upload/download speed (use an online speed diagnostic tool such as <https://www.speedtest.net/> to test your connection speed; wireless 3G or 4G/LTE is not adequate)
- a Windows or Mac computer with the minimum operating system, processor, and RAM to install and run Zoom (Most computers less than 5 years old meet the processor and RAM requirements. See complete requirements link below.)
- a working built-in computer webcam or USB plug-in external webcam
- a working USB computer headset with microphone and earphones (e.g., [https://www.amazon.com/Computer-Headsets/b/ref=dp\\_bc\\_aui\\_C\\_5?ie=UTF8&node=3015405011](https://www.amazon.com/Computer-Headsets/b/ref=dp_bc_aui_C_5?ie=UTF8&node=3015405011))

Distance students lodging in the Twin Cities for on-campus class sessions must ensure that they can meet the above requirements off-campus in case a weather emergency closes the campus and a class session is held via Zoom.

The complete requirements for using Zoom, including acceptable operating systems and devices is at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-System-Requirements-for-PC-Mac-and-Linux>

## Testing

Applicants may be asked to take designated tests or provide additional information before being admitted. Admissions testing materials become part of the student's permanent file and are available to the Dean of the Seminary, the Director of Admissions, and the applicant.

## Constituent Elements of a Completed Application for Admission

### Master's Degree Programs

Application details are located on the Application Process page of the United website:

1. Online application form
2. Official academic transcripts from the applicant's undergraduate degree-granting institution and from all previous graduate work
3. Résumé/CV
4. Personal Statement (1–2 pages) answering the following questions:
  - a. What has led you to apply to United now?
  - b. What are your hopes/goals in pursuing graduate theological education?
  - c. How do you plan to maintain or improve your health (spiritual, financial, physical, psychological, spiritual) during seminary?
  - d. (For MDiv students only) How are you currently connected with the religious community you hope to serve following the completion of your Master of Divinity degree?
  - e. (For MA students only) Provide a brief sketch of the idea or ideas you would like to pursue in your graduate thesis.
  - f. (For MAL students only) Provide a brief explanation of the context in which you plan to work/seek work following graduation.
5. Two letters of reference (it is understood that the references will speak to the applicant's academic, vocational, and/or spiritual/personal readiness for graduate theological education)  
References can be from:
  - a. an employer or professor;
  - b. a spiritual/religious mentor; or
  - c. a professor from undergraduate or graduate work.

### Doctor of Ministry Degree Programs

Application details are located on the Application Process page of the United website:

1. Online application form
2. Official academic transcripts from the applicant's undergraduate degree-granting institution and from all previous graduate work

3. Résumé/CV
4. Statement of Purpose (3-4 pages) answering the following questions:
  - a. Why is United well-suited to your doctor of ministry project?
  - b. How, and with whom, do you envision collaborating on your dissertation/project on United's faculty?
  - c. Provide a half- to one-page description of the project you envision
5. Two letters of reference from the following persons:
  - a. a professional or ministerial colleague/supervisor;
  - b. a lay person/client with whom you have worked; and
  - c. a professor/mentor/advisor who knows the applicant's work.

Additional application items may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Admissions interview
2. Pre-admission vocational counseling
3. Additional written materials relating to the life experiences and readiness of the applicant for graduate theological education (see description above for students applying to United's MAL/MDiv degrees without an undergraduate degree)

### **Non-Degree Status**

1. Online application form
2. Official academic transcripts from the applicant's undergraduate degree-granting institution and from all previous graduate work
3. Résumé/CV
4. Statement of Study (1-2 pages), addressing intentions for studying at United as a non-degree student, and potential interest in a particular degree program (if applicable)

### **International Students**

In addition to the required materials outlined in the specified degree program above, international students whose first language is not English must submit the following additional documentation:

1. Evidence of English language proficiency (Typically, this entails official TOEFL iBT or paper-delivered test scores of 80 or higher, with at least 20 in reading and 20 in writing; or demonstration of strong use of the English language in written documents and communications with the United admissions office.);
2. letter of financial support (documentation provided on United's website and regularly updated by the Registrar in order to begin the visa application process in their country of residence/citizenship; and
3. photocopy of the front (biographical) page of a current passport.

### **Cost of Enrollment**

Annual student costs for full-time enrollment in a United degree program are listed below. Letters of financial support will only be accepted as valid if they stipulate covering **all** costs associated with a United degree program.

	<i>Master's (27 credits/year)</i>	<i>DMin (24 credits/year)</i>
Tuition (\$780 per credit)	\$21,060	\$18,720
Books (maximum \$75 per credit)	\$2,025	\$1,800
Cost of Living (12 months)	\$30,105	\$30,105
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$53,190</b>	<b>\$50,625</b>

## Admissions Procedure

Admission to a degree program or non-degree status is based on a review of the applicant's application materials and written and verbal communications between United staff, faculty, and the applicant. Applicants are informed of the outcome of their application—whether approved or denied—by email from the Director of Admissions. Copies of the admissions letter are provided to the Financial Aid Office and the Registrar.

## Admissions Decisions

The Director of Enrollment Management, in conjunction with the Admissions Committee, is empowered by the Academic Council to make admission decisions based on application materials received in the applicant's file and communications with the applicant (both written and in-person).

The Admissions Committee consists of the Director of Admissions, the Dean, and two faculty representatives appointed to the committee on an annual basis by the Academic Council. The Admissions Committee reserves the right to special considerations and/or exceptions to the admissions criteria and the following policies on a case-by-case basis, as long as special considerations and/or exceptions are noted in writing and included in the applicant's file.

## Conditional Admission

If an applicant has on file most of the necessary application materials, that applicant may be considered for conditional admission to register for courses the first term after matriculation. Students admitted conditionally will have a registration hold placed on their account for the subsequent academic term until all application materials are received and reviewed.

The Director of Enrollment Management is empowered by the Academic Council via the Admissions Committee to place conditions on admission offers as is appropriate to encourage the best chance of successful completion of a degree program by an applicant. Conditions on admission offers will be stipulated in writing in the applicant's letter of acceptance.

## Enrollment Agreement

Applicants approved for admission or conditional admission shall complete and submit an Enrollment Agreement prior to the start of the first term in which they register for courses. The Enrollment Agreement form can be accessed from United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas, as well as United's public website at <https://unitedseminary.edu>. Newly admitted students will be unable to access the Canvas course for any of their courses until they submit the agreement.

## Deferring Enrollment

Applicants accepted to any degree program may choose to defer their enrollment up to a year beyond the academic term for which they were granted admission. The admissions office will retain their application materials, either until a full academic year has passed or until their first academic term of enrollment, whichever comes first.

## **Required Background Checks**

United is a seminary that educates students for transformation to be effective spiritual leaders. As such, United upholds standards of character and ethics for our students. The seminary therefore conducts a criminal background check for each admitted student who has also applied for enrollment in a degree program, as well as prior to any contextual education placement.

It is common for schools, including seminaries, to require background checks of students prior to enrollment in a degree program. While seminaries are not necessarily employing their students, seminaries train and educate students with a view to future employment in a variety of ministry, chaplaincy, and non-profit settings and for a variety of licensure and ordination paths, depending on the students' vocational direction and denominational context. Furthermore, seminary students may engage in a variety of activities and experiences, including contextual education (e.g. internships), which necessitate due diligence on the part of the seminary.

United will not necessarily deny a student's enrollment or placement on the basis of past criminal behavior. Considerations in determining a student's enrollment may include the severity of a criminal conviction, the context within which or time-frame within which the offense and conviction occurred, and an explanation by the applicant regarding how their desire to earn a degree reflects their path forward in life and in their vocational goals.

### **Prior to Matriculation**

The Dean's Office shall oversee, and the Registrar shall order a background check on each student admitted to the seminary who has also applied for enrollment in a degree program. The background check includes the National Criminal Database Search, National Sex Offender Registry Search (SOR), 7-year County Criminal Check, and Global Watch List. United contracts with a third party to conduct the background checks. United and the third party comply with federal and state laws for conducting background checks.

Applicants whose background check reveals a criminal conviction that is in conflict with the Seminary's Personal Qualities for Leadership in Communities of Faith (located in the Student Handbook) or reveals false or misleading information in the applicant's application materials may be denied enrollment in a degree program. The Admissions Committee shall make the decision whether the findings of an applicant's background check disqualify the applicant from enrollment. The committee may request additional information and documents from the applicant and potentially a personal interview with the applicant to assist in coming to a decision. If the applicant's enrollment is denied by the committee solely based on the results of the background check, the applicant may submit a written appeal to the Dean of the Seminary, who may confer with faculty and others in making a final decision. Students denied enrollment in a degree program are still permitted to enroll in United courses as a non-degree student.

The seminary shall counsel students accepted for enrollment in a degree program whose background check reveals activity that may prevent them from a contextual education placement.

### **Prior to Contextual Education Placement**

The Dean's Office shall oversee, and the Registrar shall order an additional follow-up background check on enrolled students prior to their contextual education placement. If the check reveals a criminal conviction since the student's enrollment that is in conflict with the Seminary's Personal Qualities for Leadership in Communities of Faith, the Dean may deny the student's participation in any or all contextual education sites. United will inform all contextual education placement sites to which each student has applied whether the student has successfully passed the seminary's background check process.

### **Eligibility for Future Certifications and Placements**

Although negative findings on a background check may not prevent an applicant's enrollment in a degree program or participation in a contextual education placement at United, students should be aware that

these findings may disallow certain external certifications or employment placements, should the potential employer or certifying body require and utilize their own background checks.

## **Special Policies**

### **Non-Degree Status at the Master's Level**

Non-degree status is granted for one of the following reasons:

- The applicant does not desire degree candidacy.
- The applicant has not finished the admissions procedure by the time the academic term begins.

Students may transfer up to twelve credits from courses taken as a non-degree student at United within the two years preceding their admission to the degree program. The student must complete the degree program within the statute of limitations from the time they are officially admitted to degree candidacy.

### **Applicants with Previous Graduate Degrees**

Applicants with other master's or doctoral degrees may ask for an assessment by the Registrar studies of competence previously acquired in an academic setting with a view toward possible petition for reduction of the work necessary at United for the desired degree.

- A person with a previous master's or doctoral degree in an area of religious study may transfer up to one-half of those courses from the previous graduate degree. A person with such a prior degree must complete at least twenty-four (24) credits of course work at United for the MDiv degree, at least twelve (12) credits at United for the MA, and at least sixteen (16) credits at United for the MAL.
- A person with previous master or doctoral study in an area other than religious studies may transfer up to nine (9) semester hours from the prior graduate study if they are relevant to the person's program of study.

### **Students Admitted without Baccalaureate Degrees**

A limited number of students not holding a baccalaureate degree may be admitted into the Master of Divinity or Master of Arts degree programs. These persons must possess the knowledge and readiness to succeed generally associated with persons who hold the baccalaureate degree. These students must also have significant life experience that has prepared them for theological study at the graduate level.

### **Code of Conduct for Seminary Admissions Staff**

In compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's policies on recruiting and admitting students, the following is United's Admissions Office Code of Conduct. All staff and faculty involved in talking with and recruiting prospective students are subject to these guidelines:

1. The institution treats students ethically, respectfully and professionally in the marketing, recruiting and admissions process so that students can make an informed enrollment decision without being subjected to high-pressure tactics.
2. Information provided to prospective students in the recruiting and admissions process is accurate, complete and up-to-date and is provided to all prospective students without any requirement that such students provide contact information to receive basic information about the institution.
3. The institution promptly honors any request from prospective students to remove their name from phone, email or other contact lists.
4. Prior to enrollment, the institution should ensure that the student has had sufficient time to review the institution's policies and procedures, to understand the amount of federal, state and institutional financial aid the student is eligible to receive, and to learn how many credits, if any, will transfer and whether they will be applied to requirements of the degree.

5. All admissions staff are familiar with the full [Recruiting, Admissions and Related Institutional Practices](#) published by the Higher Learning Commission, and will review and discuss this information on an annual basis and whenever a new staff member begins.



# ACADEMICS

## Concentration in Degree Program

*Concentration* is the term used to designate a particular emphasis of courses within the student's degree program. Degree concentrations make it possible for students to meet a variety of specific educational goals and interests, including personal or professional enrichment and preparation for doctoral studies. The current *Academic Catalog*, which can be accessed from United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas, lists the learning outcomes and graduation requirements for each degree program concentration. A concentration will be noted on the student's transcript if the student requests this in writing to the Registrar.

## Transfer Course Credit, Advanced Standing, and Concurrent Enrollment

Students applying to United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities may present transcripts or other documentation of previous academic work for review by the Registrar prior to or at the time of admission. The Registrar, in consultation with the Dean of the Seminary, will review the documentation and will present an articulation of the transfer and/or advanced standing course credits being offered to the applicant.

### Transfer Course Credit

Graduate level course credits earned at an institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools Commission on Accrediting or a regional educational commission for which the student has earned a grade of 2.70 (B–) or better—or granted an exception in specifically validated circumstances by the Dean of the Seminary—may be accepted toward completion of a United degree.

Course credits from another institution that did not count towards a completed degree may be applied to a maximum of two-thirds of the required course credits for a United degree. Transfer course credits that counted towards a completed degree at another institution may be applied to a maximum of one-half of the required course credits for a United degree. Credits from United courses that count towards a United degree, either completed or in progress, may be applied to a maximum of two-thirds of the required course credits for a second United degree. In any combination of cases, at least one-third of the required course credits for a United degree must be completed at United and must be applied exclusively to that degree.

Transfer credits from another institution shall only be accepted towards a United degree for courses completed no more than seven years prior to enrollment in a United degree program. Credits from degree courses that a student completed at United prior to enrollment in a degree program shall be automatically accepted with no age limit prior to enrollment, but these courses shall be reviewed as needed to determine applicability to current degree and concentration course requirements.

### Network of ATS Accredited Schools

All graduate courses offered by the member institutions of a network of schools accredited by the Association of Theological Schools are pre-approved for transfer credit to United. Since the list of network member schools changes periodically, the student must contact the Registrar to confirm which schools are current members of the network. The student must receive approval from United's Registrar for a network school course to substitute for a required United program course. Any other completed network school course credits will be transferred to United as elective credit. The student must contact the Registrar of the network partner school to register for the course. To receive United credit for the course,

the student must submit to United's Registrar a transcript from the partner school that includes the completed course.

### **Advanced Standing**

The Registrar or Dean of the Seminary may determine that previous coursework that does not meet the qualifications for transfer credit is sufficient to be accepted as advanced standing credit towards the completion of a United master's degree. Advanced standing credit may be applied to a maximum of one-third of the required course credits for a United master's degree. A combination of transfer course credit and advanced standing credit may be applied to a maximum of two-thirds of the required course credits for a United degree. In any combination of cases, at least one-third of the required course credits for a United degree must be completed at United.

#### ***Damascus Project***

Graduates of the Damascus Project (the Wisconsin Conference UCC Lay Academy) who are admitted to master's degree programs at the seminary will be granted advanced standing toward their degree based on their Lay Academy work as follows: graduates of Lay Academy 1 and 2 will be granted six (6) elective credits in general theological studies; graduates of Lay Academy 1-3 will be granted six (6) elective credits in general theological studies and three (3) additional credits in leadership; graduates of Lay Academy 1-4 will be granted six (6) elective credits in general theological studies, three (3) additional credits in leadership; and (3) additional credits in the practices of ministry.

#### ***Hamline University***

Students who have earned a B.A. or B.S. major or minor in Religion or Social Justice from Hamline University in St. Paul are eligible for advanced standing at United with credit for up to 18 credits in the MDiv and 9 credits in the MA or MAL degree. The makeup of these credits will be determined by United's Registrar or Dean.

#### ***Other Undergraduate Institutions***

Graduates of other regionally accredited undergraduate institutions who have earned a B.A. or B.S. major or minor in Religion or Social Justice (or closely related majors/minors) may be eligible for advanced standing under the same terms as Hamline University students at the discretion of the Registrar or the Dean of the Seminary.

### **Combining Transfer and Advanced Standing Credits**

Students may combine transfer and advanced standing credits but are still subject to a maximum of 48 total credits towards an MDiv, 32 credits towards an MAL, 24 credits towards an MA or MAM, and 16 credits towards a DMin degree.

### **DMin Transfer Credits from Leadership Center for Social Justice Program**

Graduates of United's Leadership Center for Social Justice (LCSJ) Program are eligible to be awarded up to eight elective credits towards a United DMin degree for completing the program, equivalent to two 4-credit DMin elective courses. A LCSJ graduate enrolled in a DMin concentration that has two elective courses among the course requirements may apply all eight of their LCSJ credits towards both elective courses. A LCSJ graduate enrolled in a DMin concentration that has only one elective course among the course requirements may only apply four of their LCSJ credits towards the one elective course. The student shall pay the current tuition fee for each LCSJ credit they choose to apply towards their DMin degree.

### **Concurrent Enrollment at Another Institution**

There are several situations where a United student may wish to complete a course at another institution during their degree program. Concurrent enrollment courses are subject to the same qualifications and limits as any other transfer courses.

### ***Denomination Specific Courses***

Students may need to complete one or two courses at another Association of Theological Schools accredited seminary to complete specific denominational requirements. Students may enroll as non-degree students at another seminary, complete these courses, and transfer them to United in consultation with the Registrar

### ***Consortium of Theological Schools***

See the “Cross-Registration at Consortium Schools” section of the *Student Handbook*.

### ***Vocation Specific Courses***

Students may need a non-theological course due to a unique vocational interest. Students may be able to apply a graduate course taken at a regionally accredited institution to their degree, as an elective, in consultation with the Registrar.

## **Academic Calendar**

United has three academic terms each year: fall, spring and summer. Symposium/Reading Week breaks are scheduled at midpoints in the academic terms, in which regular classes do not meet. Classes will not be held on the following special dates:

- Labor Day;
- Thursday and Friday of Thanksgiving week;
- Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday;
- The week between Palm Sunday and Easter;
- Memorial Day;
- Juneteenth Holiday; and
- Independence Day Holiday.

International students must contact the Registrar prior to any travel outside of the U.S. to ensure that they meet Department of Homeland Security requirements.

The current Academic Calendar can be found in the current *Academic Catalog* and via United’s Canvas website (<https://unitedseminary.instructure.com/>).

## **Academic Advising**

Upon admission to a degree program, a faculty advisor is assigned to each student. The role of the advisor is to aid the student in navigating their career at United and be a resource for questions and guidance. The faculty advisor will aid students in planning a program of study and advise the student in the progress of that plan. A student’s faculty advisor might or might not also be their program director, who is available to assist students with questions more specific to their degree concentration.

Students should meet with their advisors at least twice per year—once before the start of fall term and once before the start of spring term. Faculty advisors are available by appointment for consultation on a variety of academic concerns. A conversation with one’s advisor should be the first step in dealing with unusual academic situations. Students are encouraged to take initiative in making appointments to meet with their advisor.

If a student’s advisor goes on sabbatical, the Dean of the Seminary will assign a temporary advisor for the student.

## Course Substitution

In rare cases, a student may substitute a course that is required for their degree or concentration program with another United course that better meets their vocational needs. To pursue approval for the substitution, the student must submit to the Registrar the completed online Registrar Form located on the Student Resources, available through Canvas, indicating their request for the substitution. The form must be accompanied by a written proposal arguing how the proposed substitution better meets the student's vocational needs and is consistent with the intended learning outcomes for the degree or concentration. The Registrar shall consult with the Dean—and faculty as needed—in determining whether to approve the request.

## Exception to Course Prerequisites/Corequisites

A student may petition the seminary to enroll in a course with prerequisites before completing those prerequisites. The student seeking this exception must complete and submit the Course prerequisite exception section of the Registrar Form located on the Student Resources page, available through Canvas, including a description of their knowledge and experience that demonstrates sufficient preparation for success in the course. The request shall be submitted to Academic Council for consideration at its next scheduled monthly meeting. Approval of this exception does not exempt the student from completing any prerequisite courses that are required for completion of the student's academic program.

## Students with Disabilities

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities is committed to providing equal access to a graduate theological education for qualified admitted and enrolled students with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This commitment is consistent with legal requirements including ADA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Minnesota State Statute §135A.163. The seminary's goal is to provide appropriate and reasonable academic accommodation to students who have a documented disability that materially limits one or more major life activities, have a record of such an impairment, or are regarded as having such an impairment.

All students have the right to equal access to courses, programs, services and activities essential to completion of the educational program for which they have enrolled; receive reasonable accommodation as defined under the law; and file a complaint under the seminary's standard policies for handling student complaints. The seminary is responsible for providing information on available services, responding in a timely way to requests for reasonable accommodation, and maintaining confidentiality of all information pertaining to requests for accommodation in accordance with applicable requirements.

Examples of reasonable accommodations include: access to class recordings, audio captioning and transcripts of lectures and class meetings, basic speech-to-text software, digital text sources compatible with adaptive software (e.g., text-to-speech), dyslexia-friendly fonts, verbal descriptions of visual content, modified classroom seating, additional or longer class breaks, reduced on-camera time during Zoom class, modified class participation requirements, opportunity to complete make-up work for a missed class, request limited additional time to complete an assignment, additional time to complete an exam, and a minimal distraction exam environment.

The steps for receiving an accommodation for a documented disability are as follows:

1. The student completes and submits the online Disability Accommodation Request Form from United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas, as soon as possible after admission to the seminary or the onset of the disability.
2. The student submits to the Dean's Office sufficient and current documentation of the nature of the disability and its impact in an academic setting. The documentation must come from an appropriate licensed professional. Any costs incurred for testing and diagnosis of a disability are the responsibility of the student. The Dean may request additional documentation to better

determine the student's specific needs. The Seminary reserves the right to conduct its own independent evaluation at its own expense.

3. The Dean schedules a meeting with the student to discuss their specific needs and determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations. The Dean may also consult with faculty members as part of the determination process.
4. The Dean sends a letter to the student specifying the disability that warrants accommodations as well as the specific accommodations that the seminary will provide.
5. At the start of each term, the Dean's Office notifies the student's professors of the student's approved accommodations. Each professor will provide accommodations to the student as is appropriate and reasonable for the specific course. If a professor cannot provide an accommodation because it would fundamentally alter the nature of that course or would place an undue workload burden on the professor, the professor will notify the student, detailing why the accommodation cannot be provided.

The seminary has the right to deny a request for an accommodation if the documentation does not warrant the accommodation requested. Students who present a need for a modification of a course activity without adequate documentation of a disability may negotiate the modification with an individual professor if it does not conflict with the course goals and does not place an undue burden on the professor.

The seminary has the right to deny a request for an accommodation that would fundamentally alter the nature of an activity, course or program or pose an undue financial or administrative burden on the seminary. Receiving services or accommodations at another institution does not necessarily mean that United will conclude that the student is disabled for purposes of the ADA and/or agree to provide the student with the same services or accommodations received at the other institution.

A student may appeal the determination by the Dean of the accommodations that the Seminary will provide by submitting a letter to the Director of Student Services that explains the reasons why the accommodations offered are not sufficient for the student's academic success as well as lists the specific additional reasonable accommodations the student is requesting. The letter will be forwarded to the Seminary's Leadership Team, composed of the President, Dean, Vice President for Finance and Administration, and Vice President for Advancement. The Leadership Team will make the final determination of which of the requested accommodations the Seminary will provide.

The student is responsible for notifying the Dean of the Seminary if any difficulties arise with the accommodations provided or if there is a change in the nature of the disability or accommodation required. The Dean may request additional sufficient documentation of any accommodation changes.

## **Accommodation for English Language Learners**

Students who are identified by the seminary as English language learners are allowed 50% additional time past the time normally allowed to complete in-class quizzes and exams and one additional week past the stated due date to submit papers and other written assignments without penalty. Students will receive an automatic course extension for any assignments due the last week of the term to allow for this accommodation. Students must submit a written request for English language learner status to the Dean of the Seminary and receive approval by the Dean to receive this accommodation.

## **Title IX Training**

All new students are required to complete United's online Title IX training during their first academic term of enrollment. At the start of their first academic term, students will receive an email that provides information on accessing the training. New students will be unable to register for courses their second academic term until the training is completed. Contact United's Title IX Coordinator for questions about the training.

# Enrollment

## Continuous Enrollment Requirement

Matriculated students must be continuously enrolled in at least one degree course at United each fall, spring and summer term from the time of matriculation through graduation, with the following exceptions.

1. Students with an approved leave of absence are not required to enroll in courses for the academic term(s) the leave is in effect. See the “Leave of Absence” section of this *Student Handbook* for more information.
2. Master’s students who complete 18 credit hours of coursework between the fall and spring terms of the same academic year are not required to enroll in courses for the summer term of that academic year. DMin students who complete 16 credit hours of coursework between the fall and spring terms of the same academic year are not required to enroll in courses for the summer term of that year.
3. Master’s students participating in a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) placement that extends across two academic terms are not required to enroll in courses during the second term of the CPE placement.
4. If a course is not offered during the summer term that fulfills the student’s degree requirements, the student does not need to take a Leave of Absence for that term as long as they pre-register for the following fall term.
5. Students completing United degree requirements through study at another seminary or graduate school are not required to enroll in United courses during the term(s) that they are enrolled in coursework at the other institution.

International students must contact the Registrar prior to exercising any of these exceptions to ensure that they meet additional Department of Homeland Security requirements.

A matriculated student who is not enrolled in any courses and does not meet any of the above exceptions is subject to administrative withdrawal from the seminary. See the “Withdrawal” section of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

Exercising one of the allowed exceptions to the continuous enrollment requirement may still impact students’ financial aid status. See the “Financial Aid” section of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

## Enrollment Status

A student’s full-time or half-time enrollment status is based on the number of enrolled credit hours of coursework each academic term. To best ensure successful learning and course completion, students are strongly discouraged from registering for more than 12 master’s credit hours of coursework or 8 DMin credit hours of coursework per academic term.

### *Full-Time Enrollment*

Full-time enrollment ensures completion of a degree program within United’s defined time frame for full-time study.

For MA, MAL and MAM degree students, full-time enrollment is defined as enrollment in six (6) or more credit hours of coursework each academic term—fall, spring and summer.

For MDiv degree students, full-time enrollment is defined as enrollment in nine (9) or more credit hours of coursework each academic term—fall, spring and summer.

For DMin degree students, full-time enrollment is defined as enrollment in eight (8) credit hours of coursework each academic term—fall, spring and summer.

### *Half-Time Enrollment*

Half-time enrollment ensures completion of a degree program within the maximum time frame allowed for completing the degree. See the *Academic Catalog* for the completion requirements for each degree program. A minimum of half-time enrollment is also required for eligibility to receive financial aid.

For MA, MAL and MAM degree students, half-time enrollment is defined as enrollment in at least three (3) credit hours of coursework each academic term—fall, spring and summer.

For MDiv degree students, half-time enrollment is defined as enrollment in at least 4.5 credit hours of coursework each academic term—fall, spring and summer. MDiv students may, however, submit a petition to the Registrar to enroll in only three (3) credit hours for a specific academic term and retain their institutional (such as need based) aid for the term. This exception may only be granted up to a maximum of six (6) terms during the course of a student's MDiv degree program.

For DMin degree students, half-time enrollment is defined as enrollment in four (4) credit hours of coursework each academic term—fall, spring and summer.

## **Course Delivery Formats**

### **Synchronous Classroom/Zoom Course**

A synchronous course is composed of twelve weekly prescheduled class meetings that span the academic term. These courses are typically held on campus, in which case there will always include a Zoom presence to allow remote students to participate online in classroom activities. Some synchronous courses may be held via Zoom only, depending on the specific needs of the course or professor. The professor in some courses that include an on-campus meeting may lead class meetings via Zoom; the course syllabus will indicate if this is the case. The time blocks for synchronous course class meetings are usually 9:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m., 1:30–4:45 p.m., and 5:45–9:00 p.m. Synchronous courses do not meet during Symposium Week or Reading Week in the middle of each academic term.

Participation in a synchronous course via Zoom requires access to a computer with a high speed Internet connection, ability to run the Zoom application, and a working microphone and speaker. A headset or earbuds with a microphone is strongly recommended. See the Technology Requirements section in the Admissions chapter of this *Student Handbook* for a full description of the requirements.

### **Asynchronous Online Course**

An asynchronous online course does not include any required synchronous class meetings. Students participate in each week's course activities asynchronously online. An asynchronous online course may include optional synchronous online meetings using Zoom. Participation in an asynchronous online course requires access to a computer with a high speed Internet connection. See the Technology Requirements section in the Admissions chapter of this *Student Handbook* for a full description of the requirements.

### **Flex Course**

A flex course offers both a synchronous classroom/Zoom course section and an asynchronous online course section. The curriculum for both sections is the same, but each section's interactive activities among the professor and students are tailored to best take advantage of the delivery format.

### **Hybrid Intensive Course**

A hybrid intensive course follows the asynchronous online course format described above during the twelve regular class weeks, and includes a required all-day on-campus intensive classroom experience Monday through Friday during the Reading Week break between Weeks 6 and 7.

## Credit Hours Definition (Work Expectations)

For most United courses, one course credit hour is assigned for approximately 45 hours of total student coursework over an academic term. Thus, a 3-credit master's course typically schedules approximately 135 hours of total coursework, while a 4-credit DMin course schedules approximately 180 hours of total coursework. For master's internship, practicum and CPE courses, three course credit hours are assigned for at least 400 hours of internship or practicum experience and 30 hours of direct synchronous instruction.

Typically, one-third of total course hours is devoted to direct instruction presented or overseen by the professor such as class meetings and online discussion forums, and two-thirds of course hours are dedicated to assigned coursework outside of direct instruction such as reading, writing and fieldwork.

Direct instruction for synchronous classroom courses is predominantly fulfilled by weekly classroom meetings led by the professor that are scheduled in 3.25-hour time blocks. Direct instruction may also include asynchronous activities such as recorded lectures and online discussion forums. Direct instruction for asynchronous online courses can be fulfilled by a variety of activities including recorded or printed lectures and presentations with responses, online discussion forums, and virtual conferences.

The proportion of direct instruction to assigned work outside of direct instruction can vary based upon the instructional needs of the individual course or professor. The Rice University Center for Teaching Excellence Course Workload Calculator is typically used by faculty to ensure that the total expected student work hours for a course is consistent with United's expectation (<https://cte.rice.edu/workload>).

## Course Registration

Each student intending to enroll for a given academic term must follow the registration procedures provided by the Registrar's Office and complete plans for payment of tuition and fees to the Business Office.

### Course Registration Period

Each academic term has a unique course registration period, during which students may add or drop courses for the upcoming term either online via Blackbaud or by submitting a written request to the Registrar. Students may also use the same add/drop procedure to pre-register for courses scheduled for any future terms of the same academic year. Students may continue to add or drop courses for future terms during subsequent registration periods.

#### *Registration Periods*

July 1–August 1*	Fall Registration, Spring and Summer Pre-registration
November 1–December 1*	Spring Registration, Summer Pre-registration
March 1–April 1*	Summer Registration

\* See the Academic Calendar for the exact registration close date for each term.

Students will not be able to add a given course to their schedule if the course is closed.

### Course Availability

United will take all reasonable measures to ensure that all students will be able to enroll in all necessary courses to complete their degree within their expected time frame. To ensure quality instruction, however, the seminary may limit the number of student enrollments in a specific course. The seminary, therefore, cannot guarantee that all students will be able to enroll in the specific course they want at the time they want.



## **Residential and Zoom Course Section Registration**

All courses that meet weekly on campus during the academic term have both a residential section and a Zoom section. Regardless of geographic location, students may register for either the residential section or the Zoom section of a course. It is important that students register for their desired section and that they remain consistent in their mode of attendance in accordance with their registration, either as residential students or as Zoom-in students.

MDiv students seeking UMC ordination must register for the residential section of every required United degree course in order to be eligible for consideration for ordination. Courses taken through United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH, are exempt from this requirement.

See the Course Attendance section of the *Student Handbook* for the Zoom attendance policy for students enrolled in the residential section of an on-campus course.

## **Enrollment of Master's Students in DMin Courses**

Students enrolled in a master's degree program seeking to enroll in a DMin course for credit must submit a course registration request to the Registrar. The course instructor will determine whether to approve the request. If the request is approved, the Registrar will register the student in the course as a three-credit master's-level course. The course may, however, still expect more hours of coursework and greater textbook costs than a standard master's course. The student must contact the professor before the start of the term to arrange with the professor the work requirements to receive master's credit for the course.

## **Enrollment of DMin Students in Master's Courses**

Students enrolled in a DMin program seeking to enroll in an existing master's course for DMin credit must submit a course registration request to the Registrar. The course instructor must have a terminal degree in the field relevant to the course content or be approved by the Dean of the Seminary as having demonstrated equivalent experience in the field relevant to the course content. The course instructor and the Director of Advanced Studies will determine whether to approve the request. If the request is approved, the Registrar will register the student in the course as a four-credit DMin-level course. DMin students should expect an average of approximately 3–4 additional hours of coursework per week. The student must contact the course instructor before the start of the term to arrange the additional work required to receive doctoral credit for the course.

## **Adding or Dropping a Course After the Registration Period**

After the close of the course registration period, students can only add or drop classes by submitting a written request to the Registrar.

No student will be permitted to add a course after the Friday of the first week of the academic term.

Courses dropped by Friday of the second week of the academic term will be removed from the transcript. Courses dropped after Friday of the second week of the academic term and before the end of Friday of the eighth week of the academic term will reflect the grade of "W" (Withdrawn) on the transcript. After Friday of the eighth week of the academic term, not including Symposium Week or Reading Week, courses cannot be dropped without a petition to the Registrar who will make a decision in consultation with the Dean of the Seminary.

See the "Tuition Charge Reductions for Dropped Courses" section of the *Student Handbook* for the tuition charge reduction policy for courses dropped after the start of the academic term.

## **Outstanding Extensions**

Students with outstanding coursework from previous academic terms may register for subsequent academic terms as long as they have approved extensions for all outstanding coursework in no more than two courses. If a student has outstanding extensions in three or more courses, a hold will be placed on

their registration for future academic terms until they have completed the outstanding work and grades have been submitted to the Registrar's Office.

## **Course Availability/Cancellation**

While United will make every effort to provide sufficient course selections for students, United reserves the right to cancel any course in which there is insufficient enrollment. Students enrolled in canceled courses will be allowed to change their registration without an additional charge.

## **Auditing Courses**

The seminary offers the option for students to audit its academic (credit-bearing) courses for four purposes: continuing education for religious professionals holding a master's degree; expanded educational opportunities for students in its degree and certificate programs; educational opportunities for members of the public who do not wish to pursue a credential; and opportunities for students wishing to explore seminary. A student who audits a course receives neither credit nor grade for the course; therefore, the course will not earn credit towards graduation, and is not used in computing GPA.

Each course syllabus specifies whether it is open to auditors. Students not enrolled in a United degree program can request auditing a course by completing and submitting the Audit Registration Form, available from the Registrar. Students enrolled in a degree program can request auditing of a course by submitting the online Registrar Form, available on United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas. If the course audit is approved, the student must contact the professor before the start of the term to arrange with the professor the work requirements for participation in the course.

Students enrolled in a degree program may audit one course per academic term at no charge. Spouses or partners of students in a degree or diploma program, who are not themselves enrolled in seminary classes for credit, may audit one course per academic year at no charge. If partners wish to take a second course during the same year, standard fees apply.

There is a single, standard audit fee that is set in the light of the multiple purposes that auditing serves for the seminary. For students not otherwise enrolled in courses for credit, this fee is due and payable with the appropriate registration form.

## **Cross-Registration**

United students may earn United credit by cross-registering for courses at selected schools. Students normally take all core required courses for their degree and concentration at United. In order for a specific cross-registered course at another institution to be considered as a substitute for a United core required course, the student must submit to the Registrar a written petition, including a course description, requesting that the course be approved to meet a core requirement before enrolling in the course. The student may also be required to submit a copy of the course syllabus.

### ***Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools***

As United is a member of the Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools, a student enrolled in a degree program at United can enroll in a course at any other school within the consortium—Bethel Theological Seminary, Luther Seminary, The School of Theology at St. John's University, or The St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity of the University of St. Thomas. Students register for a course held at another consortium school through United's course registration process. United's Registrar will notify the other school of the registration. Tuition and fees for the course are paid to United. DMin students must make arrangements with the other school to ensure that the course is upgraded to DMin level if it is not already offered as a DMin level course.

### ***Eden Seminary***

A United student can enroll in select courses at Eden Seminary for United credit through United's course registration process. The student will be charged United's tuition rate, payable to United. Contact the Registrar for a list of courses and any maximum number of students eligible for cross-registration.

## **Articulation Agreements with Other Educational Institutions**

United has established agreements with other educational institutions to allow students to complete selected courses delivered through the other institution's faculty and resources to fulfill course requirements for specific United academic programs. Students must contact United's Registrar to request registration for courses delivered by these institutions.

If a student plans to enroll in a course at one of these institutions that is not already approved as a requirement for a degree concentration program, the student must submit to the Registrar a petition that includes the course syllabus and the name of the instructor. The petition must be approved by the Registrar prior to registering for the course for United credit.

### ***American Humanist Association (AHA) Center for Education—Washington, DC***

Students enrolled in United's MAL or MDiv in Humanist Studies program complete the following required program courses online through AHA for three United credits each.

- Humanist Worldviews: Then & Now
- Humanist Philosophies & Understandings
- Humanist Aesthetics & Practices
- Humanist Leadership: How to Run Organizations

### ***The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA)—Richardson, TX***

Students enrolled in United's MDiv in Interreligious Chaplaincy (Islamic Focus) program complete the following required program courses online through TISA for three United credits each.

- MAIS-601 Advanced Qur'anic Studies
- MAIS-602 Advanced Hadith Studies
- MAIS-615 Advanced Sirah
- MAIS-620 Evolution of Islamic Law and Usul al-Fiqh
- MAIS-631 Advanced Akhlaq and Spirituality
- MAIS-642 Islam in America

In addition, a student enrolled in any United degree program may register for a TISA course for elective United credit with the prior approval of both TISA and United's Academic Council.

### ***Luther Seminary—St. Paul, MN***

Students enrolled in United's MDiv in Lutheran Studies program complete the following required program courses at Luther Seminary for United credit.

- WO0515 Public Worship (3 Credits)
- Congregational Internship (6 Credits)
- Two Luther Seminary Electives (3 Credits each)

### ***United Theological Seminary—Dayton, OH***

Students enrolled in United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities' MDiv in Methodist Studies program may complete the following courses online at United Theological Seminary (Dayton) for three United credits each. Completion of both courses fulfills the program's United Methodist History and Polity and United Methodist History and Doctrine course requirements

- DN511 United Methodist History
- DN512 United Methodist Doctrine and Polity

### ***Wilmette Institute—Evanston, IL***

A student enrolled in any United degree program may register for a Wilmette Institute course for elective United credit upon approval of the syllabus and instructor by United's Academic Council.

## Required Course Textbooks

Students are required to obtain access to all of the required textbooks listed in the syllabus for each course in which they are enrolled. To keep course costs affordable, the total full retail cost of textbooks for each course must not exceed \$75 per credit hour (\$225 for a 3-credit master's course, \$300 for a 4-credit DMin course). Master's students enrolled in a DMin course are subject to the DMin course's textbook costs limit. Textbooks for each course are also available on loan from the Spencer Library on a reserve basis. See the Reserve Materials section of the Library chapter of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

## Special Courses of Study

### Special Studies

Special studies are intended to provide an educational experience tailored to an individual student's interests, needs or abilities, or to provide a means for integrating an external educational opportunity into a student's program at United.

Up to four special studies per student, per degree, may be contracted. United's regular faculty are expected to limit the number of special studies they accept in a given year; not all requests for special studies can therefore be honored. A student may contract with an adjunct faculty member for a special study with prior approval from the Dean of the Seminary.

It is the faculty member's responsibility to help the student shape the plan of study, develop methods and sources, and create a means of evaluation. In special studies where a student wishes to consult with someone outside the school's regular or retired faculty because of relevant expertise that person has, the United faculty member still exercises the primary responsibility for ensuring the quality of the educational experience, that is, helping the student design the course, meeting with the student during the study to discuss their learning process, and evaluating written work and other exercises that are part of the study.

It is the student's responsibility to propose the area of study, follow the plan developed in consultation with the faculty member, and realize that approximately 135 hours total time is expected for master's-level work including meetings, and approximately 180 hours for doctoral-level work including meetings.

One of the following two forms of special studies constitutes course options for elective credit:

- *Independent Study*: work in which the student or group pursues independent study (reading, other appropriate methods of investigation) on a topic or problem of interest to the student.
- *Directed Study*: work in which the student or group asks the faculty member to plan and guide the student in the study of a particular area or topic of interest to the student.

### Frequency of meeting

Special studies courses typically meet at a day and time arranged between the instructor and student, either on campus or online using videoconferencing tools such as Zoom.

- *Independent Study*: at least three 1-2-hour meetings during the academic term
- *Directed Study*: at least five 1-2-hour meetings during the academic term.

### Procedure

1. Access the Registrar Form, located on United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas.
2. Complete the form in consultation with the course instructor (a member of the regular United faculty [see above]).
3. Have the course instructor sign the registration form and forward it to the Dean of the Seminary.

4. Students electing a Special Study option must indicate this intention on the standard registration form filed with the Registrar during the regular registration periods. A completed Special Studies Elective Registration Form signed by student, course instructor, and Dean of the Seminary must be filed with the Registrar no later than one week after the beginning of the academic term for which the study is proposed. The Special Studies elective will not be recorded or charged until the completed Special Studies Elective Registration Form is filed with the Registrar.
5. The deadline for completion of the work for the Special Studies elective is the last day of the academic term in which it is registered, unless an alternative date is negotiated and recorded as part of the initial contract for the course.

### **Student Assistant Directed Study**

Eligible students have the opportunity to serve as student assistants, offering peer educational assistance to students in selected courses for elective credit. Student assistants do not replace faculty functions and roles, but rather serve to support the faculty member's methods and approaches to teaching. Thus, the student assistant policy conforms to three aspects of the pedagogy underlying the seminary's curriculum:

1. A high commitment to peer learning,
2. A recognition that the capacity to work with and in small groups is crucial to ministry, and
3. An opportunity to model methods of theological interpretation and integration.

See the "Student Assistant Directed Study" section of the Faculty Handbook for course limitations, the student selection procedure, and instructor responsibilities.

### ***Eligibility***

A student assistant shall meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Normally, the student shall have completed the course in which they serve as an assistant, and shall have received an "A" (letter grade system) or "PH" (pass/fail grade system) in the course. A DMin student serving as an assistant in a master's-level course is exempt from this criterion.
- Normally, the student shall not have received a grade below B in previous seminary work.
- The student shall not serve as an assistant during an academic term in which they are on academic probation.

### ***Functions***

Student assistants may carry out some or all of the following functions in a course as defined by the instructor:

- help develop lesson plans;
- make or assist in class presentations;
- facilitate discussion groups;
- engage in individual consultations with students about course issues;
- keep records of attendance and participation;
- consult with students about papers and/or exams for additional responses, following the instructor's evaluation and grading, to students who so request; and
- evaluate group processes with written or oral reports to students and the instructor.

### ***Prohibitions***

Student assistants are prohibited from carrying out the following functions:

- Grading of exams, papers, projects, etc.

- Exclusive leadership of plenary class sessions in absence of instructor, except in emergency situations by special permission of the Dean of the Seminary.

### ***Limitations***

Limitations on a student's assistantships are:

- no more than one per academic term,
- no more than four for credit during the degree program, and
- no more than once in any given course.

### ***Requirements for Course Credit***

To receive elective credit for the student assistant position, the student must register for the Student Assistant Directed Study course with the Registrar. The following course requirements must also be met:

1. Prepare contract with instructor including learning goals and methods,
2. Provide appropriate evidence of growth in learning as stipulated in contract.

### ***Non-Credit Student Assistant***

Students who do not have any free elective credits to spare can still assist for a course and it will show up on their transcript that they were a student assistant for the course but will not receive credits toward their degree. Student assistants who are not receiving credit will be performing more administrative help for the instructor, such as taking attendance and preparing for classes.

### ***Teacher Assistant (Paid Student Worker)***

Eligible students interested in serving as teacher assistants but do not wish to receive academic credit or perform the additional requirements for the directed study course may serve as paid student workers.

See the "Teacher Assistant" section of the *Faculty Handbook* for the approval procedure and course limitations.

### ***Eligibility***

A teacher assistant shall meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Normally, the student shall have completed the course in which they serve as an assistant, and shall have received an "A" (letter grade system) or "PH" (pass/fail grade system) in the course. A DMin student serving as an assistant in a master's-level course is exempt from this criterion.
- Normally, the student shall not have received a grade below B in previous seminary work.
- The student shall not serve as an assistant during an academic term in which they are on academic probation.

There may be cases in which a student has not taken or could not have taken that particular course (for example, a newly established course). In those cases exceptions may be made on the basis of the exceptional academic achievements of the student and capacity for excellent teacher assistant work.

### ***Function***

As with Student Assistants, teacher assistants do not replace faculty functions and roles, but rather serve to support the faculty member's methods and approaches to teaching, and also may assist with administrative tasks pertaining to the setup and functioning of the course (e.g., assisting with LMS setup and maintenance, scanning documents, helping facilitate Zoom operation during a class) and with minimal and non-subjective grading (e.g. quizzes, objective non-essay exams, discussion forum postings, etc.) and/or administration and maintenance of gradebook.

### ***Prohibitions***

Teacher assistants are prohibited from carrying out the following functions:

- grading of exams, papers, projects, etc.; and

- exclusive leadership of plenary class sessions in absence of instructor, except in emergency situations by special permission of the Dean of the Seminary.

## **International Study Courses**

Courses may be conducted under the tutelage of a United faculty member in international settings that relate to the subject of the course. All registrants shall take the course for academic credit, or audit.

Directed Study courses may be developed in consultation with a United faculty member and related to an international guided tour. These courses may be taken at any time of the year, but absence from other classes is not to exceed two weeks (14 consecutive days). When academic credit is granted, equivalent tuition will be charged.

All such enrollments must have the approval of the Dean of the Seminary, as well as the student's advisor.

## **Contextual Education**

The Contextual Education requirement of the MDiv and MAL degree programs is met through either a Contextual Education Internship or Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Internship, depending on the student's degree concentration.

Terms for a student's contextual education internship experience is individually negotiated between school, student, site, and supervisor. Students participating in an internship may receive remuneration as negotiated with the setting.

See the Social Transformation Project section of this *Student Handbook* for information on the Social Transformation Practicum contextual education experience. See the Spiritual Direction Practicum section of this *Student Handbook* for information on the Spiritual Direction Practicum contextual education experience.

### **Contextual Education Internship**

The contextual education internship component of United's MDiv degree programs and selected MAL concentrations consists of a 400-hour supervised ministry experience in a congregational, faith-based, or secular setting. Students will not be placed in their home congregation or in the congregation in which they have current membership except in extraordinary situations.

The contextual education experience builds upon and advances students' discernment as ministers and change agents in the world through practical experience in one or more real-world settings. Students apply their theological and ethical framework in relationship with others to their ministry, social transformation, religious leadership, or spiritual direction context. These internships take place in community groups, in congregations, through military service, in prisons, or in some other creative way that the student is led into service.

Contextual education interns normally serve 10- to 12-hour-per-week part-time roles in their internship settings over two terms, though the intensive option offers the opportunity to complete the internship in a single term on a more full-time basis.

#### ***Types of Settings for Contextual Education***

Students enroll in an internship experience in one or more of the following types of sites. Some options for each type of internship/practicum are listed on the Internship, Practicum, and Student Employment Site Opportunities page, linked from the Student Resources page in Canvas.

##### ***Traditional Internship/Practicum***

Internships in traditional settings such as congregations and nonprofit centers can be used to fulfill the Contextual Education requirement for an MDiv and MAL degree program.

As part of the traditional experience, the student works alongside an experienced supervisor to engage in conversation and reflection on religious leadership as well as theological and ethical reflection. Many traditional sites alternatively provide an enhanced internship experience by engaging the student in full- or part-time employment in their context. These sites also offer an on-site or off-site supervisor that acts as a conversation partner with the student.

To be considered for a traditional or enhanced internship, a potential site must submit to United a Site Application that speaks to the roles and expectations of an intern in their context. The prospective supervisor is also required to submit a current resume or CV. United also asks for the site to provide a minimum stipend to the student. A student participating in an enhanced internship will need to negotiate any salary and benefits with the site that is beyond the agreed stipend.

### *United Student Employment*

Many congregations and nonprofit organizations hire United students to serve their context in part-time and full-time capacities. These sites do not come with supervision or qualify for contextual education credits, but provide great opportunities to practice ministry and share the mission and values of United in the world. The Director of Contextual Education would still be a conversation partner with the student in negotiation and evaluation of the student's ministry in these settings.

### **Placement**

Students seeking an internship site may complete and submit an Internship Application to the Director of Contextual Education during the term prior to the start of their contextual education experience. This does not guarantee a site placement, especially for students outside of the Twin Cities Region. The student has final responsibility for securing an internship or practicum site.

The following steps must be completed prior to registration for the Contextual Education Internship course.

1. The student secures their own internship placement with support from the Director of Contextual Education.
2. If a congregational internship, the denomination regulates the requirements for the internship where applicable.
3. United approves the internship site; the denomination approves the site if applicable.
4. The site submits a completed internship agreement to United.
5. The student submits a copy of their agreement with the internship site to United.
6. The student registers for two terms of the Contextual Education Internship course, which specifies the site location.

### **Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Internship**

The CPE option for Contextual Studies involves at least 400 hours in a supervised Clinical Pastoral Education setting, often in a hospital. Prior to registration for the CPE Internship course, the student must complete the Introduction to Pastoral and Spiritual Care course, then secure their own internship placement for approval by the Dean of the Seminary. Upon completion of the internship, the Dean shall read both the student's self-assessment and the CPE supervisor's evaluation of the student.

NOTE: Applications for CPE programs are often due months before the program starts—for example, December for a start date the following summer—and many CPE programs have more applicants than open positions and are therefore competitive to get into.

Students registering for a unit of CPE through the CPE Internship course shall pay to United the tuition for the course. If the CPE unit is a requirement of the student's degree concentration program, United shall pay the CPE site registration fee up to a maximum of \$1,000. The student shall be responsible for payment to the CPE site of any registration fee amount above \$1,000. United shall not share costs for CPE units beyond that which is required for the student's degree concentration.



The student may request guidance and help with the CPE process from the designated CPE Advisor, who may be contacted through the Director of Interreligious Chaplaincy or the Dean of the Seminary.

### Contextual Studies Timelines

Task	Deadline for Participation in Spring Commencement	
	Contextual Education Internship	CPE Internship
Complete Introduction to Pastoral and Spiritual Care course	Spring of previous year	Spring of previous year
Secure your own internship placement with support from the Dean and your faculty advisor (CPE advisor supports CPE Internship)	June 1	June 1
Submit to the Dean an Internship Supervisor Agreement completed by your site supervisor	July 1	-
Secure the written approval of your internship site by the Dean	July 15	July 15
Submit to the Dean written confirmation of the approval of your internship site by your denomination, if applicable	August 1	-
Submit to the Dean a copy of your written internship agreement with your site supervisor	August 1	-
Register for the first of two internship courses	August 1	August 1
Submit completed Development Plan to internship professor	September 15	-
Register for the second of two internship courses	December 1	December 1

### Procedures for Petitions, Appeals, and/or Complaints in Contextual Studies

Petitions and/or appeals are handled for the Contextual Studies courses in the same manner as for other courses. Thus, any petitions filed should be sent to the Registrar for forwarding to the Student Review and Policy Committee. Field instructors are held accountable to the same ethical standards as instructors of other classes. Consequently, complaints should be handled in the same manner as for other courses (i.e., they should first be addressed to the course instructor, and then to the Dean of the Seminary). CPE supervisors operate by a set of nationally certified standards. For complaints against CPE supervisors, the student may either work through normal seminary procedures and/or file a complaint through channels established by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education. For CPE complaints the student should begin by making an appointment with the Dean of the Seminary.

### Prior Ministry Experience and Contextual Studies

With the exception of Clinical Pastoral Education, most prior experience in ministry will not meet expectations for the reflective engagement on ministry that occurs in the contextual studies courses. Thus, with the exception of CPE units, prior ministry experience normally will not be considered in lieu of the required contextual studies sequence.

## Spiritual Direction Practicum

The Spiritual Direction Practicum is a required contextual education experience for all Spiritual Direction concentrations—MAL, MDiv, and DMin—to supplement academic study and provide the student with the opportunity to put theory into practice and practice into theory. Internships in spiritual direction or pastoral ministry are among the possible practicum options. The practicum is completed over two or three academic terms. The practicum requires the accumulation of 80 hours engaged in direction and 40 hours in supervision. See the *Spiritual Direction Student Manual* on the United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas, for more details on practicum requirements.

### Spiritual Direction Practicum Procedure

All of the following tasks must be completed by the student in order to fulfill the Spiritual Direction Practicum graduation requirement.

1. **Complete The Art of Discernment course and Spiritual Direction/Companionship 1 course.** These courses do not have any prerequisites, but are prerequisites for enrolling in the Spiritual Direction/Companionship 2 course.
2. **Establish a session schedule with a certified spiritual director/companion.** This step must be completed before the start of the term the student is enrolled in the Spiritual Direction/Companionship 2 course. The Spiritual Direction Program Director can support the student in identifying a spiritual director/companion. The cost of individual Spiritual Direction is the responsibility of the students. Rates can range from \$60 to \$150 per hour. Students will meet with a spiritual director once per month throughout the term (at least 4 times total). It is recommended that students maintain the practice of receiving spiritual direction throughout the remainder of their program including during the Spiritual Direction Practicum.
3. **Complete the Spiritual Direction/Companionship 2 course and attend scheduled spiritual director/companion sessions.** This course is a prerequisite for registering for the Spiritual Direction Practicum 1 course.
4. **Meet with Spiritual Direction Program Director** to discuss progress in your program and discern next steps in finding a spiritual director and determine if one is ready for the Spiritual Direction Practicum.
5. **Secure a certified spiritual director/companion supervisor for the practicum.** The Spiritual Direction Program Director can support the student in identifying a supervisor.
6. **Obtain written approval from the Spiritual Direction Program Director for the student's practicum supervisor.** This step is a prerequisite to registering for the Spiritual Direction Practicum 1 course.
7. **Submit to the Spiritual Direction Program Director a copy of the student's written practicum agreement with their supervisor.** This step must be completed prior to the start of the term in which the student is enrolled in the Spiritual Direction Practicum 1 course.
8. **Complete the Spiritual Practicum 1 course.** This course is a prerequisite to registering for the Spiritual Direction Practicum 2 course. Over the course of the two practicum terms, students are required to participate in a minimum total of 40 hours of directed supervision and a minimum total of 80 hours of spiritual direction. See the "Required Practicum Hours" section below for details.
9. **Meet with Spiritual Direction Program Director** to discuss with the student their practicum status and create a plan for completing or extending their practicum.
10. **Complete the Spiritual Practicum 2 course.**
11. **Submit to the Spiritual Direction Program Director documentation of completion of the required supervision and spiritual direction hours.**
12. **Obtain a satisfactory recommendation** from the practicum supervisor.

### Spiritual Direction Practicum Timeline

Task	Deadline for Participation in
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	<b>Spring Commencement</b>
Complete the fall The Art of Discernment course and spring Spiritual Direction/Companionship 1 course	Spring term of previous year
Meet with Spiritual Direction Program Director for Discernment Conversation #2	During Spring Term
Establish a session schedule with a certified spiritual director/companion to be completed during The Art of Discernment course. Submit documentation to the instructor of the Art of Discernment course.	Early May
Complete the summer Spiritual Direction/Companionship 2 course; attend spiritual direction/companionship sessions	Summer term
Secure a certified spiritual direction/companionship supervisor for your practicum; obtain written approval of the supervisor from the Spiritual Direction Program Director.	August 15
Submit to the Spiritual Direction Program Director a copy of your written practicum agreement with your supervisor	Prior to the start of fall term
Complete the Spiritual Practicum 1 course	Fall term
Meet with Spiritual Direction Program Director for Discernment Conversation #3	Between Fall and Spring Practicum terms
Complete the Spiritual Practicum 2 course	Spring term
Meet with Spiritual Direction Program Director for final conversation before graduation or completion of certificate	April 15
Meet with Spiritual Direction Program Director to discuss practicum status and create a plan for completing or extending practicum	April 15
Submit itemized documentation to the Spiritual Direction Program Director of a minimum of 40 hours directed supervision and a minimum of 80 hours of spiritual direction	April 15

## **Required Practicum Hours**

Practicum hours are composed of directed supervision and spiritual direction practice. All practicum hours must be recorded on a single log sheet that will be submitted to the Spiritual Direction Program Director at the end of the student's practicum experience. Each log entry must indicate the category of supervision or spiritual direction conducted. Students who do not complete the minimum number of required hours within two terms will be automatically registered for the Spiritual Direction Practicum Continuation course each term that they continue work completing their practicum hours.

### ***Group Directed Supervision***

Students are required to receive a minimum of 40 hours of supervision over the course of the two practicum terms for completion of the practicum, composed of Group Supervision. In Group Supervision, students share their experiences (verbatim) of providing spiritual direction and doing spiritual listening. Group Directed Supervision is offered in the context of the Practicum course every academic term,

including summer. Each minimum two-hour group session counts as two hours towards the supervision hours requirement.

### ***Spiritual Direction***

Students are required to conduct a minimum of 80 hours of spiritual direction over the course of the two practicum terms for completion of the practicum. Spiritual direction hours are composed of a combination of categories of spiritual direction types, described below.

**Significant Conversations** are informal scheduled or unscheduled spiritual direction conversations with anyone, including friends or relatives, of any duration of time. These conversations are intended as a warm-up to formal spiritual direction sessions early in the practicum and should therefore be limited in order to devote time to the formal practice. These conversations should comprise no more than 20 of the required 80 hours.

**Situational Spiritual Direction** refers to one or two sessions with an individual of at least 45 minutes each in short-term non-profit settings including hospices, hospitals, listening houses, shelters, and retreats. Sessions shorter than 45 minutes must be counted instead as Significant Conversation hours. Situational Spiritual Direction should comprise no more than 20 of the required 80 hours.

**Group Spiritual Direction** follows a disciplined pattern of sharing, listening, and responding, which is interspersed with periods of contemplative silence, in small groups of usually four to six people. Small-group spirituality settings such as Bible studies, book discussions, or faith-sharing groups do not count towards practicum hours. Group Spiritual Direction should be no less than 90 minutes in duration. Students planning to conduct group spiritual direction as part of their internship experience should check with the instructor of the Practicum course to ensure that their sessions follow an acceptable model. Group Spiritual Direction should comprise no more than 20 of the required 80 hours.

**Long-term, One-to-One Spiritual Direction** refers to a minimum of five sessions with the same individual. This is the emphasized format to be practiced during the Spiritual Direction practicum. Fewer than five sessions with the same individual and sessions shorter than 60 minutes must be counted instead as Situational Spiritual Direction.

Up to 40 hours of combined Significant Conversations, Situational Spiritual Direction, and Group Spiritual Direction may be counted towards fulfilling the practicum hours requirement. At least 40 practicum hours must be composed of Long-Term One-to-One Spiritual Direction.

## **Tuition and Fees Payment**

The seminary has an ongoing commitment to maintain a high quality education to its students at the minimum cost possible, as well as to pursue all possible opportunities for students to receive financial aid and scholarships. It is United's goal to be as accommodating as possible with students and families in financial need. In order to sustain its educational quality for all students, however, the seminary must maintain consistent and timely collection practices. The seminary therefore requires that all new students complete the Intent to Pay form prior to the start of the first academic term that they are enrolled in courses, and that all continuing students complete the Intent to Pay form prior to the start of fall term each academic year, affirming their agreement to pay all tuition and fee payment requirements described in this *Student Handbook*.

Tuition and fees due each academic term are usually added to students' tuition account balances in Blackbaud during the first week of the term. Any financial aid awarded to students is usually deducted from their Blackbaud account balances during the second week of the term. The final tuition and fees due each term is subject to change based on any changes to students' course enrollments. Students are responsible for regularly monitoring their account balance in Blackbaud.

Payment of the entire account balance is due on the 28th day of the first month of each academic term—January, May and September. Payments may be made through Blackbaud by using a bank debit

card or by using a Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express credit card. Direct payments from a USA bank checking or savings account can be arranged by emailing [studentbilling@unitedseminary.edu](mailto:studentbilling@unitedseminary.edu). Checks made out to United Theological Seminary can be mailed to: United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, attn.: Business Office, 767 Eustis St., Suite 140, St. Paul, MN 55114. Checks or cash can be brought to the Business Office in a sealed envelope with student name and ID# clearly written on it.

If a student has not paid their tuition account balance in full by the 28th day of the first month of the term, a late payment fee will be added to their account balance. Each subsequent month that the student's account balance is not paid in full by the 28th day of the month, an additional late payment fee will be added to their account balance. Until the student's account balance is paid in full, they will not be allowed to register for courses in subsequent academic terms without the specific approval of the Registrar. Upon completion of their degree, the student will not be issued a diploma until their account balance is paid in full. An unpaid account balance may also prevent the student from obtaining an academic transcript. See the "Transcript Requests" section of this *Student Handbook* for more information.

See the current *Academic Catalog* for up-to-date tuition and fee amounts.

## Payment Plans

In lieu of paying the entire tuition account balance in full during the first month of the academic term, a student may arrange a payment plan with the Business Office that allows the student to pay their balance in partial monthly installments over the course of the term. The payment plan only covers tuition and fee charges for the current term. A payment plan fee will be added to the student's account balance each term that a payment plan is arranged. A copy of the payment plan, signed by both the student and Student Billing, will be kept on file in the Business Office.

The signed payment plan agreement, full payment plan fee, and full amount of the first month's payment plan installment are due on the 28th day of the first month of the academic term—January, May or September. The remaining three installment payments are due on the 28th day of the second, third, and fourth months of the term.

If the student has not submitted the signed payment plan agreement, full payment plan fee, and full amount of the first month's installment payment by the 28th day of the first month of the term, a late payment fee will be added to their account balance. Each subsequent month that the student has not paid in full all payments due by the 28th day of the month, an additional late payment fee will be added to their account balance. Until all payments due to date are paid in full, the student will not be allowed to register for courses in subsequent academic terms without the specific approval of the Registrar. Upon completion of their degree, the student will not be issued a diploma until their account balance is paid in full. An unpaid account balance may also prevent the student from obtaining an academic transcript. See the "Transcript Requests" section of this *Student Handbook* for more information.

See the current *Academic Catalog* for up-to-date payment plan fee amounts.

## Tuition Charge Reductions for Dropped Courses

A student who wishes to drop a course after the regular course registration period must submit written notification to the Registrar. The date the Registrar receives the required documentation is the date used for determining any applicable reduction in tuition charges due for the course. See the "Add/Drop Registration" section of the *Student Handbook* for the policy and procedures on dropping courses.

Tuition charge reductions are only applied to the portion of a student's course tuition that is the obligation of the student to pay. The tuition charge reduction schedule below also applies when a student switches from credit to audit. Please see the "Audit" section of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

- If the course is dropped before the end of Friday of the second week of the academic term, the student's tuition balance shall be reduced by the full amount charged to the student for the course.

- If the course is dropped after the end of Friday of the second week and before the end of Friday of the third week of the academic term, the student's tuition balance shall be reduced by 50% of the amount charged to the student for the course.
- If the course is dropped after the end of Friday of the third week of the academic term, the full amount charged to the student for the course shall remain on the student's tuition balance.

This tuition charge reduction policy does not apply to any non-tuition course fees including payment plan fees, late fees, NSF fees, or any fees pertaining to dropping the course. The student is responsible for payment of the full balance of these fees even if they drop the course before the drop deadline.

Students receiving Federal Unsubsidized Direct and Graduate PLUS loans who drop a course may be required to return part or all of their aid amount in addition to being responsible for payment of their tuition balance as described in this section. See the "Return of Title IV Funds (R2T4) Policy" section in the Financial Aid chapter of this *Student Handbook* for the full policy.

### **Exception for Deployed Military**

If a student must drop a course due to a military deployment at any point before the end of the academic term, the student's tuition balance will be reduced by the full amount charged to the student for the course. A copy of the activation orders or other appropriate documentation must be included with the student's submitted drop notification.

### **Tuition Charge Reduction Appeals**

Tuition charge reduction appeals are granted only in rare and extreme circumstances. To apply for an appeal, the student must complete a petition for appeal that includes a written description of their situation that justifies a tuition charge reduction as well as supporting documentation of the situation. The completed petition must be submitted to the Registrar prior to the last day of the term. The Student Review and Policy Committee will review the petition and make a decision whether to grant a tuition charge reduction.

## **Course Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all scheduled class meetings punctually. For any week in which students participate in the course asynchronously online, participation in the week's activities (e.g., forum discussion, assignment submission) is counted as attendance for that week.

Absences should normally occur only for such urgent reasons as ill health or critical emergency. Instructors should be notified of absences in advance whenever possible. Depending on the nature of the course, a student may or may not be able to negotiate with the instructor to make up for missed work. International students must contact the Registrar prior to any travel outside of the U.S. to ensure that they meet Department of Homeland Security requirements.

Excessive absences or tardiness, even for legitimate reasons, may jeopardize a student's course grade or course completion. Absences that exceed 1/3 of the total class meetings (e.g., 4 absences in a 12-week academic term) will normally result in a failing grade for a course. At the professor's discretion, excessive tardiness will count as absences. A more restrictive attendance policy stated in an individual course's syllabus supersedes the general attendance policy described here.

### ***Zoom Attendance for Students Enrolled in Residential Course Sections***

A student registered for the residential section of a course must be physically present in the classroom for each class meeting in order to be marked present for attendance. A student enrolled in the in-person section of a course may, in very rare and exceptional circumstances, attend a single class meeting via Zoom with prior approval from the instructor. The student's attendance will be marked as an allowed absence for that session.

Depending upon the proportion of students enrolled in the in-person vs. Zoom sections of a course, the professor may arrange with the students to change all course enrollments to the same section—in-person or Zoom.

### ***On-Campus Class Attendance for Students Enrolled in Zoom Course Sections***

A student registered for the Zoom section of a course may attend on-campus class meetings of the course with no penalty.

### ***Class Attendance During Inclement Weather***

If an NWS winter weather advisory or warning is active in any Twin Cities county during a class meeting, students enrolled in the in-person section of the course will make an individual decision whether they are able to attend class in person. Students enrolled in the in-person section of a course who are unable to attend class in person due to weather must attend class via Zoom or, if necessary, by phone to avoid an absence.

During a winter weather advisory or warning, in-person students should check for confirmation from their professor whether class will meet on campus or via Zoom only. If the instructor chooses to hold the class via Zoom only, all enrolled in-person students must attend class via Zoom or, if necessary, by phone to avoid an absence.

### ***Class Attendance for Asynchronous Weeks***

For class weeks in which only asynchronous work is assigned, a student submitting a completed assignment that is due that week will be marked as present for that week for attendance purposes.

### ***Zoom Behavior Expectations***

Students participating in a classroom session via Zoom are expected to observe the same respectful behavior as they would if they were physically present in the classroom. Instructors have the right to refuse the participation of Zoom-in students who fail to observe these behavior expectations and ask that the student rejoin when they are able to comply. Students who are unable to rejoin a class session due to noncompliance with behavior expectations may be marked absent.

Zoom behavior expectations include but are not limited to the following.

- Dress appropriately for class.
- Set aside a single quiet room from which to join the class for the duration of the session.
- Plan ahead to make sure there are no foreseeable potential distractions during the class session.
- Join the class several minutes before start time to allow for Zoom audio and video troubleshooting before the start of class if needed.
- Be punctual in joining the class and returning from breaks; stay until the end of class.
- Except for breaks, keep webcam video on and remain within view of the camera.
- Give whole attention to class participation for each session: do not drive during the session; do not engage in computer-based distractions such as social media; and keep eating and other personal activities to break times.

## **Live Streaming and Recorded Class Sessions**

Most of United's class meetings are offered for online or distance students via live streaming or recording for later viewing. In addition, some classes may be recorded for use by other current or future students. Students indicate their agreement to be recorded by taking the class. If a student objects to being recorded for seminary use outside of this course, either as a whole or in a particular class session, they must notify the course instructor at the beginning of the term or particular class so that alternate arrangements can be made.

## Use of Generative AI in Coursework

Unless otherwise noted, students may use generative AI (such as ChatGPT, DEET-E, etc.) to assist in the development of assignments and other coursework. Examples include the development of outlines, proofreading, and the creation of illustrations. Students may not submit an assignment entirely generated by AI, unless explicit permission to do so is given by the instructor. Students should be aware of the potential for inaccuracies and biases in AI generated content; students are responsible for the content of assignments submitted.

All use of AI, including in the development process, must be acknowledged and cited. Information on citation, including examples, can be found on the *Chicago Manual of Style* website. It is a violation of United's academic integrity policies to use generative AI tools if a) the instructor explicitly bans their use or b) the use of generative AI is not disclosed and cited appropriately.

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an important component of a students' formation for ministry leadership. All United students upon matriculation agree to adhere to this Academic Integrity policy and to the expectations outlined in the *Student Handbook* generally.

Writing papers, preparing oral and written presentations, and conducting scholarly research are an important part of seminary education. When students use the ideas or words of others, they must acknowledge their sources in accordance with a standard form for notes (footnotes, endnotes or in-line references), such as those found in Turabian: *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertation*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as follows: "Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting the words or thoughts of another writer [or person] as if they were your own ... If you quote from anything at all ... you must put quotation marks around it, or set it off from your text. If you summarize or paraphrase an author's words, you must clearly indicate where the summary or paraphrase begins and ends. In every instance you must formally acknowledge the written source from which you took the material" [From James A. W. Heffernan and John E. Lincoln, *Writing: A College Handbook* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), p. 457].

### Cheating

Additionally, the content students' submit in their name, whether in the classroom context or in assignments, must be their own intellectual property, the direct result of their own understanding, and in their own words. Cheating is defined as making use of substantive external assistance in a student's work that has not been specifically authorized by the instructor of the course in question or would not be approved by the instructor of the course if directly asked.

### Consequences of Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism and cheating are each serious acts of academic dishonesty and violations of this Academic Integrity policy. Ignorance concerning the proper citation of sources or the unauthorized use of external assistance in a student's work does not exempt the student from the consequences of academic dishonesty.

For a demonstrable and documented offense of academic dishonesty, the student may receive a grade of "F" for the assignment from the professor and/or may fail the course, depending on the weight, nature, or function of the assignment. The instructor will report the offense to the Dean. The Dean will issue a letter to the student that will be placed in the student's file. The student may also be referred to a writing tutor for further education on plagiarism, if applicable.

For a second demonstrable and documented offense, the Dean will notify the student, the professor involved, and the Registrar that the student has failed the course. For the third demonstrable and



documented offense, the student will be subject to dismissal from the seminary. The Dean will inform the student, the professor involved, and the Registrar. The progression of consequences for repeat offenses will continue throughout the student's entire degree program, not just within a single course.

If academic dishonesty is discovered to have occurred after the conclusion of a course and after the conclusion of a prior academic term, a change of grade and a potential "F" may still be assigned to that student's prior course and therefore the student's transcript would be changed to reflect the consequences of plagiarism or cheating as newly demonstrated and documented in that (now) prior course. In such cases, the professor and Dean would follow the progression of offenses and consequences listed above (first offense, second offense, third offense).

## Student Course Feedback

At the end of each academic term, all students in credit-bearing courses receive an email invitation from the Dean of the Seminary to complete a standardized online survey to provide feedback on the quality of their course experience. The surveys are completely anonymous, unless a student provides identifying information in a written response. After the instructor submits all grades for a course to the Registrar, the Dean's Office will release the results of completed evaluations for that course to the instructor. Copies of the course feedback surveys are retained in the Dean's Office.

## Grades

All course grades, including incompletes and CPs, will be available in Blackbaud by the third Monday after the last day of the term. Any errors or contested marks should be reported to the Registrar immediately. Student performance in United courses is scored using either the Letter Grade System or Pass/Fail System. An individual student may not request the pass/fail grade option for a course graded on the letter grade system below nor request the letter grade option for a course graded on the Pass/Fail grade system.

### Letter Grade System

The default grading system for courses at United is the Letter Grade System. United uses the following letter grades to designate evaluations of academic activity.

AH	Superior with Honors	Reserved for the highest level performance on course requirements, mastery of learning outcomes, and demonstration of United's values.
A	Superior	Superior performance on course requirements and mastery of learning outcomes.
A–		
B+	High Pass	Above-average performance on course requirements and mastery of learning outcomes.
B		
B–		
C+	Pass	Satisfactory performance on course requirements and mastery of learning outcomes.
C		
C–		
D+	No Pass	Unsatisfactory performance on course requirements and insufficient mastery of learning outcomes. Although credit will be awarded, the course must be retaken and earn a C– or higher to fulfill any degree or concentration course requirement. This grade will not qualify a student to be removed from academic probation.
D		
F	Failure	Incomplete to no performance on course requirements. Little to no evidence of mastery of learning outcomes. If a student receives a grade that is equivalent to a D for a course taken at one of the consortium schools, a grade of F will be entered in their United record.

I	Extension	This grade is given if a student is approved for a course extension. A grade of I is changed to the permanent grade once the work is submitted or the extension has expired. Refer to the Extensions Policy in the Student Handbook for further information.
CP	Conditional Pass	Awarded if unexpected circumstances prevent the student from completing coursework for a passing grade. Allows the student to re-register for the course in a future term at no additional cost. Granted only in rare and exceptional cases. See the "Conditional Pass" section below for more information.
W	Withdrawal	This grade is awarded if the student has withdrawn from the course after Friday of the second week of the academic term and before the end of Friday of the eighth week of the academic term. A course dropped by Friday of the second week of the academic term is not recorded on the academic transcript. This grade does not reflect the student's status at the time of the withdrawal, nor is it included in computing a grade point average.
AU	Audit	An audit is not used in computing a grade point average. An audit does not count toward a graduation credit.
TR	Transfer Credit	This grade is given for an approved course transferred in from another institution.

## Pass/Fail Grade System

Some courses at United use the Pass/Fail Grade System to evaluate student performance. Pass/Fail course grades are not included in the computation of a student's grade point average. The course descriptions in the *Academic Catalog* indicate which courses are graded using the pass/fail system. United uses the following pass/fail grades to designate evaluations of academic activity.

PH	Pass with Honors	Performance indicates the highest level of mastery of course requirements. This grade is not included in computing a grade point average. Not applicable to independent study or CPE Internship courses.
P	Pass	Performance indicates satisfactory mastery of course requirements. This grade is not included in computing a grade point average.
CP	Conditional Pass	Awarded if unexpected circumstances prevent the student from completing coursework for a passing grade. Allows the student to re-register for the course in a future term at no additional cost. Granted only in rare and exceptional cases. See the "Conditional Pass" section below for more information.
F	Fail	Insufficient evidence of course mastery at minimal graduate level. This grade is not included in computing a grade point average. If a student receives a grade that is equivalent to a D for a course taken at one of the consortium schools, a grade of F will be entered in their United record.
I	Extension	This grade is given if a student is approved for a course extension. A grade of I is changed to the permanent grade once the work is submitted or the extension has expired. Refer to the Extensions Policy in the Student Handbook for further information.

W	Withdrawal	This grade is awarded if the student has withdrawn from the course after Friday of the second week of the academic term and before the end of Friday of the eighth week of the academic term. A course dropped by Friday of the second week of the academic term is not recorded on the academic transcript. This grade does not reflect the student's status at the time of the withdrawal, nor is it included in computing a grade point average.
AU	Audit	An audit is not used in computing a grade point average. An audit does not count toward a graduation credit.
TR	Transfer Credit	This grade is given for an approved course transferred in from another institution.

## Honors Notation

The Honors notation, used with both the Letter Grade and Pass/Fail course grade options, indicates the highest mastery of a course's academic requirements. The following criteria are used in consideration of the AH/PH grade, where appropriate:

### **Standard Course**

- overall course grade of A, P, 4.0, or 98% or higher
- regular and constructive participation in class discussions or forums
- timely assignment completions and/or communication of extensions
- deep level of engagement with material in discussions
- deep level of respect and engagement with peers during discussions
- exemplary demonstration of United's values per the *Academic Catalog* including community, commitment to intersectional justice, and creativity and curiosity
- clear ability to contextualize material in real-world experiences or situations

### **Directed Study**

- overall course grade of A, P, 4.0, or 98% or higher
- demonstrates clear mastery of topic or significant learning of new topic
- exemplary demonstration of United's values per the *Academic Catalog* including community, commitment to intersectional justice, and creativity and curiosity

### **Contextual Education (except CPE)**

- regular and constructive participation in bi-weekly meetings with contextual education instructor
- demonstrate growth through the application of reading and/or other applicable material to their experience
- successful completion of the objectives presented by their site supervisor

The application of these criteria towards determination of honors is subject to faculty discretion as to what is appropriate and applicable to the particular course as well as to any approved student accommodations due to a disability. The Honors notation does not apply to independent study or CPE Internship courses. Students who receive two or more Honors grades in a single academic term will receive a commendation from the Dean's Office.

## Conditional Pass (CP)

A CP grade is awarded if unexpected circumstances prevent the student from completing coursework for a passing grade and, in the judgment of the instructor, the student's already submitted work indicates that the student would otherwise pass the course. A CP grade is granted only in rare and exceptional cases. By Monday of the last week of the academic term, the student must submit a written request for a CP grade to the instructor that includes documentation supporting the request. The request will be considered for approval at the next Academic Council meeting. If the request is approved, a CP will appear on the

student's transcript and the student may re-register for the course in a future term at no additional cost. If the approved course is an elective, then the student may register for another elective course in a future term in place of the approved course at no additional cost. If the approved elective course meets a program requirement for an elective course in a specific category, then the replacement elective course must be in the same category. If a student withdraws or graduates from the seminary without retaking the course, the CP grade will be changed to F.

## Changing of a Grade

Normally there can be no change of a grade in a course once the instructor has submitted grades to the Registrar. In exceptional cases, a student seeking to change a grade through further work for the course should submit their petition to the Dean of the Seminary with a statement of support from the faculty member stating the rationale for granting such opportunity.

## Calculation of Grade Point Average

The following letter grades are factored into a student's GPA according to the following schedule:

Grade	Points	Grade	Points
AH	4.00	C+	2.33
A	4.00	C	2.00
A–	3.67	C–	1.67
B+	3.33	D+	1.33
B	3.00	D	1.00
B–	2.67	F	0.00

## Retaking a Course

A student may retake a course at any time if the first grade was below satisfactory performance. When a student retakes a course the former grade remains on the student's transcript. However, after the student retakes a course only the latter grade is used in the calculation of the GPA.

## Extensions

The instructor shall evaluate each student's performance in a course on the basis of the work submitted by the last day of the academic term, unless the instructor approves an extension of time to complete coursework beyond the end of the term. The instructor shall approve an extension only under extraordinary circumstances. The instructor must agree to the extension by the last day of the academic term. In the case that the student is unable to contact the instructor in time due to critical health issues, the student must obtain the instructor's agreement as soon as possible after the end of the term.

If an extension is approved, the student and instructor shall negotiate the date that the extension will expire, which shall extend no farther than the last day of the subsequent academic term. The instructor shall send an email to the student and the Registrar confirming the date the extension expires, as well as the grade earned for work already completed that will be recorded if no additional work is completed by the expiration date. The student shall respond with an email reply to the instructor and Registrar acknowledging the extension expiration date and current grade.

The instructor shall enter "I" for the student's grade while the extension is active. If the student completes additional coursework during the extension, the instructor shall update the student's final grade based on the additional work. Upon the expiration of the extension, the student's final grade shall be recorded based on the work completed by the expiration date.

See the "Outstanding Extensions" section of the *Student Handbook* for more information on course extension policies.

## Submitting Coursework

Students should arrange with their instructors acceptable ways to submit coursework. Students should not depend upon the postal service when meeting deadlines. Only if materials are sent by registered or certified mail can one show a receipt indicating proof of a mailing time if the materials have been delivered late or are lost. Students are advised to always save their notes or personal copies.

## Completed Canvas Course Content Access

Students retain read-only access to all past Canvas courses in which they have been enrolled, though individual professors may modify or delete the content of past courses without notice. In addition, the seminary may discontinue access to Canvas courses that have been completed beyond a certain window of time if long-term storage becomes cost prohibitive. Students are therefore strongly encouraged to download any course content that they want assurance that they will be able to access in the future. Instructions for downloading content are located in the “How do I view course content offline as an HTML file as a student?” tutorial in Instructure’s Canvas Student Guide (<https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student>).

## Academic Standing

Determinations of academic standing for students in degree and diploma programs shall be the responsibility of an Executive Session of the Academic Council. The Student Review and Policy Committee must formally consider the question of student standing before it reaches the floor of the Academic Council Executive Session. Matters of student standing include probation, required reduced academic load, required remedial work, required leave of absence, suspension, and dismissal. The Dean of the Seminary, or the student under review may invite others to speak to the issue during the Academic Council Executive Session. The student may invite an advocate to be present at the session.

### Student Review

Normally, the consideration of student standing shall occur when the Student Review and Policy Committee meets in January, June and September. Questions of student standing may also be brought to a specially convened meeting of the committee if consideration of the matter cannot wait until a regularly scheduled meeting.

At all times when student standing is being considered, the following procedures shall be adhered to:

1. The Registrar shall have the student file available for immediate access to student records.
2. All members of the Student Review and Policy Committee should receive relevant information prior to the meeting. If any information is withheld (e.g., psychological assessments), an objective synopsis of such reports shall be provided.

## Satisfactory Progress

### *Master’s Students*

A student in a master’s degree program at United is judged to be making satisfactory progress toward the degree each academic term that one of the following conditions is met:

- The student is continuously enrolled in at least one course each academic term, does not receive a grade of F in any course, and receives a grade of CP in no more than one course.
- The student is on an approved leave of absence.

### *DMin Students*

A student in the DMin Program at United is judged to be making satisfactory progress toward the degree when one of the following conditions have been met:

- The student is enrolled for a minimum of six (6) credits per year and maintains a GPA of 2.7 or higher.
- The student is on an approved leave of absence.

A student not meeting satisfactory progress toward the degree is ineligible for federal loans.

## **Academic Probation**

A student who is a candidate for a degree at United is placed on probation by action during an Academic Council Executive Session upon recommendation of the Student Review and Policy Committee. The Student Review and Policy Committee meets three times each year (January, June and September) for the purpose of considering such recommendations, after grades from the preceding academic term have been compiled.

The purpose of probation is remedial. Hence, the Student Review and Policy Committee is expected to discuss the situation of a student being placed on probation with a view to considering whether any special aid or counsel would be useful to the student. It may recommend a program of corrective action, either as advice to the student or as a recommendation for action during an Academic Council Executive Session.

A student placed on probation for a second consecutive academic term in which they are enrolled in courses will be declared as making unsatisfactory progress toward their degree unless they are specifically declared to be making satisfactory progress by a vote of the Student Review and Policy Committee based on specific extenuating circumstances, which vote is then confirmed during an Academic Council Executive Session.

A student placed on probation for a third consecutive academic term in which they are enrolled in courses is automatically declared as making unsatisfactory progress toward their degree. The student must present themselves at an Academic Council Executive Session to show cause why they should not be dismissed from the degree program.

### ***Probation for Master's Students***

The following circumstances normally will result in a master's student being placed on probation:

- Receipt of a grade of CP in two courses in a single academic term;
- Receipt of a grade of F in one course.

A master's student is automatically removed from probation if they receive a C– or higher in all enrolled classes in the same academic term and do not receive any CP grades. The probation is not removed until a grade is received for all courses in the term.

### ***Probation for DMin Students***

A DMin student whose grade point average falls below 2.7 will normally be placed on probation. A DMin student is automatically removed from probation when their grade point average matches 2.7 or above.

Students doing MDiv equivalencies to prepare for full DMin admission shall be judged by master's student standards for probation.

## **Satisfactory Academic Progress for Master's Students Receiving Financial Aid**

Federal regulations require the Office of Financial Aid to measure the satisfactory academic progress (SAP) of federal student loan recipients each academic term. The federal SAP policy is more defined than the seminary's Satisfactory Progress policy. This policy, however, applies to both United (Institution) originated aid and federal aid.

Academic standing for financial aid purposes is measured in two ways—Qualitative and Quantitative:

**Qualitative**

The student is in good academic standing, i.e., not on academic probation. See the “Academic Probation” section of the *Student Handbook*.

**Quantitative**

The student completes 2/3 (67%) of their attempted courses each academic term. Additionally, the student has an overall completion rate of 2/3 (67%). Only courses with grades of C– or higher or P (pass) count as completed credits for passing. Courses with grades of CP (Conditional Pass), I (Extension), F (Fail), W (Withdrawal) are not completed credits.

All financial aid students will be expected to complete their program with 125% of the published length of the program. Students enrolled in a 72-credit MDiv program will be expected to complete their program by the time they attempt 90 credits. Students enrolled in a 36-credit M.A or DMin. program will be expected to complete their program by the time they attempt 45 credits. Students enrolled in a 48-credit MAL program will be expected to complete their program by the time they attempt 60 credits.

**Financial Aid Warning and Suspension**

SAP is determined for each student each academic term by the Student Review and Policy Committee. If a student previously meeting SAP fails to meet both the Qualitative and Quantitative academic progress standards, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Warning. The student may continue to receive aid while on Financial Aid Warning for a period of one academic term. If the student fails to meet both standards at the end of the term on Financial Aid Warning, they will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension: the student may continue to enroll in courses, but will be ineligible for financial aid both from the institution (United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities) and federal student loans. If the student meets both academic progress standards at the end of the academic term, they will be taken off Financial Aid Warning and Financial Aid Suspension.

**Appeal Process**

A student may request exceptions to this policy, as noted above, by presenting a written description of their extenuating circumstances and their plan for establishment of good academic standing to the Student Review and Policy Committee. The student will be advised in writing of the decision after review by the Financial Aid Office.

A student may submit a satisfactory academic progress petition for one or more of the following reasons:

- A death in the family
- Accident
- Illness
- Other performance factors that were outside of the student’s control

If the student meets one or more of the reasons listed above and wishes to petition, the student must submit ALL of the following written documents to the Financial Aid Office within 30 days of the date on the suspension letter. In order for the student’s petition to be considered, it must include each of the following items.

- A detailed letter explaining the mitigating circumstances that affected the student’s ability to make Satisfactory Academic Progress.
- An academic plan approved by the student’s academic advisor. The plan must be signed by the academic advisor.
- Documentation of illness or medical condition in the form of a letter from the attending physician stating the condition will no longer hinder the student’s ability to make satisfactory progress. The letter must include the dates the condition occurred. The dates must coincide with the period the student failed to make Satisfactory Academic Progress.

The Student Review and Policy Committee will review the petition and notify the student with the decision within 30 days of submission. After review, the student will be advised in writing of the decision by the Financial Aid Office. Decisions of the Student Review and Policy Committee are final.

### **Program Extensions for DMin Degree**

No extensions are granted to those students who have been in the DMin Program beyond seven years.

Before students begin their fifth year of study, they are required to submit a written plan to their faculty advisor outlining their remaining units of study including the academic terms in which they plan to engage in each of the remaining requirements. The deadline for this request is May 1.

### **Suspension of Students**

The Dean of the Seminary shall have the power to suspend a student from enrollment for due cause. Written notice of suspension shall be conveyed promptly to the student, and where feasible, explained personally to the student by the Dean of the Seminary. Normally the Dean of the Seminary will consult with relevant staff and faculty such as the President; faculty advisor; and Director of Admissions before the action is taken. Such action is temporary until the Student Review and Policy Committee can consider the case and the recommendations from the Dean of the Seminary. The committee shall make its recommendations and report to an Academic Council Executive Session, if appropriate. The Student Review and Policy Committee decision will be taken at a duly called and announced meeting and the student duly notified of their rights and privileges for appeal.

### **Dismissal of Students**

Causes for dismissal shall include one or more of the following, applicable to all students:

- probation for three consecutive academic terms of enrollment;
- receipt of three or more “F” grades during the student’s course of study at seminary;
- receipt of a grade of “F” in the DMin Dissertation course;
- violation of the policy of the integrity of written work (i.e., plagiarism);
- failing to complete the degree program within the prescribed period (see completion time for degree in Academic Catalog);
- personal or professional deficiencies, which an Academic Council Executive Session deems cause for dismissal as specified in the “Qualities and Competencies for Leadership in Communities of Faith” section and as appropriate for the specific degree program;
- failing to complete or deceitful completion of the Personal Disclosure Form; or
- failing to complete or deceitful completion of the Research with Human Subjects form.

A student shall be notified of the Student Review and Policy Committee recommendation for dismissal by the Dean of the Seminary, and informed of the date of the Academic Council Executive Session at which the recommendation will be considered. The student has the option of presenting a written appeal, or of making a personal appearance before the Academic Council Executive Session, or both. Ample time to prepare and present the appeal will be allowed.

Any matriculated student who does not comply with the Continuous Enrollment Policy is subject to administrative withdrawal from the seminary. See the “Withdrawal” section of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

### **DMin Admission to Candidacy**

Admission to candidacy is determined by the Registrar and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean:



1. After the student has successfully completed 30 hours of coursework; and
2. Upon review of the student's work and recommendation for candidacy by the student's Faculty Advisor.

The student is then permitted to submit a dissertation proposal.

## **Personal Qualities for Leadership in Communities of Faith**

The following Six Key Qualities of spiritual and personal formation have been identified by United faculty as vital to responsible and transforming leadership in communities of faith. These qualities point toward evaluating church leaders in the MDiv and MAL degree programs who are theologically reflective, ethically responsible, and emotionally and relationally mature. They complement the necessary knowledge and skills for spiritual leadership addressed in the learning outcomes for each MDiv and MAL degree and concentration program.

The evaluative contexts for a student's personal qualities for spiritual leadership are the admissions process and participation in both curricular and co-curricular aspects of seminary community life.

### **Authentic Spirituality**

- An awareness of and desire for the holy
- Capacity for joy
- Ability to tolerate the wilderness and to encounter doubt
- Practice of spiritual disciplines
- Evidence of experience of grace
- Ability to offer grace
- Stance that embraces both listening and action
- Have acknowledged one's images of God and opened those to transformation/change

### **Differentiation of Self**

- Appropriate boundary maintenance
- Management of anxiety
- Ability to develop and sustain self-directed plan for growth
- Comfort with both intimacy and autonomy
- Ability to live in healthy community with others
- Celebration and appropriate expression of sexuality, holistically understood
- Able to regulate one's behavior
- Attention to self-care

### **Moral Imagination**

- Concern for and action to promote justice
- Responsibility for choices and behaviors
- Realistic sense of personal agency
- Integrity in values and action
- Respect for others
- Fidelity to commitments
- Appropriate risk taking
- Ability to engage in critical reflection
- Ability to engage and explore paradox
- Ability to understand and utilize metaphor and symbolic meaning

### **Emotional Intelligence**

- Empathy
- Compassion that moves one to action
- Ability to use personal authority appropriately

- Emotional regulation of self and others
- Appropriate use of humor and playfulness
- Ability to refrain from objectifying people
- Intentionality in planning for and practicing health (physical, mental, financial, relational)

## **Humility**

- Openness to differences
- Appropriate responsiveness to authority
- Ability to dialogue as well as persuade
- Inclusiveness
- Willingness and ability to empower others
- Ability to be passionate about convictions and open to possibility of error
- Ability to own one's biases and assumptions
- Intercultural competency and flexibility in attending to difference
- Ability to receive influence

## **Generativity**

- Willingness to nurture others, including marginalized populations and future generations
- Vocational imagination
- Intellectual and emotional flexibility
- Ability to tolerate ambiguity
- Ability to contextualize
- Creative responses in a variety of professional contexts
- Cultivation of the creative/artistic life
- Utilization and integration of the other 5 qualities into action for the benefit of others
- Promotion of a just, peaceful, and sustainable world through stewardship and courageous action

## **Expectations and Requirements of Student Leadership**

United offers many opportunities for students to exercise and develop their capacities and skills for leadership within the United community. The Student Leadership Collective, representation on other institutional and ad hoc committees (Faculty Search Committees, Chapel Committee, Commencement Committee, Symposium Week Committee, etc.), and other official or unofficial leadership roles that are sanctioned by and supported within the framework of United's Seminary operations.

Participation in these leadership contexts and representation on the various committees by students should be considered a privilege rather than a right. Furthermore, student leaders should reflect in an exemplary way the qualities of leadership expected by our community's behavioral, academic, financial, and formation standards (see Student Handbook, "Personal Qualities for Leadership Within Communities of Faith" for formation standards). As such, students who are candidates for or are serving in these leadership capacities shall not:

1. fail to enroll in at least one United course (including 0-credit CPE, MA thesis, MAL final project, and DMin dissertation continuation courses) each term;
2. have an unpaid tuition and fees account balance or unpaid payment plan amount due at the end of the term (see policy for tuition and fee payment in Student Handbook);
3. be on Academic Probation;
4. be under a Sanction for a Behavioral Misconduct Violation; or
5. have received an official letter from the Dean notifying them of a violation of the Academic Integrity policy.

If any of these situations apply to a student currently in candidacy for or serving in one of these student leadership capacities, the Dean may require that the student relinquish that candidacy or leadership role. The student shall again be eligible for a leadership position if and when the situation has been satisfactorily resolved and the issue in question has been remedied.

# Student Misconduct Policy

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities strives for an educational environment in which the greatest academic potential of its students and professional potential of its faculty and staff may be realized. The Seminary therefore prohibits student behavior that disrupts Seminary activities or brings harm to its participants.

This Policy outlines behaviors that constitute a violation of the Seminary's student conduct standards, the procedure the Seminary follows to determine a violation of the Seminary's Student Misconduct Policy, and the steps for recourse when a violation has been committed. Any student found to have violated the Student Misconduct Policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Seminary.

This Policy applies to misconduct committed by a student that occurs during any Seminary class or activity that occurs on Seminary property, off campus, or online.

## Prohibited Conduct

This Policy prohibits conduct in the learning environment that:

- violates established civil rights, human rights, and criminal statutes;
- engages in acts that harm (or could be reasonably expected to harm) the mental or physical health or safety of self or others;
- interferes with the resources of the academic facility;
- bullies and/or harasses members of the learning community;
- neglects (intentionally or accidentally), recklessly endangers, or severely disrupts the well-being of the learning environment; or
- violates the ethical standards of one's intended profession (e.g., clinical settings, practice, directed field studies, internship, etc.).

Procedures governing student misconduct reflect values outlined in the *Student Handbook* under the heading, "Personal Qualities for Leadership in Communities of Faith."

## Immediate Recourse for Student Misconduct

Primary responsibility for managing student behavior at a Seminary activity rests with the faculty or staff member leading or hosting the activity. If a student engages in behavior that disrupts the activity or risks harm to its participants, the leader or host may direct the student to leave the activity.

## Reporting Student Misconduct

In order to ensure a safe learning environment for all, the Seminary encourages any member of the community to report incidents of student misconduct to the Dean of the Seminary. Reports to the Dean may be submitted in person, by phone, by email, or using the Seminary's online reporting form. To best enable the Seminary to respond appropriately, a report should include as much information as possible, including the name of the individual alleging to have witnessed or experienced misconduct, the name of the individual reported to have committed the misconduct, and the date, time, place, and circumstances of the incident.

The Seminary will accept anonymous reports, including using the Seminary's online reporting form. The individual making the report is encouraged, however, to provide as much information as possible to allow the Seminary to investigate the report and respond as appropriate. The Seminary may be limited in its ability to investigate an anonymous report unless sufficient information is furnished to enable the Seminary to conduct a meaningful and fair investigation.

Reports of alleged misconduct should be made only in good faith. Reports that are not made in good faith may result in disciplinary action. All parties and witnesses have an obligation to be truthful in the process.

## **Student Misconduct Allegation Resolution Procedure**

The Seminary shall use the procedure outlined below to investigate and resolve a report of alleged student misconduct brought to the Dean of the Seminary in a prompt, fair, and impartial manner. All Seminary officials shall treat all parties involved in the process, including the respondent, with respect, sensitivity, and dignity. The confidentiality of all students involved in the process shall be maintained per FERPA guidelines.

The Seminary is committed to the prompt and equitable resolution of allegations of student misconduct. The Seminary shall strive to conclude the allegation resolution process within forty-five (45) calendar days of receiving a report. In the event that the allegation resolution process exceeds the 45-day timeframe, the Seminary shall notify the respondent of the reason for the delay and the expected adjustment in the time frame.

The procedures set forth in this Policy reflect the Seminary's desire to respond to reports in good faith and in a manner that promotes fairness to all parties. The Seminary recognizes that each case is unique and that circumstances may arise which require that it reserve some flexibility in responding to the particular circumstances of the matter. Where it is not possible or practical to follow these procedures, the Seminary reserves the right to modify the procedure or to take other administrative action as appropriate under the circumstances.

## **Notification of Report to Respondent**

When the Dean of the Seminary receives a report of student misconduct, the Dean or the Dean's designee shall meet with the respondent of the report to notify the respondent of the report, the alleged policy violations that are being investigated, and the allegation resolution process. The respondent has the right to participate or decline to participate in the allegation resolution process. In such cases, the Seminary shall proceed with the allegation resolution process and will make a determination based upon the information available.

If the respondent has a concern of a conflict of interest or bias regarding the Dean's oversight of the allegation resolution process, the respondent must submit the concern in writing to the President of the Seminary within two (2) calendar days of notification of the allegations. If the President agrees that a potential conflict of interest exists, the President shall appoint an alternative person to oversee the allegation resolution process.

## **Report Review and Assessment**

Within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of the report, the Dean of the Seminary or the Dean's designee shall prepare an initial review and assessment of the report. The purpose of the initial assessment is to determine if the report indeed describes a violation of the Policy and warrants an investigation. The assessment is not an investigation of the truth of the facts of the report. In developing the assessment, the Dean or designee shall consult with relevant members of Seminary staff and administration. The Dean or designee may also collect additional clarifying information from the individual filing the report.

If the Dean or designee determines that the allegations depicted in the report, even if substantiated, would not be a violation of this Policy, they shall dismiss the matter. The Dean or designee may still recommend alternative actions among members of the Seminary community to protect the well-being of the educational environment and its members. The individual filing the report, if possible, and respondent shall be notified of the Dean's determination whether to proceed with an investigation.

If the Dean or designee determines that the allegations depicted in the report warrant an investigation, the Dean or designee shall further determine if interim measures are reasonably necessary or appropriate to protect the well-being of the community pending completion of the allegation resolution process. Interim measures may include a no-contact order with an individual, restrictions to or prohibition from participation

in a class or activity, or prohibition from the Seminary campus. The respondent and any relevant members of the student body, faculty, and staff shall be notified of any interim measures. Any concern about a violation of an interim measure should be promptly reported to the Dean of the Seminary.

### **Informal Resolution Process**

If the Dean of the Seminary or the Dean's designee determines that an investigation is warranted, the Seminary may, in certain cases, instead pursue an informal resolution of the allegation. The Dean may ask a member of the staff or faculty to discuss the alleged incident with the respondent to determine if the matter can be resolved by informal means such as advising, mediation, or counseling. Any informal resolution must adequately address the allegations presented in the report, as well as the overall intent of the Seminary to stop, remedy, and prevent policy violations.

If the Seminary representative and the respondent agree in writing to the terms and conditions of a recommended informal resolution, the case will be resolved without further action under this procedure. The representative may arrange for the provision of services to the respondent agreed to in the resolution. The member of the staff or faculty designated by the Dean will be responsible for monitoring compliance with the terms of the resolution and reporting to the Dean regarding compliance and the outcome.

If the Seminary representative and respondent do not agree to the terms and conditions of the recommended resolution, or if the respondent fails to subsequently comply with the agreed terms and conditions, or if the terms and conditions fail to resolve the reported policy violations, the report shall be referred to the formal resolution process.

### **Formal Resolution Process**

If the allegation is not processed or resolved through the informal resolution process discussed above, the allegation will be processed according to the formal resolution process outlined below.

#### ***Investigation***

Upon the determination that an investigation is warranted, the Dean of the Seminary or the Dean's designee shall appoint two or more investigators to conduct a prompt, thorough, fair, and impartial investigation. At least 50% of the investigators shall be members of the faculty. The Dean or designee shall submit written notice of the investigators appointed to the respondent. The respondent has two (2) calendar days after receipt of the notification to report any concern of bias or conflict of interest among the investigators in writing to the Dean or designee. The Dean or designee shall review the concerns and take appropriate steps to resolve any potential conflicts of interest.

The purpose of the investigation will be to gather facts that the investigators and Dean or designee will use to determine whether it is more likely than not that the Seminary's Student Misconduct Policy was violated. The investigators shall conduct the investigation in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the case, which will typically include interviews with the individual who filed the report, the respondent, and other witnesses. The interviews will be supplemented by the gathering of any physical, documentary, or other evidence, as appropriate and available.

The investigators shall provide the respondent with the opportunity to advise the investigators of any witnesses they believe should be interviewed, and other evidence they believe should be reviewed by the investigators. The investigators have discretion to determine which proposed witnesses to interview and what proposed evidence to review. General character or reputation evidence generally will not be considered relevant and will not be included in the investigation.

The investigators shall inform the respondent of the close of evidence date. The respondent must submit any and all information and evidence believed to be relevant to the report by the close of evidence date. After the close of evidence date, the respondent will not be permitted to submit new or additional evidence that existed prior to the close of evidence date, unless the investigators determine otherwise.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigators shall submit to the Dean or designee a report setting forth the facts gathered that pertain to the allegations in the original misconduct report. The report will include, as applicable, written records of interviews with the respondent and any witnesses, and any other evidence obtained during the investigation. The Dean or designee shall review the investigation file and has the discretion to ask the investigators for clarification, additional investigation, and/or to have information removed or redacted from the investigation file. The Dean or designee shall prepare and submit a summary of the facts of the investigation file to the respondent.

The Seminary shall strive to submit the investigation summary to the respondent within fourteen (14) calendar days from the assignment of the investigators, but this time frame may be extended depending on the circumstances of each case, including the complexity of the allegations, the number of witnesses involved, the availability of the witnesses involved, unsuccessful attempts at informal resolution, any intervening school break, vacation, or other unforeseen circumstance.

### ***Respondent's Response to Investigation Summary***

Within seven (7) calendar days after the respondent receives the investigation summary, the respondent may submit a written statement in response to the summary to the Dean or designee. The statement may be used as an opportunity to clarify points in the investigation summary or identify information previously given to the investigators that is not included in the summary which the respondent believes should have been included. The response may not exceed 2,500 words.

The Dean or designee shall review the respondent's written response statement and may remove or redact any portions of the statement that exceed the permitted word limit of the statement or the permitted scope of information that may be considered in the allegation resolution process (such as general character evidence).

### ***Adjudication of Outcome***

Upon completion of the investigation, the adjudication team—composed of the investigators and the Dean of the Seminary or the Dean's designee—shall review both the Dean's investigation summary and the respondent's written response statement and complete a prompt, thorough, fair, and impartial adjudication. Based on the contents of both documents, the team shall determine whether the Student Misconduct Policy was violated and assign appropriate sanctions and/or remedies. The team shall use the "preponderance of evidence" standard to determine whether it is more likely than not that the respondent violated the Seminary's Student Misconduct Policy and what sanctions are necessary to end the misconduct, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects.

The respondent is presumed to be not responsible for violating this Policy. The respondent will be deemed responsible for a policy violation only if the adjudication team concludes that there is sufficient evidence, by a "preponderance of the evidence," to support a finding that the respondent engaged in misconduct. If the adjudication team determines that the respondent is responsible for a policy violation, it will then determine what sanctions and remedies are warranted.

When a respondent is found not responsible for a policy violation, but nevertheless is found to have engaged in inappropriate conduct, the Seminary may, in its discretion, require the respondent to receive appropriate education and/or training. The Seminary may also recommend counseling or other support services for the respondent.

### ***Sanctions and Remedies***

The adjudication team shall impose sanctions and/or remedies as necessary to end the misconduct, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects. The Seminary reserves the right to take whatever measures are deemed necessary in response to a determination of student misconduct in order to protect the rights and personal safety of the members of the Seminary community. Students who are found responsible under this Policy may face the following sanctions. Each of these sanctions may be imposed alone or in combination for a student found responsible for misconduct.

- Oral or written warnings;

- Probation;
- Mandatory assessment, counseling, education, or training;
- Behavioral contracts;
- Temporary or permanent restricted access to areas of campus, and campus events, activities, organizations, or courses;
- Conditions upon presence on campus or at Seminary events;
- No-trespass or no-contact directives;
- Revocation of admission to the Seminary;
- Withholding of diploma or degree for a defined period of time or until the completion of assigned sanctions;
- Suspension from the Seminary up to one additional academic term, with reinstatement requirements that could include behavioral contracts, required assessment or education, demonstrated rehabilitation, conditions upon the individual's presence on campus or at Seminary events;
- Dismissal from the Seminary;
- Restriction of privileges;
- Unenrollment from a course;
- Transfer to a directed study section of a course.

#### *Notice of Outcome*

The Dean shall submit a written notice of the outcome to the respondent and any relevant members of the student body, faculty and staff. The notice shall include the determination of the adjudication team and any imposition of sanctions. The written notice to the respondent shall also include information about the procedure for appeal, as set forth below. In addition, the written notice shall include any other steps the Seminary has taken to eliminate the conduct and prevent its recurrence.

Sanctions shall take effect immediately, notwithstanding an appeal. Any concern about a violation of an imposed sanction should be reported to the Dean.

The Seminary shall strive to complete the adjudication process and provide a notice of the outcome within seven (7) days after the adjudication team's receipt of the investigation summary and the respondent's written response statement. In some cases, more time may be required.

The determination of the adjudication team may be appealed by the respondent as provided below. In the event that no appeal is filed within the time period prescribed below, the decision will be final.

#### ***Appeal of Recommended Outcome***

The respondent has the right to appeal the adjudication team's decision on the following basis:

- a procedural error occurred that substantially affected the outcome of the process; or
- presentation of newly-discovered evidence that was not previously available to submit during the allegation resolution process that may substantially affect the outcome of the process; intentional omission of factual information by the respondent, however, is not a ground for an appeal.

Within seven (7) calendar days after the respondent is notified of the adjudication team's decision, the respondent may submit either or both of the following to the Dean of the Seminary or the Dean's designee:

- a written appeal statement, not to exceed 2,500 words, to be reviewed by the faculty members of the Academic Council; and/or

- a request to present an oral appeal in person to the faculty members of the Academic Council.

The appeal request must include an explanation of the basis for the appeal. Failure to file a timely appeal request constitutes a waiver of any right to an appeal.

The Dean or designee shall review the appeal statement to determine whether the appeal states a permissible ground for appeal (as set forth above), such that the appeal will be considered. The Dean or designee may remove or redact any portions of the appeal statement that exceed the permitted word limit or exceeds the scope of information that may be considered in the allegation resolution process (such as general character/reputation evidence). If the Dean or designee determines that the appeal states a permissible ground for appeal, the Dean or designee shall provide to the faculty members of the Academic Council the investigation summary, the respondent's written response statement, if applicable, and the written appeal statement, if applicable.

The faculty members of the Academic Council shall review the appeal and consider whether it is more likely than not that the above-listed grounds for appeal have been satisfied and impacted the outcome of the process. If the Academic Council determines that the respondent has demonstrated that it is more likely than not that one of the above grounds for appeal is satisfied, the faculty members of the Academic Council may impose a more lenient outcome than determined by the adjudication team in favor of the respondent.

If the faculty members of the Academic Council determine that the respondent has not demonstrated that it is more likely than not that one or more grounds for appeal have been satisfied, the Academic Council shall dismiss the appeal. This dismissal decision is final and is not appealable.

The Dean or designee shall issue a written decision to the respondent and all relevant members of the student body, faculty, and staff stating the Academic Council's decision on the appeal. The Seminary shall strive to complete the appeal by the subsequent meeting of the Academic Council after the Dean or designee receives the appeal request from the respondent; in some cases, however, more time may be required.

## **MA Thesis**

All MA students are required to complete a thesis or research paper as part of the Master of Arts graduation requirements. Normally, the thesis is researched and written during the last year of studies.

### **Purpose of the Thesis**

The purpose of the thesis is to demonstrate, within the scope of a particular topic, question or issue in the student's area of study, a student's capacity for analysis and evaluation of faith traditions in relation to diverse contexts, and for integration of diverse resources in the service of construction of a theology or worldview.

### **Character of the Thesis**

A successful thesis should display a capacity for critical analysis of the positions and arguments of others, and a capacity to take one's own reasoned position in conversation with those of others. It need not generate new knowledge, but it should show some capacity to engage constructively in the kind of critical analysis and conversation out of which knowledge may emerge. The student has the option to complete a Work of Art thesis project that includes a form of artistic expression (see "MA Thesis: Work of Art" below).

The thesis is normally a 3-credit thesis, but students have the option to do a 6-credit honors thesis. Ordinarily a 3-credit thesis will be 25-30 pages in length, not including the front and back matter. Ordinarily a 6-credit thesis will be 50-60 pages in length, not including the front and back matter. A student completing the 6-credit thesis may complete one fewer elective course to fulfill the MA graduation requirement for total academic credits.



## Research Paper Option

As an alternative to the thesis requirement, the student may choose to complete a single 25–30 page (double-spaced) research paper written as an expansion of the final assignment for a course. Students who plan to pursue advanced studies in religion or theology after completion of the MA are strongly encouraged to pursue the thesis option, as many institutions require the completion of a thesis as a prerequisite for admission to doctoral academic study. A student completing a research paper shall complete one additional elective course in place of the MA Thesis course in order to fulfill the MA graduation requirement for total academic credits.

The research paper option must be approved by the student's faculty advisor and the course professor, who will evaluate whether the completed paper merits approval for the student's completion of the MA degree. As with the thesis, the research paper must sufficiently demonstrate a competent understanding of a selected topic within the student's chosen degree concentration through the effective critical interpretation, analysis and synthesis of appropriate sources, as well as demonstrate effective academic theological research and writing skills. The completed research paper must be submitted to the course professor by the 1st day of the last month of the academic term (i.e. August, December or April) that the student plans to graduate from their degree program.

## Thesis Procedure

All of the following tasks must be completed by the student in order to fulfill the MA thesis graduation requirement.

1. **Secure the First Reader for the thesis.** The student shall consult with their faculty advisor and/or the Director of Advanced Studies in identifying and securing the First Reader. The First Reader is usually a full-time United faculty member with extensive knowledge related to the thesis, but the student may, with the consent of the faculty advisor, approach a United adjunct professor to serve as the First Reader. The student should secure both the First and Second Reader (below) by the deadline for the term that they plan to graduate (see Timeline below).
2. **Secure the Second Reader for the thesis.** The student shall consult with the First Reader in identifying and securing the Second Reader. The Second Reader is usually a full-time United faculty member or adjunct professor, but the student may, with the consent of the first reader, approach an individual from outside United's faculty to serve as the Second Reader. The student should secure both the First and Second Reader by the deadline for the term that they plan to graduate (see Timeline below).
3. **Develop the thesis proposal.** In consultation with the First Reader, the student shall develop a thesis proposal that describes the topic to be explored in the thesis. The proposal shall also include the scope of the work, its focal question or issue, the methods or approaches that will be taken to that question/issue, the major resources that will be engaged, and a working bibliography. See Thesis Proposal below for details.
4. **Secure approval of the thesis proposal.** The student shall submit to the First Reader the final proposal and an attached Master of Arts Thesis Proposal Cover Sheet and Evaluation Rubric with the student section completed by the deadline for the student's planned graduation term (see Timeline below). After evaluating the proposal, the First Reader shall return to the student the cover sheet and evaluation rubric with the reader section completed. If the proposal is approved, the Registrar shall register the student for the 3-credit or 6-credit thesis course. If the proposal is not approved, the student shall attach a new cover sheet to each revised proposal submission for re-evaluation.
5. **Write the thesis.** Following the approval of the proposal, the student researches and writes the thesis, primarily under the guidance of the First Reader. The Second Reader may also be consulted as this is agreeable to all parties concerned.

6. **Submit the completed thesis.** The student shall submit their completed thesis (and work of art, if applicable) to the First Reader by the deadline for the student's planned graduation term (see Timeline below). The student shall receive feedback on the thesis from the First Reader, including any additional work required for approval of the thesis.
7. **Submit the revised thesis.** The student shall submit to both readers their thesis that includes revisions based on the First Reader's recommendations on the first submission.
8. **Complete an oral defense of the thesis.** When the readers judge the thesis to be ready, the student shall sit for an oral defense of their thesis that is conducted by the readers. The defense shall be no longer than one and one-half hours. The defense must be completed by the deadline for the student's planned graduation term (see Timeline below). The student will receive from the Reader a completed Oral Defense Evaluation Report indicating their grade for the thesis. See Thesis Evaluation below for details.
9. **Submit the final thesis for archiving.** After completing any required final revisions and receiving a passing grade for the thesis, the student shall submit a PDF copy of the final thesis to the Director of the Library by the deadline for their graduation term (see Timeline below). Students are responsible for ensuring that the submitted thesis meets all formatting requirements (see the Capstone Document Formatting Requirements section of the *Student Handbook* for details). A diploma will not be provided until a thesis that meets all formatting requirements is received by the Library.

## Thesis Evaluation

The written thesis document and oral defense together are the basis for evaluation of the student's thesis. Grading for the thesis follows the Pass/Fail grading system (see Grading section of the Student Handbook). A grade of "Pass" or "Pass with Honors" on the Oral Defense Report merits completion of MA thesis graduation requirement. The report may include recommendations for minor corrections to the thesis before its submission to the library for archiving.

If a student receives a grade of "Conditional Pass," the student must make the significant corrections described in the Oral Defense Report and resubmit the thesis to the Readers for reevaluation of the grade. If a student receives a grade of "Fail," the student must make the substantial revisions described in the Oral Defense Report, then resubmit and defend the revised thesis for reevaluation of the grade.

A student enrolled in the MA Thesis course who is withdrawn from the MA degree program for failing to complete the program within the maximum allowed five year enrollment duration will receive a grade of "F" for the MA Thesis course.

## Thesis Proposal

Prior to registering for the thesis course, the student shall complete a 3–5 page—not including the working bibliography—double-spaced thesis proposal that addresses each section below.

**Topic Proposal and Summary:** A brief description of the topic of the thesis and the context and significance of the project.

**Background:** What has led you to this specific thesis topic?

**Structure:** Include a thesis statement in the proposal (It can take the form of a hypothesis, research question, or goal statement.) It should capture the essence of your thesis and also help you define and narrow the scope.

**Feasibility:** What leads you to believe that you have a substantive question or issue for investigation and what are the resources you will draw upon to address the question or issue?

**Method:** Describe the methods or approaches that will be taken.

**Location:** Relate your Thesis to the larger theological conversation. Who would be interested in reading this thesis?

**Objectives or Outcomes:** Where do you want to be at the end of your thesis? State the contribution the thesis will make to the field.

**Evaluation:** List your evaluators and describe the type of evaluative feedback you will seek from them. (If you intend to also gather feedback from the public or others in ministry describe the methods of evaluation for this group as well.)

**Time Table:** Develop a time table for researching and writing your thesis.

**Working Bibliography:** The bibliography must be in correct format (Turabian) and include current and reputable scholarly sources.

## **Work of Art Thesis**

A Work of Art Thesis is appropriate for a student who is a trained artist who wishes to develop a thesis project with an artistic expression and focus. This thesis type is driven by the selected medium and the normal canons of critical response by connoisseurs.\*

A Work of Art thesis type has two parts. **The first part** is the work of art itself which is to be evaluated by connoisseurs who are publicly recognized for their knowledge of art and how it works, its norms, whether it is mature, how effective it is in communication, and who understand the theory and history of art. The focus may be on music, the visual arts, theater arts, literature, poetry, spiritual memoir or spiritual autobiography as a ministry-relevant aesthetic expression of a religious theme. The methodology uses an advanced degree of technical skill appropriate to the selected medium and an integrative format which allows for a theological interpretation. There should be an awareness of the responses of the observers, the public, or the church. The student must devise a method for receiving critique and evaluation from the connoisseurs, the public and ministers.

**The second part** is a substantive written reflection on the project which seeks to locate the work of art in the genre chosen, the appropriate theological framework, a ministry framework, the artist's own faith journey, and the responses of the community of critics. This part of the thesis or dissertation will be evaluated by the professors on the student's reading team. The written reflection for the 3-credit Work of Art Thesis requires 10–14 pages. The written reflection for the 6-credit Work of Art Thesis requires 20–28 pages.

### ***Work of Art Thesis Proposal***

Prior to registering for the thesis course, the student shall complete a two- to three-page, double-spaced thesis proposal that addresses each section below. The student shall attach a working bibliography to the submitted proposal.

**Topic Proposal and Summary:** A brief description of the topic of the work of art thesis and the context and significance of the project.

**Background:** What has led you to this specific work of art thesis topic? (This should capture the essence of your work of art and intended theological reflection.)

**Structure:** Include a thesis statement in the proposal (It can take the form of a hypothesis, research question, or goal statement.) It should capture the essence of your thesis (both work of art and reflection) and also help you define and narrow the scope.

**Feasibility:** What leads you to believe that you have a substantive question or issue for investigation through a work of art and what are the resources you will draw upon to address the question or issue?

**Method:** Describe the methods or approaches that will be taken. State why it matters?

**Location:** Relate your Work of Art Thesis to the larger theological conversation. Who would be interested in reading this thesis?

**Framework:** Name your assumptions. Assumptions need not be tested but they should be stated. Explain the limits of your Work of Art Thesis, what is it not addressing and why?

**Description:** Describe your art form and the focus you will pursue.

*Examples:*

- Writing, I will focus on prose
- Visual Art, I will focus on painting
- Music, I will focus on hymnody

**Objectives or Outcomes:** Where do you want to be at the end of your thesis? State the new knowledge the thesis will add. (Assume that the revealed knowledge will come from both the art making and the theological reflection.)

**Theological Reflection:** Theological reflection is an essential part of a Work of Art Thesis proposal. Students are encouraged to aim for a reflection that draws upon and integrates scripture, tradition, personal experience, and cultural resources. Two books to assist you in structuring your theological reflection are: *The Art of Theological Reflection* by Patricia Killen and John de Beer and *Method in Ministry* by James and Evelyn Whitehead.

**Evaluation:** List your connoisseur evaluators and describe the type of evaluative feedback you will seek from them. (If you intend to also gather feedback from the public or others in ministry describe the methods of evaluation for this group as well.)

**Time Table:** Develop a time table for creating your work, receiving feedback, evaluating your work of art and writing your thesis.

**Working Bibliography:** The bibliography must be in correct format (Turabian) and include contemporary and recent writings as well as relevant classical works.

\*A connoisseur is a person who is especially competent to provide a response to a work(s) of art. The responses will come from someone in the same field. Responses can also come from additional persons who are fluent in the artistic medium in which the work is done.

*Note:* In spiritual memoirs or spiritual autobiographies, additional criteria shall be observed. Such works must demonstrate a great deal of conscious reflection. The thesis writer will need to step back and take a more objective look at the memoir in order to identify and develop spiritual themes, offer particular personal stories that illustrate these themes, show a strong ability for self-reflection and self-criticism and show how it is related to their own theology and ministry.

## Thesis Continuation

After initial registration for the MA Thesis course, one academic term is normally allowed for the completion of the 3-credit thesis or 6-credit thesis. If, at the end of that time period, a student's thesis is incomplete, the student will be automatically registered for the 0-credit MA Thesis Continuation course each academic term, including summer, until the completion and approval of the thesis; the student will be charged for the course each term. See the Tuition and Fees section of the current *Academic Catalog* for the fee amount.

At the end of each academic term that the student is enrolled in the MA Thesis Continuation course—including summer—and has not completed their thesis, the student shall submit to their first reader a brief report that summarizes their progress towards completion of their thesis that term as well as their progress goals or planned action steps towards completion for the coming term. If, over three consecutive terms, the first reader has determined that the student has not made progress towards completion of their thesis, the student shall be administratively withdrawn from the seminary.

## Thesis Timeline

Task	Deadline for Graduation in		Deadline for Participation in Spring Commencement
	August	December	
Secure 1st and 2nd Reader	January 1	May 1	September 1
Submit to 1st Reader thesis proposal (or work of art proposal) and completed MA Thesis Proposal and Registration Cover Sheet and blank Assessment Rubric	March 1	July 1	November 1
Receive from 1st Reader proposal cover sheet with approval signature and completed assessment form	mid March	Mid July	Mid November
Submit copy of signed proposal and registration cover sheet and assessment rubric to Registrar	April 1	August 1	December 1
Submit Petition for Graduation form to Registrar	May 1	September 1	January 1
Submit completed thesis (and work of art, if applicable) to 1st Reader for feedback	July 1	November 1	March 1
Receive from 1st Reader any additional work required for approval of thesis	early July	early November	early March
Submit revised thesis (and work of art, if applicable) to 1st Reader and 2nd Reader	July 15	November 15	March 15
1st Reader schedules oral defense date and time	late July	late November	late March
Complete oral defense of thesis with 1st Reader and 2nd Reader	August 1	December 1	April 1
Receive completed Oral Defense Evaluation Report from 1st Reader; make any needed revisions before receiving approval of final thesis by First Reader	early August	early December	early April
Submit to Library Director PDF copy of final thesis and completed Permission to Archive and Disseminate Thesis form	August 15	December 15	April 15

## MAL Final Project

*This project is required only for students in MAL degree programs other than the MAL in Social Transformation. Students in the MAL in Social Transformation complete the Social Transformation Project described in the next section.*

The final project is the capstone experience of the MAL program: It is the central and culminating professional and academic component of the curriculum. The capstone document of the project

demonstrates the student's ability to integrate, synthesize, and apply material learned throughout the MAL program in the context of a setting appropriate to the student's vocational goals. The document should add to the body of knowledge and practice in the area of the student's vocational goals.

After initial registration for this course, the final project is expected to be completed within one academic term. The need or problem addressed by the project should be of sufficient scope for all required components to be completed within one term, even if the implementation of the solution extends beyond the end of the term. Some examples of needs that can be addressed by the project: a new specialized community ministry role, a middle school faith formation curriculum, guidance on providing spiritual direction to a specific population, and applying Humanist principles to the solution of a specific community social issue. The choice of project should arise from the student's context and should connect to their ultimate vocational goals.

## **MAL Final Project Procedure**

All of the following tasks must be completed by the student in order to fulfill the MAL final project graduation requirement.

1. **Secure the Reader for the project.** The student shall consult with their faculty advisor and the Dean of the Seminary in identifying and securing the project Reader. The Reader is usually a full-time United faculty member with extensive knowledge and/or experience related to the project, but the student may, with the consent of the faculty advisor, approach a United adjunct professor to serve as the Reader. The student should secure the Reader by the deadline for the term that they plan to graduate (see Timeline below).
2. **Develop the project proposal.** In consultation with the Reader, the student shall develop a 1–2 page project proposal. The proposal shall include a one-paragraph summary of the proposed project, and descriptions of the following: 1) the need or problem pertaining to their focused area of study and desired vocation that the project will address, 2) the scholarly and real-world research that will be performed, 3) the physical or social context in which the project will be carried out, and 4) how the project will add to the body of practice in the area of the student's vocational goals.
3. **Secure approval of the project proposal.** The student shall submit to the Reader the completed MAL Final Project Proposal and Registration Cover Sheet and Proposal Assessment Rubric with the final proposal attached by the deadline for the student's planned graduation term (see Timeline below). If the Reader approves the proposal, they shall return the signed cover sheet and completed assessment rubric to the student.
4. **Register for the project course.** The student shall submit the signed proposal cover sheet and completed assessment rubric to the Registrar by the deadline for the student's planned graduation term, then register for the MAL Final Project course by the end of the course registration period (see Timeline below). The student may not register for the project course without the signed proposal cover sheet and assessment form on file.
5. **Complete the project.** Following the approval of the proposal, the student shall carry out implementation of the project sufficient to meet the requirements of the capstone document, primarily under the guidance of the Reader.
6. **Submit the completed capstone document.** The student shall submit to the Reader their completed capstone document and project artifact by the deadline for the student's planned graduation term (see Timeline below). The student shall receive feedback on the document from the Reader, including any additional work required for approval of the document.
7. **Submit the revised capstone document.** The student shall submit to the Reader their capstone document that includes revisions based on the Reader's recommendations on the first submission. The student will receive from the Reader a completed Final Project Evaluation Report indicating their grade for the final project. See Final Project Evaluation below for details.

8. **Submit the final capstone document for archiving.** After completing any required final revisions and receiving the First Reader's final approval of the document, the student shall submit a PDF copy of the final capstone document to the Director of the Library by the deadline for their graduation term (see Timeline below). The student is responsible for ensuring that the submitted capstone document meets all formatting requirements (see the Capstone Document Formatting Requirements section of the *Student Handbook* for details). A diploma will not be provided until a capstone document that meets all formatting requirements is received by the Library.

## Capstone Document

The written component of the Final Project should be at minimum 20 double-spaced pages, with the minimum page length for each section stated below. The artifact (developed and implemented solution) may be additional written pages or it may be another kind of artifact (video, website, etc.).

### Required Components

1. **Description of Need.** The student clearly identifies and describes the need or problem to be solved pertaining to their focused area of study and desired vocation. It should express a real, discernible need or problem in a community, ministry context, or other social context. This component should be at least 5 pages double-spaced.
2. **Research.** The student discusses the scholarly and real-world (e.g., interviews) research performed that clarifies the nature of the need or problem and articulates potential solutions (e.g., a curriculum, an initiative, an enacted policy, an experiment, organizing a community) based both on the research and their United learning. The scholarly research reflects engagement with contemporary research in the field or fields related to the problem or need. The research must be adequately cited and appropriately understood and articulated. The summary of and engagement with research should demonstrate an in-depth understanding of and facility with learning from the student's MAL coursework (theology, religious texts, scripture, leadership, spiritual and personal formation). This component should be at least 10 pages double-spaced.
3. **Solution.** This will be your "artifact," the documentation of the product you develop and express in the real world. It should demonstrate the ability to move from understanding a need or problem to developing a solution and implementing it. The nature of the artifact should align with the need or problem to be solved. Artifact examples include but are not limited to written documents, digital and print materials, recorded events and presentations, videos, websites, and YouTube channels. The artifact should express depth of understanding, creativity, and ability to enact practical impact of ideas in real world settings. There is no page length requirement for a written document artifact, though it should be sufficient to convey the requirements for this section.
4. **Evaluation/Reflection.** The student writes an evaluation of and reflection on the implemented solution. This component should convey insightful self-reflection and awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the implemented project, discern potential impacts of the student's effort, and demonstrate the ability to learn through experimentation. If the implementation of the solution identified in the project extends beyond the end of the term, the evaluation may be completed based on its partial implementation. This component should be at least 5 pages double-spaced.

## MAL Final Project Evaluation

The written capstone document and artifact are the basis for evaluation of the MAL final project. Grading for the capstone document follows the Pass/Fail grading system (see Grading section of the *Student Handbook*). A grade of "Pass" or "Pass with Honors" on the Final Project Evaluation Report merits completion of the MAL final project graduation requirement. A passing report may include recommendations for minor corrections to the capstone document before its submission to the library for archiving.

If a student receives a grade of "Conditional Pass," the student must make the significant corrections described in the Evaluation Report and resubmit the capstone document to the Reader for reevaluation of the grade. If a student receives a grade of "Fail," the student must make substantial revisions described in

the Evaluation Report, then resubmit the revised capstone document to the Reader for reevaluation of the grade.

A student enrolled in the MAL Final Project course who is withdrawn from the MAL degree program for failing to complete the program within the maximum allowed six year enrollment duration will receive a grade of “F” for the MAL Final Project course.

### **MAL Final Project Continuation**

After initial registration for the 3-credit MAL Final Project course, the capstone document is expected to be completed within one academic term. If, at the end of that time period a student's document is incomplete, the student will be automatically registered for the 0-credit MAL Final Project Continuation course each academic term, including summer, until the completion of the document; the student will be charged for the course each term. See the Tuition and Fees section of the current *Academic Catalog* for the fee amount.

At the end of each academic term that the student is enrolled in the MAL Final Project Continuation course—including summer—and has not completed their final project, the student shall submit to their advisor a brief report that summarizes their progress towards completion of their final project that term as well as their progress goals or planned action steps towards completion for the coming term. If, over three consecutive terms, the first reader has determined that the student has not made progress towards completion of their final project, the student shall be administratively withdrawn from the seminary.

### **MAL Final Project Timeline**

Task	Deadline for Graduation in		Deadline for Participation in Spring Commencement
	August	December	
Secure project Reader	January 1	May 1	September 1
Submit to Reader project proposal and completed MAL Final Project Proposal and Registration Cover Sheet and blank Proposal Assessment Rubric	March 1	July 1	November 1
Receive from Reader proposal and registration cover sheet with approval signature and completed assessment rubric	mid March	Mid July	Mid November
Submit copy of signed proposal and registration cover sheet and completed assessment rubric to Registrar	April 1	August 1	December 1
Submit Petition for Graduation form to Registrar	May 1	September 1	January 1
Submit completed capstone document to Reader for feedback	July 15	November 15	March 15
Receive from Reader any additional work required for approval of capstone document	August 1	December 1	April 1
Submit revised capstone document to Reader	August 15	December 15	April 15
Receive completed Final Project Evaluation Report from Reader	late August	late December	late April



## Social Transformation Project

One of the learning goals of the MAL, MDiv and DMin degrees in Social Transformation is for students to demonstrate transformational leadership through the intentional, real world application of hermeneutical and strategic frameworks for faithful public witness and action in the world. To meet this goal, all Social Transformation students complete a praxis-oriented learning experience in the form of the Social Transformation Project.

The MAL and MDiv project is composed of a two-term practicum experience followed by a capstone paper that documents and reflects upon the completed project, including its impact on the community and contribution to the field of social transformation. The DMin project is completed during the one-term DMin Practicum course, with the documentation of and reflection on the project incorporated into the student's subsequent dissertation (see the DMin Dissertation section below).

The project may be of the student's own design or may consist of an internship or employment at one or more locations. These sites may be secular or spiritual in nature, depending on the student's interest and learning goals and the needs of the project. Students are welcome and encouraged to engage in projects at their place of employment, community of faith, or other appropriate setting. DMin students are expected—but not required—to engage in a project at their place of employment. The goal is that the project be directly applicable to the student's vocation and learning goals. The student is responsible for informing their employer, community, or other setting of their intentions to conduct a project at that site. This should be a point of mutual agreement and enthusiasm.

MAL and MDiv students should identify a supervisor or mentor who will be available to supervise the project on a regular basis or have sufficient knowledge to guide the student in project implementation. In cases where the student is the executive leader of an organization, such as the pastor, executive director, etc. and does not have a direct supervisor, the student must contact their Social Transformation Project advisor to develop an alternative plan.

Prior to the start of the project, MAL and MDiv students must complete the Leadership and Strategies for Social Change course, while DMin students must complete the Leader as Change Agent course. In these courses, students develop a plan for a social change project and receive coaching and feedback on the plan. Students may implement the projects they develop in the course or use the methodology to develop a similar project. Students have the opportunity to further develop their plan as they continue through their coursework.

The project should take at least 400 hours to complete. This is usually done over time as 8-10 hours per week, but the schedule may vary based on the needs of the project. Students should document their hours and their work as they go, which will be invaluable in accurately conveying the results of the project in the capstone or dissertation after completion of the practicum.

### MAL/MDiv Social Transformation Project Timeline

Task	Deadline for Participation in Spring Commencement
Complete Leadership and Strategies for Social Change course	Fall term of previous year
Secure an internship/practicum placement with support from the Director of Social Transformation	February 1 of previous year

Submit to the Director of Social Transformation an Internship/Practicum Supervisor Agreement completed by the site supervisor	March 1 of previous year
Secure the written approval of the internship/practicum site by the Director of Social Transformation	March 15 of previous year
Submit to the Director of Social Transformation a copy of the student's written internship/practicum agreement with the site supervisor	April 1 of previous year
Complete Contextual Education Internship 1 or Contextual Education Internship Intensive course	Summer term
If completed Contextual Education Internship 1 course, complete Contextual Education Internship 2 course	Fall term
Complete Social Transformation Capstone course	Spring term

### DMin Social Transformation Practicum and Dissertation Timeline

Task	Deadline for Enrollment in DMin Dissertation Course		
	Fall	Spring	Summer
Register for spring Leader as Change Agent course (offered every other year)	Spring term of previous year	Spring term, 2 years prior	Spring term of previous year
Secure the written approval of the practicum site by the Director of Social Transformation	December 15	December 15 of previous year	December 15
Complete DMin Practicum course	Spring term	Spring term of previous year	Spring term
Register for DMin Dissertation course	Fall term	Spring term	Summer term

### DMin Practicum

The DMin Practicum is the capstone course for Doctor of Ministry students in all concentrations, including Directed Study. The practicum integrates students' Doctor of Ministry coursework into their ministry and/or vocational context. The practicum includes a project, related to the student's dissertation, that will be undertaken in their ministry or other vocational context. Students bring insights gained from their project into conversation with other students during the course of the term. Students must complete the DMin Practicum course before enrolling in the DMin Dissertation course.

The DMin Practicum course is offered each spring. Prior to registering for the course, students must secure the ministry setting they will be participating in and determine the dissertation project they plan to work on during the practicum term. Ministry settings are very broadly defined—any setting (paid or volunteer) in which the student is able to apply and/or experiment with concepts learned in class. Additionally, ministry settings must have a supervisor or support and accountability team. Students may contact the Director of Advanced Studies for support in identifying a placement. Dissertation projects are similarly broadly defined but should support a student's work toward their dissertation. To gain approval to register for the practicum course, the student must submit to the Director of Advanced Studies a 1–2 page

description of their ministry setting and planned dissertation project that demonstrates the appropriateness of each for their practicum work and written dissertation.

The following steps must be completed prior to participation in the DMin Practicum course.

1. The student submits a description of their ministry setting and dissertation project to the Director of Advanced Studies.
2. The Director approves the practicum ministry setting and planned dissertation project.
3. The student submits a copy of their agreement with their practicum site supervisor to the Director of Advanced Studies.
4. The student registers for the spring DMin Practicum course.

## DMin Dissertation

All DMin students are required to complete a doctoral dissertation as part of the Doctor of Ministry graduation requirements. Normally, the dissertation is completed over a two-year period after completion of DMin coursework. The main body of text of a DMin dissertation must be no fewer than 90 or more than 125 pages. The page total including appendices must not exceed 200 pages.

### Types of Dissertations

There are four different types of DMin dissertations. Each has a distinct focus that enables the author to effectively formulate their research.

#### ***Model of Ministry***

This type of dissertation is experimental research devised for the student's context of ministry. Its focus is on validating the efficacy of a new practice of ministry. It calls for new and creative responses to obvious needs or opportunities, a synthesis of resources and implementation of a new ministry effort. The student focuses on developing a rationale for a new approach, structuring a project design with clear objectives that respond to the need, and evaluating the effect of the experiment. The end result of this project type is to create a ministry practice or program that enhances or furthers the ministry of others.

#### ***Research in Ministry***

This type of dissertation is driven by the identification and analysis of a particular ministry question in the author's context. The scope and nature of this problem is usually defined by discoveries made during the feasibility study. It is descriptive and phenomenological in nature. Normally the writer articulates a hypothesis and sustains or corroborates the hypothesis by means of research and observation. This type of project uses the scientific format of gathering and interpreting data. Quantitative or qualitative research may provide the data. Integration of theology and practice is essential. The document seeks to advance the practice of ministry by generating new information, interpreting a context or relating the research question to a theological framework.

#### ***Work of Art***

A Work of Art Dissertation is appropriate for a student who is a trained artist who wishes to develop a thesis project with an artistic expression and focus. This thesis type is driven by the selected medium and the normal canons of critical response by connoisseurs.

A Work of Art Dissertation has two parts. **The first part** is the work of art itself which is to be evaluated by connoisseurs who are publicly recognized for their knowledge of art and how it works, its norms, whether it is mature, how effective it is in communication, and who understand the theory and history of art. The focus may be on music, the visual arts, theater arts, literature, poetry, spiritual memoir or spiritual autobiography as a ministry-relevant aesthetic expression of a religious theme. The methodology uses an advanced degree of technical skill appropriate to the selected medium and an integrative format which allows for a theological interpretation. There should be an awareness of the responses of the observers, the public, or the church. The student must devise a method for receiving critique and evaluation from the connoisseurs, the public and ministers.

**The second part** of the Work of Art Dissertation is the written dissertation, described in the following sections, which must be between 35 and 60 pages.

### ***Theological Construction for Ministry***

This type of dissertation engages the student in research and theological reflection designed to create new theological understandings that will under-gird the practice of ministry for the student and others in ministry today. Its focus is on employing the use of necessary hermeneutical tools for constructing a theological framework and understanding of a topic in ministry from the perspective of one or more of the theological disciplines. It calls for the understanding and use of appropriate theological methods and new and creative theological construction, reflection, and integration.

### **Dissertation Procedure**

All of the following tasks must be completed by the student in order to fulfill the DMin dissertation graduation requirement.

1. **Secure the First Reader for the dissertation.** The student shall consult with their faculty advisor and/or the Director of Advanced Studies in identifying and securing the First Reader. The First Reader is usually a full-time United faculty member with extensive knowledge related to the dissertation, but the student may, with the consent of the faculty advisor, approach a United adjunct professor to serve as the First Reader. In circumstances in which no United faculty member with such expertise is available, a qualified scholar outside of the United faculty may be appointed under a special contract. The student should secure the First Reader, as well as the Second Reader and optional Third Reader (see below), by the deadline for the term that they plan to enroll in the DMin Dissertation course (see Timeline below).
2. **Secure the Second Reader and optional Third Reader for the dissertation.** The student shall consult with the First Reader in identifying and securing the Second Reader and, if appropriate, Third Reader. The Second and Third Readers are usually full-time United faculty members or adjunct professors, but the student may, with the consent of the first reader, approach an individual from outside United's faculty to serve as the Third Reader. The student should secure all readers by the deadline for the term that they plan to enroll in the DMin Dissertation course (see Timeline below).
3. **Develop the dissertation proposal.** The draft proposal is developed in the Research Tools and Proposal course. During and after completion of the course students, in consultation with the First Reader and following feedback received during the Research Tools and Proposal course, will revise the dissertation proposal for submission to the Readers.

#### ***Dissertation Proposal Components***

The proposal shall be about 15 pages in length, not including the working bibliography. The proposal, regardless of dissertation type, shall include all of the following (exceptions noted below):

1. Background statement
2. Problem statement/Research question
3. Methodology statement defining dissertation type and rationale for type
4. Value of the dissertation /contribution to ministry
5. Presuppositions/Delimitations
6. Feasibility statement
7. Proposed plan for Literature Review
8. Proposed plan for Theological Statement
9. Proposed Field Research (including methodology and method)  
*Optional for Theological Construction for Ministry, Statement of proposed work of art for Work of Art dissertation type*
10. Outline with chapter summary (see Dissertation Outline below)

11. Timeline
12. Working Bibliography

4. **Secure approval of the dissertation proposal.** The student shall submit to the First Reader the final proposal and an attached Doctor of Ministry Dissertation Proposal Cover Sheet and Evaluation Rubric with the student section completed by the deadline for the term for enrollment in the DMin Dissertation course (see Timeline below). After evaluating the proposal, the First Reader shall return to the student the cover sheet and evaluation rubric with the reader section completed. If the proposal is approved, the Registrar shall register the student for the DMin Dissertation course. If the proposal is not approved, the student shall attach a new cover sheet to each revised proposal submission for re-evaluation.

**Register for the dissertation course.** The student shall submit the signed proposal cover sheet and assessment rubric to the Registrar by the end of the course registration period (see Timeline below). The Registrar shall then register the student for the DMin Dissertation course.

5. **Submit Institutional Review Application, if applicable.** United's DMin students are required to protect the well-being, dignity, and confidentiality of participants in research. If a student conducts a research study that involves the participation of human subjects, the student shall submit an Institutional Review Application and documentation to the Dean for approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). For details, see the Institutional Review Policy in the Seminary-Wide Policies located on United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas.
6. **Write the dissertation.** Following the approval of the proposal, the student shall perform research and write the dissertation based on the Dissertation Outline (below), primarily under the guidance of the First Reader. The Second and Third Readers may also be consulted if this is desired by the First Reader. The student shall be attentive to written comments made by any of the readers while writing the dissertation.
7. **Submit Institutional Review Application annually, or as needed.** For details, see the Institutional Review Policy in the Seminary-Wide Policies located on the Student Resources page. See the Timeline below for due dates.
8. **Submit the completed dissertation.** The student shall submit their completed dissertation (and work of art, if applicable) to the First Reader by the deadline for the student's planned graduation term (see Timeline below). The student shall receive feedback on the dissertation from the First Reader, including any additional work required for approval of the dissertation.
9. **Submit the revised dissertation.** The student shall submit to all readers the dissertation that includes revisions based on the First Reader's recommendations on the first submission.
10. **Complete an oral defense of the dissertation.** When the readers judge the dissertation to be ready, the student shall sit for an oral defense of their dissertation that is conducted by the readers. The defense shall be no longer than one and one-half hours. The defense must be completed by the deadline for the student's planned graduation term (see Timeline below). The student will receive from the First Reader a completed Oral Defense Evaluation Report indicating their grade for the dissertation. See Dissertation Evaluation below for details.
11. **Submit the final dissertation for archiving.** After completing any required final revisions and receiving the First Reader's final approval of the dissertation, the student shall submit a PDF copy of the final dissertation to the Director of the Library by the deadline for their graduation term (see Timeline below). Students are responsible for ensuring that the submitted dissertation meets all formatting requirements (see the Capstone Document Formatting Requirements section of the *Student Handbook* for details). A diploma will not be provided until a dissertation that meets all formatting requirements is received by the Library.

## Dissertation Evaluation

The written dissertation and oral defense together are the basis for evaluation of the student's dissertation. Grading for the dissertation follows the Pass/Fail grading system (see Grading section of the Student Handbook). A grade of "Pass" or "Pass with Honors" on the Oral Defense Report merits completion of the DMin dissertation graduation requirement. A passing report may include recommendations for minor corrections to the dissertation before its submission to the library for archiving.

If a student receives a grade of "Conditional Pass," the student must make the significant corrections described in the Oral Defense Report and resubmit the dissertation to the Readers for reevaluation of the grade. If a student receives a grade of "Fail," the student must make the substantial revisions described in the Oral Defense Report, then resubmit and defend the revised dissertation for reevaluation of the grade.

A student enrolled in the DMin Dissertation course who is withdrawn from the DMin degree program for failing to complete the program within the maximum allowed six year enrollment duration will receive a grade of "F" for the DMin Dissertation course.

## Dissertation Outline

All students are required to follow this described dissertation outline with six (or seven) chapters. Advisors have broad discretion about altering the outline and as such students must get permission from their advisor to deviate from this outline.

### ***Chapter 1: Introduction***

This chapter is a modification of the proposal completed in DM5201. The bibliography and literature review of the proposal are removed, and the background, feasibility and sub-problem sections would be expanded as appropriate. All dissertation types would complete this chapter.

### ***Chapter 2: Literature Review (may be switched with Chapter 3)***

This chapter is a traditional literature review examining the literature pertinent to the dissertation topic. Emphasis is placed on professional ministerial and professional practice literature (as opposed to theoretical literature). The literature review is generally limited in scope to two major topics.

On average, chapter 2 consists of about 15-25 pages and has a minimum of 40-50 quality sources. It is expected that the student engages with all the significant scholars on the topic. It is NOT expected that the literature review be comprehensive.

#### ***Requirements by Dissertation Type***

- The Model of Ministry and Research in Ministry dissertation types requires the student to focus on the literature relevant to the practice of ministry as it relates to their research question.
- The Theological Construction for Ministry dissertation type requires students to do an historical study of the current theological state of affairs in relation to their research question.
- The Work of Art dissertation type requires a contextual reflection of the work of art in relation to its genre and context (the chapter could be, at the discretion of the advisor, significantly shorter).

### ***Chapter 3: Theological Reflection***

Chapter 3 is like chapter 2 in that it is a survey of pertinent theological material. Unlike chapter 2 this chapter is theoretical in its nature. Chapter 3 is roughly the same size as chapter two.

#### ***Requirements by Dissertation Type***

- The Model of Ministry and Research in Ministry dissertation types require the student to focus on the literature relevant to the theological foundations (or theological context) of the project and research question.

- The Theological Construction for Ministry dissertation type requires students to explain, in theological language, the need for the proposed theological changes in relationship to their research question.
- The Work of Art dissertation type requires a contextual reflection of the work of art in relation to its theological intersections (the chapter could be, at the discretion of the advisor, significantly shorter).

#### **Chapter 4: Methodology**

Chapter 4 is a relatively short (10 pages on average) explanation of the field research of the dissertation. This chapter outlines the field research and its parameters. It also describes any consent gathering tools.

##### *Requirements by Dissertation Type*

- For the Model of Ministry and Research in Ministry dissertation types this chapter outlines the practical field research component of the dissertation.
- For projects that are more theological/theoretical in nature, such as the Theological Construction for Ministry dissertation type, the student (in conjunction with the advisor) will think critically about the various sources of data that inform the project. For example, a project focused on proposing a new doctrinal standard for a denomination might include a small focus group or survey to gain appropriate critical feedback to the project.
- The Work of Art dissertation type would not need this chapter.

#### **Chapter 5: Results**

Chapter 5 is a presentation of the results of the field research project in chapter 4. The length of this chapter will be directly proportional to the size of the field research project.

For more theoretical projects this chapter may contain further research beyond the literature and theological reviews. Regardless of type, this is where the student presents their original contribution to the field of ministry praxis.

##### *Requirements by Dissertation Type*

- For the Model of Ministry and Research in Ministry dissertation types this chapter will report on field research.
- For the Theological Construction for Ministry dissertation type this chapter will develop the proposed theological or doctrinal change along with all supporting documentation. For this dissertation type it would be expected that this chapter be significantly longer than chapters 2 and 3.
- The Work of Art dissertation type would not need this chapter.

#### **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

This chapter presents the conclusions of the project engaging directly with chapters 2, 3 and 5. It is expected that the project conclusions include a clear application to professional ministry. Suggestions for further research on the topic would be encouraged.

##### *Requirements by Dissertation Type*

- For the Model of Ministry, Research in Ministry and Theological Construction for Ministry dissertation types the evaluative expectation will be that the student critically engages in all data streams (chapters 2, 3 and 5).
- For the Work of Art this chapter will be a summative statement of the Work of Art and its contribution to ministry.

#### **Chapter 7 (OPTIONAL): Personal Formation Statement**

Students are encouraged (and advisors may require) a short five to seven page written reflection on how the dissertation process personally impacted the student's own spiritual, professional and relational formation. This chapter is OPTIONAL for all dissertation types.

## DMin Dissertation Continuation

In each academic term subsequent to registering for the DMin Dissertation course, a student will be automatically registered for the 0-credit DMin Dissertation Continuation course each academic term, including summer, until the completion and approval of the dissertation; the student will be charged for the course each term. See the Tuition and Fees section of the current *Academic Catalog* for the fee amount.

At the end of each academic term that the student is enrolled in the DMin Dissertation Continuation course—including summer—and has not completed their dissertation, the student shall submit to their first reader a brief report that summarizes their progress towards completion of their dissertation that term as well as their progress goals or planned action steps towards completion for the coming term. If, over three consecutive terms, the first reader has determined that the student has not made progress towards completion of their dissertation, the student shall be administratively withdrawn from the seminary.

## Dissertation Timeline

Task	Deadlines for Enrollment in DMin Dissertation Course in		
	Fall	Spring	Summer
Complete fall Research Tools and Proposal course	Fall of previous year	Fall of previous year	Fall
Submit to the Director of Advanced Studies for approval a 1–2 page description of practicum ministry setting and planned dissertation project	November 1 of previous year	November 1 of previous year	November 1
Submit to the Director of Advanced Studies a copy of practicum site supervisor agreement	December 15	December 15	December 15
Register for and complete spring DMin Practicum course	Spring	Spring of previous year	Spring
Secure 1st and 2nd Reader (and Outside Reader, if applicable)	May 1	September 1	January 1
Submit to 1st Reader completed DMin Dissertation Proposal and Registration Cover Sheet and dissertation proposal (or work of art proposal) and blank Proposal Assessment Rubric	July 1	November 1	March 1
If appropriate, submit completed Application for Institutional Review form and documentation to Dean	July 1 annually	November 1 annually	March 1 annually
Receive from 1st Reader proposal and registration cover sheet with approval signature and completed assessment rubric	mid July	mid November	mid March
Submit to Registrar copy of approved proposal and registration cover sheet signed by 1st Reader and completed assessment rubric	August 1	December 1	April 1
Receive institutional review form approval from IRB	August 1 annually	December 1 annually	April 1 annually



Register for DMin Dissertation course	early September	early January	early May
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Task	Deadlines for Graduation in		Deadlines for Participation in Spring Commencement
	August	December	
Submit Petition for Graduation form to Registrar	May 1	September 1	January 1
Submit completed dissertation (and work of art, if applicable) to 1st Reader	June 1	October 1	February 1
Receive from 1st Reader any additional work required for approval of dissertation	mid June	mid October	mid February
Submit revised dissertation (and work of art, if applicable) to Readers	July 1	November 1	March 1
1st Reader schedules oral defense date and time	mid July	mid November	mid March
Complete oral defense of dissertation with Readers	August 1	December 1	April 1
Receive completed Oral Defense Evaluation Report from 1st Reader; make any needed revisions before receiving approval of final dissertation by First Reader	early August	early December	early April
Submit to Library Director PDF copy of final dissertation and completed Permission to Archive and Disseminate Dissertation form	August 15	December 15	April 15

## Capstone Document Format Requirements

The style manual for theses, MAL capstone documents, and dissertations is the latest published edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. The front matter, the text of the paper itself, and the back matter shall follow Turabian format except as noted in the United formatting specifications below. In addition, the document shall comply with Copyright Law as detailed in the *Seminary-Wide Policies* document.

### United Formatting Specifications

1. The document must have a 1.5" left margin and 1" top, right, and bottom margins.
2. Page numbers for the front matter that require a page number (e.g., table of contents) must be centered at the bottom of the page. All other pages in the document must have the page number in the upper right hand corner.
3. The document must use footnotes, not endnotes.

4. Text must be a 12 pt sans-serif font, preferably Arial or Verdana.

A diploma shall only be issued if the capstone document submitted to the Director of the Library meets all format requirements. Students who are unable to meet these requirements are encouraged to hire a formatting expert.

## **Leave Of Absence**

Students in degree programs who need to take time away from their studies may request a leave of absence for a maximum total of three academic terms during their program. Students on approved leave of absence will have the cumulative maximum time frame of their program extended by the length of the approved leave of absence, not to exceed one year. International students are not eligible for Leave of Absence.

Students must complete the Registrar's form indicating a request for Leave of Absence and submit it to the Registrar's Office. The Registrar will approve or deny the request. The Registrar's office will document the approved leave in the student's file and notify the appropriate offices. The Registrar's Office will notify the financial aid office immediately in the case of any leave of absence granted to a student receiving financial aid.

If a leave of absence is denied, the Registrar's office will inform the student, make a notation of the denial and the reason for the denial on the Request Form, and place it in the student's file.

Students taking a leave of absence must send a written request to the Registrar to drop each course for which they are currently registered. The policies for dropped courses and tuition charge reductions apply to courses dropped for a leave of absence. See the "Adding or Dropping a Course After the Registration Period" and "Tuition Charge Reductions for Dropped Courses" sections of the *Student Handbook* for the relevant policies.

A student who is unable to return to active status at the conclusion of an approved leave of absence because of illness or other special circumstances may request an extension of the leave. This request must be received a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to the start of the academic term in which the student is scheduled to return. The procedure for requesting an extension of a leave is the same as that for making the initial request.

A matriculated student who is not enrolled in any courses and does not have an approved leave of absence is subject to administrative withdrawal from the seminary. See the "Withdrawal" section of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

## **Leave of Absence and Financial Aid**

Students in degree and diploma programs receiving financial aid who request a leave of absence may have their student loans deferred, if the leave meets the following requirements:

1. The student must follow the procedure to request a Leave of Absence.
2. The leave of absence must be for no longer than one academic trimester term, and the student must return at the beginning of the next trimester. United's standard academic trimester terms include fall, spring, and summer. Students are expected to be enrolled in all three trimesters, such that taking the summer off is still considered a leave of absence unless the student meets the requirements for an exception. See the "Continuous Enrollment Requirement" section of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

A student receiving financial aid, whose leave of absence does not meet these requirements, or who fails to return to the school at the end of an approved leave of absence, is considered by the Department of Education to have withdrawn from their academic program. The federal loan refund requirements apply, and the student will not be eligible for any in-school loan deferments. Financial aid will not be disbursed during the leave of absence. Any loan proceeds that the school receives during this period will be returned to the lender.

Any student who takes a leave of absence in the middle of the academic term will be charged for classes attended in accordance with the appropriate tuition charge reduction policy. Any remaining funds are returned to the lender.

If a student's leave of absence goes beyond one academic trimester term, loan repayment begins six months from the last day of at least half-time enrollment.

### **National Guard or Federal Active Duty**

A student who is a member, or the spouse of a member if the member has a dependent child, of the National Guard or Reserve of the United States and who is ordered to national guard duty or federal active duty during an academic term, or an active duty member of the Armed Forces who is notified of a deployment and deployed overseas during an academic term, is entitled to:

1. Withdraw from the student's entire registration and receive a full removal of tuition and mandatory fee charges.
2. Make arrangements with the student's instructors for course completion, or for a Conditional Pass that shall be completed by the student at a later term. If such arrangements are made, the student's registration shall remain intact and tuition and mandatory fees shall be assessed for the courses in full. The Conditional Pass policy and procedure will then be followed. (See the Conditional Pass section of the *Student Handbook*.)
3. Switch section from in person to zoom or asynchronous if it's feasible for the individual to continue with coursework while deployed. Arrangement must be approved by the professor and Registrar.

## **Withdrawal**

Any student in degree and diploma programs who wants to discontinue studies at the school should submit a letter to the Registrar indicating their intention to withdraw from the school. The Registrar will send a letter granting withdrawal in good standing to the student if all financial obligations have been met.

### **Administrative Withdrawal**

Any matriculated student who does not comply with the Continuous Enrollment Policy is subject to administrative withdrawal from the seminary. See the "Continuous Enrollment Requirement" section of the *Student Handbook* for the definition of continuous enrollment.

A student who has been administratively withdrawn from a degree program due to noncompliance with the continuous enrollment policy may submit a petition to the Registrar for re-enrollment in the degree program up to three academic terms after the last term the student met the continuous enrollment policy. If the petition is approved and the student registers for at least one course in the upcoming term, the student will be re-enrolled in the degree program in which they were enrolled prior to their withdrawal. A student who has not met the continuous enrollment policy for more than three consecutive terms must reapply for admission to the seminary.

## **Graduation**

Students who desire to graduate from a degree, diploma or certificate program must submit a completed Petition to Graduate Form to the Registrar's office by the first day of the academic term prior to their desired graduation term (fall, spring or summer) and pay the appropriate graduation fees.

In order to receive a diploma, a student must have met all the requirements for their academic program and have satisfied all obligations to the seminary, including returning all library materials to the library. Diplomas are ordered from an outside vendor in batches and sent directly to graduates.

United holds a commencement ceremony at the end of the spring term for students who have completed all requirements for degree, diploma and certificate programs during the academic year ending at

commencement. Students who have not completed all program requirements may also participate in commencement if they meet the following qualifications:

- are registered for all remaining required program courses for the summer term following commencement, up to two courses;
- if applicable, submitted to the library their successfully completed and defended MA thesis or DMin dissertation by April 15 prior to commencement, or completed their MAL Final Project by the end of the spring term prior to commencement; and
- meet all other program requirements.

All students who desire to participate in commencement must submit the Petition to Graduate Form by the first day of the fall term prior to commencement and pay the appropriate graduation fees prior to the day of commencement.

### **DMin Certificate of Advanced Ministry Studies**

A Certificate of Advanced Ministry Studies will be awarded to DMin students who successfully complete the coursework portion of the program, but are not planning to continue in the degree program. The Certificate will be awarded at commencement.

### **Honors Recognition**

Starting with the 2025 Spring Commencement Ceremony, honors will be recognized for the graduating class. Honors students will receive cords for wearing with their regalia at graduation.

The honors criteria will be a combination of GPA and AH or PH grades achieved for the duration of the student's degree. The number of AH/PH grades will be tiered based on degree. More details on the GPA requirement and number of AH or PH grades needed for honors will be forthcoming in the January 2025 *Student Handbook*.

### **Graduation Awards**

Each year, select graduates are recognized for their achievements during their seminary career by the faculty through the granting of academic awards. These awards are announced during the Spring Banquet and are recognized in published Commencement materials.

### **Transcript Requests**

All requests for transcripts, both official and unofficial, must be submitted using the online Registrar Form on United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas, and on the United website. The form requires the individual seeking the transcript to supply:

1. Name
2. Birth date
3. Address to which the transcript will be sent
4. Signature

Both official and unofficial transcripts are free of charge. Any student who has an outstanding account balance to the institution WILL NOT receive official or unofficial transcripts, except under any of the following circumstances:

- the student owes less than \$1,000,
- the student has entered into and is in compliance with a payment plan<sup>1</sup> with the seminary,
- the transcript request is made by a prospective employer for the student, or

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<sup>1</sup> Please see the Payment Plans section of this *Student Handbook* for details.

- the student is incarcerated at a Minnesota correctional facility.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 requires that all transcript requests be submitted in writing and be signed by the former or current student. Telephone and email requests for transcripts cannot be processed. Requests received by fax with the above information will be processed. Transcript requests are processed on Thursdays each week.

## Confidentiality and Retention Of Student Records

Within the Seminary administrative structure that serves students from the time of inquiry to the time of their withdrawal or graduation, there are a number of offices that maintain student records. These records are maintained with integrity and discretion, and in keeping with the guidelines of the *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act*. Guidelines are available on their website:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/students.html>. They are set up to serve the students and to facilitate the necessary administrative function of each office.

The **Registrar** is the **only official** authorized to certify current student enrollment. (In emergencies when the Registrar will not be available to make the needed certification in a timely way, the Financial Aid Office may certify current student enrollment.) Items classified as “public information” are indicated below, and are continued in this category **unless the Registrar is notified in writing** that any particular item should not be “public.”

## Notification of Rights Under FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives United’s students certain rights with respect to their education records. Annual distributions of the Student Handbook containing this policy to students by email serve as regular notification of their rights under FERPA.

1. Students have the right to inspect and review their education records within 45 days of the day on which the seminary receives a request for access. The student should submit to the Registrar a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The Registrar shall make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the Registrar, they shall retrieve the records from the appropriate personnel or office, then allow the student to access the records. The seminary is not required to provide copies of records unless circumstances such as distance prevent a student from reviewing the records.
2. Students have the right to request that the seminary amend or correct records which they believe are inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of their privacy rights. If the seminary decides not to amend the record as requested by the student, the seminary shall notify the student of the decision and advise the student of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. If the campus denies the amendment request after the hearing, the student has the right to insert a statement in their education record commenting on the contested information and/or stating why they disagree with the decision.
3. Generally, the seminary may not disclose personally identifiable information from a student’s education records to a third party unless the eligible student has provided prior written consent. The seminary may, however, disclose this information to a third party without consent under certain exceptions.
  - a. The seminary may disclose, without consent, information from a student’s records to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the institution as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member; a person serving on the board; a person or company with whom the institution has contracted to perform a special task (such as an auditor or attorney); a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or

assisting another school official in performing their tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

- b. The seminary may disclose, without consent, information from a student's records to officials of another school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll. The seminary will attempt to notify the student of the disclosure if the student did not initiate the disclosure.
- c. The seminary may disclose, without consent, "directory" information including a student's name, photograph, academic program, graduation year, and honors and awards. Students may inform the Registrar that they refuse to let the institution release any or all directory information. The request must be made in writing and specify the information that may not be released. The request is valid until a subsequent written request is received.
- d. Other exceptions that allow disclosure, without consent, to a third party are listed under 34 CFR § 99.31 of the Federal Code of Regulations at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-A/part-99/subpart-D/section-99.31>.

Students who believe that their FERPA rights may have been violated may file a complaint with the Department of Education's Student Privacy Policy Office. Information regarding the complaint process is available at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint>.

More information regarding FERPA is available on the Department of Education's Protecting Student Privacy website at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov>.

## **Institutional Records**

The administrative offices involved in a systematic record-keeping procedure are:

- Admissions
- Financial Aid
- Dean
  - Course evaluations
  - Contextual education
- Registrar
  - Academic file (student file after matriculation)
  - Transcripts

The Advancement Office maintains a file on all graduates that includes address, degree earned, and giving record to United. The development office also maintains the giving record of all students who are donors.

The Business Office maintains files regarding student accounts, loans, leases, and correspondence pertinent thereto; also, employee records when applicable.

The following persons or offices may keep records necessary for the fulfillment of the function of the office with regard to its service to the student (note that memos or reports from them are in the academic file):

- Director of Admissions
- Dean of the Seminary
- members of the faculty

Each student's education records (those in the Registrar's files above) shall be available for review by the student, to the extent specified by law, during regular working hours in the office of the Registrar. Each current student's contextual studies records shall be available for review by the student, to the extent

specified by law, during regular working hours in the office of contextual studies. Otherwise, a student's education and contextual studies records shall be held confidential by the seminary as permitted by law, and are not released without authority of the student. Records in other offices are held in confidence, and can be discussed with students in the context of procedures operating in each office. These records may not be released to third parties without written permission of the student, except those necessary to pursue collection of past due bills or loans.

## **Retention of Records**

Each office, in keeping with long-range usefulness and available space, has established a retention policy for its records. As a matter of special information, these specific policies are indicated below:

Admissions records of students who matriculate are retained for five years after graduation or the last date of attendance.

The Registrar has primary responsibility for official student records. Items that are part of the student's academic record are retained for five years after graduation or the last date of attendance. Certain records are maintained permanently, including the transcript and academic records that include individual student grade evaluation forms, and other narrative student evaluations. Following graduation, disclosure forms, learning agreements, and evaluations from a student's Contextual Studies file are transferred to the record file maintained in the Registrar's office. Of these, the evaluations are retained permanently, and the other records are retained for five years after graduation or last date of attendance.

## **Procedure to Change Content or Handling of Records**

If the student believes the Registrar's files (see above) contain inaccurate or misleading information, or that the records are not being handled properly, the student may discuss the matter with the Dean of the Seminary, who will assist the student in formulating a specific and formal request. The matter may be handled administratively or assigned to a standing or an ad hoc committee. If the student is not satisfied by the handling at that level, the Dean of the Seminary shall take the petition to the Academic Council for formal hearing.

## **Preferred Name Policy**

### ***Can I use my preferred name for everything at the seminary?***

Preferred name will only be used in cases where legal name is not necessary. Examples of where your legal name is necessary includes, but not limited to, financial aid documents, payroll, official transcripts, and federal documents. You may be asked to validate, and provide identifiers to our legal record data.

### ***Who has access to my legal and preferred name?***

Staff with an administrative need (e.g. financial services, dean, accounting, United employers that work directly, and indirectly with learners) will see both legal and preferred names. Similar to GPAs and other sensitive information, these staff are trained on the implications of this access.

### ***Places where preferred Name is used***

- Unofficial Transcript
- Display Name for email
- Canvas
- United Campus

### ***Places where legal first name is used***

- Student Accounting
- Financial Aid Documents
- Official Transcripts
- Human Resources (student employment documents)

- Immigration and Visa-Related documentation
- Required State and Federal data submissions
- United Diploma



# FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid is important for many students seeking a graduate education. The financial aid program at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities is intended to enable qualified students with diverse backgrounds and needs to complete their degree programs by providing them with appropriate financial assistance consistent with the resources available to the seminary and in compliance with federal student aid rules and regulations. United's Office of Financial Aid is committed to helping students navigate what can, at times, be a complicated and stressful process, but students can also help themselves by regularly following application procedures, meeting deadlines, and maintaining eligibility.

The financial aid program has been designed to support the seminary's strategic commitments. Financial aid policies are established by United's Board of Trustees based on the criteria of the Association of Theological Schools and the regulations of the United States Department of Education. Financial aid policies are administered by the United's Financial Aid Office which is committed to assisting students in securing the financial aid to which they are entitled.

## Financial Aid Process for Students Seeking Assistance through United

United is involved in a broad spectrum of aid that is potentially available to students enrolled in a master's degree program, including need-based aid, merit-based scholarships, targeted scholarships, and federal student loan programs. DMin students do not generally qualify for scholarship programs but may still qualify to receive need-based aid and/or federal student loans.

The financial aid process will vary slightly by student depending on their degree program, the type of aid they are pursuing, and the order in which they complete certain steps. The annual financial aid process is generally as follows:

**Step One: Submit a FAFSA.** All students (both master's-degree and DMin students) who want to be considered for financial aid at United must complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>). The FAFSA is required for any student who wishes to be considered for any form of need-based aid, including federal loans and United's need-based grant and scholarship programs (see descriptions below), even if one does not plan to take out a student loan.

Students must complete a new FAFSA for each academic year in order to be considered eligible for need-based aid in that year. The only students who are *not* required to complete the FAFSA are those who are only seeking consideration for merit-based scholarships or those who are not choosing to apply for financial aid of any kind.

With a recent change in the law, the FAFSA now requires the student applicant to supply information using their tax returns from *two* years prior to the fall term year for which they are seeking aid (the "prior-prior year"). For example, a student applying for aid for the 2019-20 academic year should use figures from their 2017 tax return. The United school code is G02386.

Students may apply for financial aid at any time of the year, but only complete applications received by the Aid Application Date are guaranteed access to available funds for the coming academic year. For continuing students, this date is **June 1** prior to the academic year for which aid is being sought. For newly admitted students, this date is **July 1** prior to their first academic term.

After a FAFSA has been submitted by a student, United's Financial Aid Office may need to notify that student to rectify any issues with their FAFSA. Each student should work with the Financial Aid Office to

ensure the successful and timely processing of their application. This can include fixing problems with their FAFSA or supplying more information about their financial circumstances.

**Step Two: Submit a Statement of Intent.** All students (both master's and DMin degree seeking students) who want to be considered for financial aid at United must submit a completed and signed Statement of Intent form to the Financial Aid Office by the Aid Application Date. The Statement of Intent indicates the number of credits a student is planning to take each academic term, which allows for an accurate financial aid award calculation.

Students are not obligated to follow through on their initial registration intentions. Plans often do change. However, changing credits can alter a financial aid award and/or eligibility and so students should notify the Financial Aid Office whenever a change is made to their registration plans.

This step is required for students seeking financial aid of any kind (including students who are not seeking need-based aid). Students who fail to submit a completed Statement of Intent by the Aid Application Date cannot have their financial aid fully processed, which puts them in danger of not receiving scholarships or loans in a timely fashion, missing further application deadlines, and/or paying late fees. For continuing students, this date is **June 1** prior to the academic year for which aid is being sought. For newly admitted students, this date is **July 1** prior to their first academic term.

**Step Three: Apply for External Scholarships.** All students (both master's and DMin degree seeking students) are encouraged to apply for scholarship programs sponsored by organizations outside of United, such as their home church or denominational and other ministry organizations. Typically, external scholarships are not limited to tuition expenses, so these funding sources can be a valuable part of a student's financial portfolio. United highly recommends that students take the initiative to seek out, apply for, and receive such awards.

If a student receives a scholarship award from an external organization, they must contact the Financial Aid Office as soon as possible with details of the award.

**Step Four: Submit a Merit Scholarship Application.** Master's degree students are encouraged to submit a completed Merit Scholarship Application form to the Financial Aid Office by the Merit Scholarship Application Date. Only master's degree students are eligible to apply for the Merit Scholarship, but the application process is open to both current students and newly admitted students, provided they can meet the application deadline.

Applying for a Merit Scholarship is optional. See below for a detailed description of the Merit Scholarship program.

**Step Five: Submit a Targeted Scholarship Application.** Master's degree students are encouraged to submit a completed Targeted Scholarship Application form to the Financial Aid Office by the Aid Application Date. Only master's degree students are eligible to apply for Targeted Scholarships, but the application process is open to both current students and newly admitted students, provided they can meet the application deadline.

This step is required for students seeking scholarship consideration beyond the Merit Scholarship. Students who fail to submit a completed Targeted Scholarship Application by the Aid Application Date will not be eligible for scholarship consideration for the coming academic year.

There are two separate application forms, one for continuing students and one for newly admitted students. For continuing students, this date is **June 1** prior to the academic year for which aid is being sought. For newly admitted students, this date is **July 1** prior to their first academic term.

**Step Six: Receive a Financial Aid Package.** Once the Financial Aid Office has received all relevant applications and forms, complete and without errors, the Financial Aid Office can begin compiling Financial Aid Packages. A Financial Aid Package indicates how much total aid for which the student is eligible for the school year in question. The Financial Aid Office will begin sending Financial Aid Packages to DMin students as early as mid summer. Master's degree students can expect to receive Full Financial Aid Packages by late July, after all targeted scholarships have been awarded.

The total aid offered in a full Financial Aid Package may contain a combination of need-based aid, merit-based scholarships, targeted scholarships, external scholarships, and/or indications of loan eligibility, depending on the profile of the individual student. A Financial Aid Package will also contain a Loan Request Form, if the student is eligible to borrow a federal loan.

**Step Seven: Return a Signed Financial Aid Package.** In order to accept the financial aid outlined in the Financial Aid Package, each student must return a signed Financial Aid Award Agreement form. A student cannot receive aid until this step is completed. Not accepting a financial aid award by the Award Acceptance Date may result in the award being rescinded and having scholarship funds offered to other students.

**Step Eight: Request a Loan (if applicable).** If a student wishes to borrow a loan and receive their first disbursement in time to pay for fall expenses, a signed Loan Request Form must be submitted by the Award Acceptance Date, no later than the first Friday before course start date. A signed Loan Request Form is only required if a student wishes to take out a federal loan. Not submitting a loan request by the Award Acceptance Date may delay student loan disbursement.

Loans are completely optional. United highly recommends that students use loans as a last resort when financing their education. A student is not required to accept the full amount of the offered loan. They may instead choose to decline the entire amount or accept a partial amount.

## Professional Judgment

If a learner is facing extenuating circumstances due to financial hardship, a learner may complete a Professional Judgment form with supporting documentation. Professional Judgment refers to the authority of a school's Financial Aid Office to make adjustments to the data elements on the FAFSA and to override a student's dependency status. The school does not have the authority to change the need analysis formula itself or to make direct adjustments to the Student Aid Index (SAI) calculated on their FAFSA. Instead, the school may make adjustments to the inputs to the formula which can but does not guarantee a change to a learner's Need-Based Aid. The changes to the inputs are dictated by the impact of the special circumstances on the family's income and assets. The standard formula is then applied to the new data elements, yielding a new SAI figure. The review of a student's Professional Judgment varies case to case, and may take up to 30 days for review. Please contact the Financial Aid Office for further information.

## Financial Aid Deadline Date Definitions

There are a number of important dates and deadlines that students must observe in order to successfully apply for financial aid at United:

- **Aid Application Date** – the date by which a student must (1) complete the FAFSA, (2) submit a signed Statement of Intent form, and (3) submit an application for all non-Merit, targeted scholarship programs. All students seeking aid of any kind (including scholarships) must submit a Statement of Intent, even those not looking for loans or other need-based aid. All students seeking any form of need-based aid (including need-based scholarships and federal loans) must complete the FAFSA. For continuing students, this date is **June 1** prior to the academic year for which aid is being sought. For newly admitted students, this date is **July 1** prior to their first academic term.
- **Merit Scholarship Application Date** – the date by which a student who wishes to be considered for a merit-based scholarship must submit a complete application. This date varies every academic year; contact United's Financial Aid Office for the deadline date for the academic year for which a scholarship is being sought.
- **Award Acceptance Date** – the date by which a student must accept their Full Financial Aid Package by returning a signed Financial Aid Award Agreement form. This is also the date by which a student must request a loan in order to be eligible for a loan disbursement at the beginning of the fall term. To formally request a loan, a student must return a signed Loan

Request form no later than the first Friday before the course start date of the academic year for which aid is being sought.

- **Final Loan Request Date** – the last date in a given academic year by which a student must request a loan for that year. This date is no later than the second week of June.

Student loan applications must be completed by the Award Acceptance Date of first Friday before course start date in order for a student to be eligible for the first loan disbursement date for the fall term. Students who do not complete their loan applications by the Award Acceptance Date may still apply for a student loan after that date, up to their eligible amount. Students may request loans for a given academic year up until the Final Loan Request Date, which is no later than the second week of June.

Each academic term also has a Balance Due Date, the date set by the student billing by which a student must either have paid the balance of tuition and fees or have set up a reasonable payment plan with student billing. If neither has occurred a late payment fee and other charges may apply. Any outstanding balance will result in a hold and could delay student registration for the following term. See the “Tuition and Fees Payment” section for more information.

## Financial Aid Eligibility

United follows the enrollment eligibility guidelines established by the United States Department of Education, which is that a student must be enrolled in a degree program at least half-time. See the “Enrollment Status” section of this *Student Handbook* for the definition of half-time enrollment.

Courses taken at other institutions through consortium agreements may carry different credit levels that can affect financial aid eligibility. Students planning to enroll in consortium classes should notify United’s Financial Aid Office either directly or in their Statement of Intent in order to verify their eligibility status.

Students in the final year of their degree program may be subject to unique eligibility criteria. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

Each scholarship program carries its own eligibility criteria, which may be more or less restrictive than the need-based eligibility criteria listed above. Contact the Financial Aid Office for specific scholarship eligibility criteria.

## Types of Financial Assistance

Careful financial planning is suggested for all seminarians to ensure realistic and responsible financial management during their time in school and following graduation when loan payments begin. Students are expected to consider all potential sources of financial aid when preparing a budget, including scholarships (from both United and outside sources), grants, loans, savings, employment, and family contributions. United’s Financial Aid Office is available to assist students in planning their budgets, identifying possible sources of financial assistance, and counseling on loan repayment. United is directly involved in a broad spectrum of aid that is potentially available to students enrolled in a degree program, including:

- United scholarship programs:
  - need-based aid,
  - merit-based scholarships,
  - targeted scholarships;
- federal student loans; and
- funds available from individuals or organizations outside the seminary.

## **United Scholarship Programs**

Funds awarded through any of the scholarship programs sponsored by United—including need-based, merit-based, and targeted scholarships—are applied only to the tuition of United courses that the student is enrolled in for academic credit. The student's account balance is directly reduced based on the terms of each scholarship. Students are eligible to receive multiple United scholarships but the total award cannot exceed more than 100% of a student's tuition.

### ***Need-Based Aid***

Standard, untargeted need-based aid is available for qualified master's and DMin students to assist in covering a portion of their United tuition. Standard need-based aid can only be applied to tuition expenses. To qualify, a student must demonstrate financial need as determined by their FAFSA results.

Need award levels are set as a percentage of tuition, according to a student's apparent need as indicated by the Student Aid Index (SAI), formerly known as EFC, number calculated on their FAFSA. The formula that determines need award levels changes each year, depending on available resources and enrollment expectations. This formula is published by the Financial Aid Office early in the spring term, and is available to students upon request.

Students must meet the following criteria to receive standard need-based aid:

- be admitted in good standing in a master's or DMin degree program,
- show financial need as determined by the FAFSA,
- maintain at least half-time course enrollment each academic term,
- maintain satisfactory progress in their degree program,
- reapply each year and submit a current FAFSA to the Financial Aid Office,
- apply the aid only to courses taken through United or at schools and programs with which United has consortium agreements.

Students awarded need-based aid that is partially funded by donors are required to write a one-page thank you letter, which United will submit to the donors in their report. Funds will not be distributed until this letter has been received by the Financial Aid Office.

### ***Merit-Based Scholarships***

Merit-based scholarships are awarded to students who demonstrate a record of outstanding academic and intellectual achievement as well as an exceptional capacity for religious leadership and professional ministry.

The Scholarship Committee reviews scholarship applications and materials submitted by the application deadline date to determine awards starting in the upcoming fall term. Applications received after the deadline date will be ineligible for the current scholarship application process, but may be included in the following year's scholarship application process.

Students awarded a merit scholarship will automatically continue to receive the award up to the maximum duration stated by the specific scholarship as long as they remain in good standing. To remain in good standing, the recipient must carry at least a half-time course load each academic term. Recipients must also maintain a record of general excellence, defined as maintaining "outstanding" academic and intellectual achievement, promise for religious leadership (both personal and professional), and commitment to church-authorized professional ministry. Contact the Financial Aid Office for any additional criteria for specific scholarships. Student compliance with the scholarship criteria is assessed twice each year by the Student Review and Policy Committee. Failure to meet the criteria will result in the loss of merit aid to the student. The award may be reinstated if and when the student again meets the criteria.

### ***Targeted Scholarships***

Targeted scholarships are programs usually funded through gifts or grants and often have specific eligibility criteria that can be any combination of enrollment status, demographic characteristics, church membership, demonstrated merit, or demonstrated need. Master's-degree students are eligible to apply for targeted scholarship programs at United.

To apply for a targeted scholarship at United (beyond the Merit Scholarship and standard Need-Based Aid programs, described above), students are required to fill out and submit a completed Targeted Scholarship Application form by the Aid Application Date deadline. For continuing students, this date is **June 1** prior to the academic year for which aid is being sought. For newly admitted students, this date is **July 1** prior to their first academic term. The Scholarship Review Committee will evaluate applications and the Financial Aid Office will notify award recipients. Applications received after the Aid Application Date may be considered, but only if there are remaining scholarship funds.

Funds given through any of the scholarship programs listed in the United handbook (including need-based merit-based, and targeted scholarships) can be applied to tuition only. Students are eligible to receive multiple United scholarships but the total award cannot exceed more than 100% of a student's tuition. External scholarship programs and student loans can (usually) be used for other expenses, such as fees, books, campus rent, and other items related to a student's cost of living.

All targeted scholarship programs are subject to yearly funding limitations.

A student who receives one or more of the targeted scholarship awards:

- Must apply for need-based aid, including submitting a FAFSA, and meet half-time eligibility status.
- Must apply the award only to courses taken through United or at schools and programs with which United has articulation agreements.
- Is required, once awarded, to write a one page thank you letter to the donors at the time of award and submit the letter to the Financial Aid Office. Submission of this letter is mandatory. If a thank you letter is not received, scholarship funds will be withheld the following term until a letter is provided.
- Must maintain satisfactory progress in the degree program as determined by the Student Review and Policy Committee at its biannual meetings. See the "Academic Standing" section for the definitions of satisfactory progress. Two consecutive academic terms on academic probation will result in a loss of scholarship funds.
- Will retain their scholarship eligibility for an entire academic year, including if and when that student goes on an approved leave of absence (assuming they return from leave during that academic year).
- Will surrender that eligibility if they withdraw or are dismissed.
- If not completing all enrolled courses in a term, may not be eligible for the scholarship in future terms.
- Must reapply for that scholarship each year, according to the scholarship application process described above.

United offers two kinds of targeted scholarships: those for newly admitted students beginning their first year of seminary and those for continuing students. Some scholarships may be available to both new and continuing students. Some targeted scholarship programs have their own distinct eligibility requirements which may be more or less restrictive than United's general aid eligibility requirements. Contact the Financial Aid Office for the current list of available targeted scholarships and their eligibility criteria.

### ***Priority Scholarship***

The Priority Scholarship is awarded to incoming students who apply to the seminary by the priority application deadline. The amount is \$1,000, split evenly among the academic terms of the first academic

year—fall, spring and summer—that the student is enrolled in courses. As an example, a student starting in the fall will have the amount split among the fall, spring, and summer; a student starting in the spring will have the amount split between the spring and summer. A student awarded the scholarship must enroll in at least three credits of coursework their first academic term and be enrolled at least half time each of the remaining terms of their first year of enrollment in order to remain eligible. See the Enrollment Status section of this *Student Handbook* for the definition of half-time enrollment.

## **Federal Student Loans**

Federal student loans are helpful to many people. They are structured to be financially beneficial to the borrower due to relatively low interest rates and the allowance of deferred payments, and they can be used to pay for tuition as well as non-tuition expenses such as fees and books as well as rent and other items related to a student's cost of living.

Many students need to take out loans to finance their education. Students are reminded, however, that student loan debt is a tremendous burden for many people, especially people who pursue financially modest careers in religious and nonprofit work. The seminary therefore strongly advises students to avoid incurring any unnecessary educational debt. If a student does deem it necessary to take out a loan, the seminary recommends borrowing only what is necessary to fund the student's educational costs and living needs as well as maintaining consistent satisfactory progress towards the completion of their degree program. Students can contact United's Financial Aid Office with questions about loans.

### ***Direct Unsubsidized Federal Student Loans***

The type of loan utilized by the vast majority of United students is the federal unsubsidized direct loan for graduate students. It is "unsubsidized" because, unlike subsidized loans for undergraduate students, the government does not pay for (subsidize) interest while a student is in school. Actual payments are deferred until after graduation, withdrawal, dismissal, or a student loses eligibility due to unresolved probation or a leave of absence that extends beyond one academic term, but the interest starts to accrue immediately upon borrowing. This means the size of the loan actually increases while a student is in school.

The amount of loan a student is eligible to borrow is determined by the cost of attendance, minus the sum total of all other awards received, up to both annual and lifetime borrowing limits. Because a student's cost of attendance is determined by the course plan indicated in their Statement of Intent, loan eligibility must be recalculated anytime a student changes their registration plans. If loan eligibility drops below the amount requested before the start of a fall term, the difference will be deducted from the disbursement amount on the next loan disbursement date. If a student's credit load drops below half time for any term, the student is not eligible for federal financial aid loans. See the Enrollment Status section of this *Student Handbook* for the definition of half-time enrollment.

The federal government charges a small origination fee for each loan. (Please visit <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/interest-rates>.) Each student borrower is required to complete a loan agreement for an unsubsidized loan (known as a Master Promissory Note, or MPN) and successfully participate in entrance counseling. Both steps can be accomplished online at <https://studentloans.gov> by selecting "Graduate/Professional Students."

### ***Unsubsidized Graduate-PLUS Student Loans***

United also participates in the Graduate-PLUS loan program with the federal government. The PLUS loan differs from the direct loan in that it typically has a higher interest rate, a much larger origination fee (currently over 4%), and it requires a credit background check (either of the student borrower or a qualified endorser/co-signer). Very few United students pursue this loan, since it is less attractive financially and requires more steps beyond the direct loan.

The PLUS loan is only available to a student who (1) has already exhausted their direct loan eligibility for the year, and (2) has either passed a credit background check or has obtained a qualified endorser/co-signer who can pass the credit check. If a student's credit load drops below half time for any

term, the student is not eligible for federal financial aid loans. See the Enrollment Status section of this *Student Handbook* for the definition of half-time enrollment.

## **Money from Outside Sources**

Scholarship money from individuals or organizations outside of United is often available to students through their home churches, denominational agencies, or from private organizations such as service clubs or lodges. The student is expected to pursue all available sources of financial aid. The Financial Aid Office is available to assist the student in identifying potential sources of financial assistance. Any scholarships received by the student must be reported to the Financial Aid Office. These scholarship gifts need to be known when determining need for both internal (United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities) and external (federal loans) financial aid.

## **Return of Title IV Funds (R2T4) Policy**

### **How a Withdrawal Affects Financial Aid**

Federal regulations specify how the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (the school) must determine the amount of Title IV program assistance that a student has earned if they officially withdraw, stop attending, or are dismissed. The Title IV programs that the school uses are governed by this law. These programs are Federal Unsubsidized Direct and Graduate PLUS loans. This aid is included in a return calculation, based on re-calculation of student eligibility as long as the student begins attendance in at least half time enrollment.

Title IV (federal) financial aid funds are awarded under the assumption that a student will remain in classroom attendance for the entire academic term for which the funds were awarded. When a student withdraws from all courses, stops attending, or is dismissed, the amount of assistance that the student has earned is determined on a prorated basis. The student may no longer be eligible for the full amount of Title IV funds originally awarded. The return of funds to the federal government is based on the premise that a student earns financial aid in proportion to the length of time during which they will have earned at the time of full withdrawal. If the student has not begun attendance in enough courses to establish half-time enrollment status, the school will not make a first disbursement of Direct loans. Once a student has successfully completed 60 percent or more of the payment period, they have earned all the scheduled assistance for that payment period. If the student withdrew and did not receive all of the assistance that was earned, a post-withdrawal disbursement may be due.

If a student submits a written withdrawal with confirmation of an anticipated return date, which falls within the same payment period, a Return of Title IV funds is not required. This notification from a student is by completing a withdrawal form and submitted to the Registrar.

If an enrolled student withdrew without confirming intent to return, and later returns, the student is treated as though they did not cease attendance, as long as re-entry is done within the same payment period.

A student requesting a Leave of Absence (LOA-see LOA policy in the *Student Handbook*) must do so by contacting the Registrar's office. A withdrawal is not the same as a Leave of Absence.

If a student does not return to the school at the expiration of an approved LOA (or a student takes an unapproved LOA), the student's withdrawal date is the date the student began the LOA.

### **How Earned Financial Aid Is Calculated**

Financial aid recipients "earn" the aid they originally received by remaining in classes. If a student withdraws or does not complete all classes in which they were enrolled, then they may be required to return some of the aid originally awarded.

The school is required to determine the percentage of Title IV aid "earned" by the student and return the "unearned" portion to the appropriate federal aid programs (see Order of Return to Federal Aid Programs below). This calculation is done within 30 days of the date the school determines that a student has



completely withdrawn. The following explains the formula used to determine the percentage of unearned aid to be returned to the federal government:

- The percentage earned is equal to the number of calendar days completed up to the withdrawal date divided by the total number of calendar days in the payment period.
- The payment period for most students is the full academic term.
- The percent unearned is equal to 100 percent less the percent earned.

Institutional scholarship funds are not subject to the R2T4 policy. United has its own policies that determine when scholarship funds may be revoked due to withdrawal, dismissal, or failure to complete an individual course (see above).

If a return of unearned loan funds is required, the school will return these funds within 45 days of the date of the student's withdrawal date. If a student is due a post-withdrawal disbursement of loan funds (amount disbursed to the student is less than the amount the student earned, and for which the student is otherwise eligible, the student is eligible to receive a post-withdrawal disbursement of the earned aid that was not received) the school will notify the student in writing within 30 days of the date of determination, allowing the student 14 days to accept or decline the funds.

All post-withdrawal disbursements are applied to the student account first, and any resulting credit balance will be disbursed to the student as soon as possible and no later than 14 days from the date of disbursement. Students with a credit balance at the time of withdrawal will have that credit balance disbursed as soon as possible and no later than 14 days after the calculation of a R2T4.

The student is requested to notify the school in writing as soon as possible if they would like the post-withdrawal disbursement credited back to their loans or sent directly to them. If no response is made from the student in writing within 30 days of the date of the letter to the student, the school will return the funds to be credited to the student's outstanding Direct loan balance. The school will disburse any loan funds that the student requests within 180 days of the date of determination that the student withdrew. If the student requests the school to credit their outstanding Direct loan balance, the school will send the funds to Direct loans within 45 days of the original date of the letter to the student.

The school will notify the student if the school will be applying Direct loans for tuition and or fees. If there are additional charges on the student's account, the student may be required to pay those charges after the post-withdrawal disbursement.

There may be Title IV funds that cannot be disbursed once a student withdraws because of other eligibility requirements. If a student withdraws before establishing half-time enrollment status (six credits) the first disbursement of Direct loans will be counted as aid that could have been disbursed in the Return to Title IV calculation. The school will not disburse these loan funds as a post-withdrawal disbursement or any subsequent disbursement.

If a student has received unearned Title IV program funds, the student must return the remaining amount. Any loan funds that the student must return may be repaid in accordance with the terms of the promissory note. The student may make scheduled payments to the holder of the loan over a period of time.

### **Order of Return to Federal Aid Programs**

In accordance with federal regulations, unearned aid will be returned to the Federal Title IV programs the school is eligible to participate in the following order:

- Federal Direct Loans: Unsubsidized
- Federal Direct PLUS loans

## Return of Federal Loans

This Federal requirement for students borrowing federal unsubsidized loans is in addition to the institutional tuition charge reduction policy of the *Student Handbook*. Effective October 7, 2000, the following procedure for return of Title IV funds is mandatory.

1. A statutory schedule will be used to determine the amount of Title IV funds a student and school has earned as of the date they cease attendance in school. The amount of Title IV program assistance earned is based on the amount of time the student spends in academic attendance.
2. Up through the 60% point in each disbursement period or period of enrollment, a pro rata schedule is used to determine the amount of Title IV funds the student and school has earned at the time of withdrawal.
3. After the 60% point in each disbursement period or period of enrollment, a student and school has earned 100% of the Title IV funds.
4. Once this withdrawal date is determined, the school must calculate any amount of unearned Title IV funds for institutional charges and return these funds, if any, to the lender of the student loan.
5. The student returns loan funds in accordance with the terms of the loan. In other words, the student will be repaying any unearned loan funds in the same manner that they will be repaying earned loan funds.

## Additional Information

Additional information, including examples of R2T4 calculations, is available in the Financial Aid Office. Please also see the “National Guard or Federal Active Duty” section.

## Code of Conduct for Seminary Financial Aid Staff

In compliance with the Secretary of Education’s request and recent regulatory changes, the following is United’s Financial Aid Office “Code of Conduct.” All seminary staff (officers, employees and agents of the school) responsible for the administration of federal and private education loans are subject to these guidelines:

United staff responsible for student loan processing are prohibited from:

1. Revenue-sharing arrangements with any lender.
2. Soliciting or accepting of gifts of more than a minimal value from a lender, guarantor, or servicer. Exceptions to this include Entrance and Exit counseling services, philanthropic contributions to the institution that are unrelated to loans, professional staff training, and standard loan material (brochures, financial literacy, etc.).
3. Accepting fees, payments, or other financial compensations for any type of consulting or contractual relationship with a lender.
4. Refusing or delaying the loan process based on a borrower’s selection of a particular lender.
5. Entering into an arrangement with a lender for private education loans funds in exchange for a preferred lender arrangement or providing the lender with a specified number of FFELP or private education loans.
6. Requesting or accepting staffing assistance from a lender. Exceptions are allowed for professional development or training and provision of educational counseling materials or short-term, nonrecurring staffing assistance during disasters or emergencies.
7. Accepting compensation, other than for reasonable reimbursement expenses, for service on an advisory board, commission, or group established by a lender(s) or guarantor (s).

8. The financial aid office is expected to always maintain exemplary standards of professional conduct in all aspects of carrying out their responsibilities. In addition, the financial aid office will refrain from taking any action they believe is contrary to law, regulation, or the best interest of the student they serve.

This Code of Conduct is provided annually to all United staff responsible for the administration of student loans.

# SPENCER LIBRARY

The Spencer Library is a primary educational resource for the seminary community. The goal of the library is to make available a wide variety of materials that will enhance the learning experience of students, faculty, staff, and library users from beyond the seminary.

## Library Holdings

The Spencer Library has over 60,000 print volumes and an increasing number of online books as well as access to hundreds of periodicals.

## Library Hours

The library is open anytime the seminary complex is open to students.

## Access To Materials

### Computer Catalog Workstations / Databases

There are two catalog workstations located in the library. These are to be used only for identifying and locating materials. Patrons are asked not to use these computers for word-processing, web surfing, etc.

The catalog workstations of the Spencer Library provide access to a wide selection of bibliographic resources: Our local catalog, the holdings of the other Minnesota Consortium seminary libraries (MTLA), and other libraries in our region and beyond. Full-text online articles from a number of subscription databases are also available through the Spencer Library Catalog.

### Remote Access to Library Resources

The link to the Spencer Library website is available through United's website home page as well as United's Student Resources page, available through Canvas. The site provides information about the library including links to the library catalog, full-text online journals to which we subscribe, e-books and electronic reference materials and websites on religion, theology and ministry.

The library catalog, with its various databases, provides the best single-search way to identify books held in our own library and/or in other libraries in our region and throughout the country.

Over a dozen electronic reference resources are available via the Spencer Library website. These include Oxford Biblical Studies Online; The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature; The Encyclopedia of African-American History; and The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States, among others.

Remote Access to subscription databases and to our electronic journals is available only to currently-enrolled students and faculty.

You will be prompted to enter your United username and password when you wish to access one of our subscription databases or electronic journals.

PLEASE DO NOT give your password to anyone else, for both ethical and practical reasons. Subscription-based are licensed rather than free resources. The cost of our subscriptions are based on our report of FTE students and faculty. We agree to limit access to users of our library, and remote access

to faculty, staff, and currently enrolled students. We depend on you to help us keep that agreement so we don't endanger our subscriptions. Also, in order to comply with Fair Use limits of U.S. copyright law, please print full text articles only for your own personal educational use (see copyright policy).

## **Circulation Procedures**

Students have term check-out privileges: All books must be returned on or before the last class day of the academic term in which they are checked out. (See special policy for Reserve materials.) Speak to a library staff member about arranging for renewal. DMin students not enrolled in a class have 60-day check-out privileges.

Students on leave of absence are extension borrowers during the term of their leave. Extension borrowers may check out books for six weeks with one renewal.

The library may recall any checked out item, provided it has been out for at least three weeks. Recalled items are to be returned within one week after recall. Books needed for Reserve must be returned within two days. The library does not release the name of anyone who has checked out a book to other library users.

Audiovisual materials may be checked out for six weeks. Reference books and current and bound periodicals are to be used in the library only.

Please do not re-shelve books or periodicals used in the library. Leave them on the designated carts, return them to the circulation desk, or leave them on a study table for the staff to re-shelve.

## **Overdue Books**

Please return books on or before the due date. Due dates for all materials borrowed from United or other libraries must be strictly observed. Books not returned are billed according to the policies of the library that lent the book. At United, a standard charge of \$50.00 is applied for each lost or unreturned book. Library users who fail to observe due dates may have their borrowing privileges suspended until all books are returned or paid for.

## **Consortium Libraries And Interlibrary Loan**

United is a member of the Consortium of Minnesota Seminary Libraries. The other member schools are Bethel Seminary, Luther Seminary, John Ireland Library at the St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity (all in the Twin Cities), and St. John's School of Theology in Collegeville. United students may request materials from these libraries to be delivered through the daily courier. Turnaround time is usually one - three days. With a United identification card (available from the Registrar), you may also go to any Consortium library and borrow directly (call ahead to make arrangements at St. John's). In addition, United participates in MINITEX (Minnesota Interlibrary Telecommunications Exchange, which allows us to request through the courier materials held at many libraries through the region. Turnaround time is usually two days – two weeks.

If materials are not available at United, through the Consortium or MINITEX, the library can arrange for an interlibrary loan from a more distant library. Turnaround time for these requests can range from three days to several weeks, depending on the location and availability of the materials. There also may be a charge for interlibrary loans.

# STUDENT LIFE

## Communications

### Monday Morning

The Communications Office publishes *Monday Morning* weekly. It contains events, information on student, staff and faculty activities, policy change notifications, announcements from other seminaries of the Minnesota Consortium, and information about off-campus programs of interest. **It is important to read it each week**; it is the primary vehicle for communicating information to the student body and community as a whole, and often the only place announcements are made.

Submissions by all members of the community are welcome. All items of information must be submitted in accordance with the instructions described in the most current issue of the publication. Decisions about the content of *Monday Morning* are made by the Director of Marketing and Communications.

### Email

All students will be assigned a United email address. FERPA laws require faculty and staff to use United email addresses for all communication with students. Login information is sent to new students upon admission. Request login information at: [computersupport@unitedseminary.edu](mailto:computersupport@unitedseminary.edu).

### Academic Calendar

Coordination of all events and activities is maintained through the seminary's event calendar. The current Academic Calendar can be found in the current *Academic Catalog* and from United's Canvas website (<https://unitedseminary.instructure.com/>).

## Technology Resources

### Computer Workstations

The computer workstations adjacent to Spencer Library have Internet access, the Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint & Publisher), Windows Media Player, Adobe Acrobat Reader and Flash Player. In addition to this software, the computers can play DVDs, and will accept USB flash drives.

- Contact [computersupport@unitedseminary.edu](mailto:computersupport@unitedseminary.edu) if you need to write DVDs or scan photographs or text.
- Do NOT keep documents on the workstation computers. They are continuously being checked for viruses and spyware to ensure they work properly. Documents found on the computers will be permanently deleted.
- Please report any problems with a workstation computer to Computer Support.

### Wireless Access

Wifi Internet is available throughout the United campus. Access information is posted in the common areas.

# Student Life Resources

## By-appointment Chaplains

United's by-appointment chaplains are available to all current United students to provide spiritual care in the context of seminary study and ministry preparation, as well as provide vocational direction or referrals for further and deeper therapeutic work, if needed. The Student Resources page accessible through Canvas includes a link to the United Chaplains appointment page that includes information on each chaplain and a link to schedule an appointment time. Students are encouraged to schedule up to three one-hour appointments with a chaplain per academic term (fall, spring, summer).

## Counseling

Many students find that seminary is a challenging time of reflection and change at a foundational level. For this reason, we encourage students to create support networks and find help in coping with the ongoing stresses and challenges of student life.

## Entrance and Exit Interviews

As you begin and end your time at United, you are encouraged to participate in entrance and exit interviews. The entrance interview gives you a chance to define personal and vocational goals for your time at the seminary. Exit interviews afford you the opportunity to reflect again on your vocational goals as well as your total experience (academic, spiritual, social and vocational) at United. These interviews are very important to staff and faculty as we seek to serve students.

## International Shipping

International students who accumulate books or other goods to ship home are responsible for packing and shipping all parcels before departing campus in the spring. If funds set aside to assist international students in case of emergency are still available, some support may be available to assist with the cost but such support is not guaranteed.

# Employment (master's-level students only)

## Research Assistants

The use of research assistants is intended to be a means by which faculty may be given help in completing certain specified roles in their academic and administrative work. Individual supervisors handle student employment contracts.

### ***Five criteria inform this work:***

1. That it be work designed to assist the professor in scholarly work,
2. That it be work compensated apart from course credit,
3. That it be defined apart from a student's ongoing academic program,
4. That it be for a time-defined period determined in consultation with the Dean of the Seminary,
5. That there be a fair distribution of opportunity to utilize such service among the faculty.

### ***Functions of the Work Research Assistants May Do:***

- That it assists scholarly activity, such as bibliographic surveys, review of materials related to research topics, general help in completing projects, such as indexing texts, and management of research projects.
- That it allows the professor to complete administrative responsibilities such as mailings, organization of research data, and planning of events related to the seminary or research programs funded to enhance the professor's scholarly interests.

***The following functions are prohibited to Research Assistants:***

- Grading papers or exams,
- Doing other work directly related to the teaching of courses.

***Instructor's Responsibilities in Relation to Research Assistants:***

- To serve as the immediate work supervisor,
- To develop a job description or contract with the student which outlines job requirements, method of evaluation, and payment for services,
- To evaluate the research assistant's work.

***Approval and Remuneration of Research Assistants:***

- The professor needing research assistance will propose to the Dean of the Seminary, three months prior to the needed service, a plan including recommended name, job description, and pay.
- The Dean of the Seminary will approve payment for service based on seminary guidelines.

***Rate of Remuneration for Research Assistants:***

- Annually, the Faculty Administration Committee will set an hourly research assistant pay scale.
- The rate or scale of remuneration shall be the operating figure for faculty who are urged not to exceed that amount through personal payment without consultation with the Dean of the Seminary.
- In the event program grants or other funded resources are used beyond the amount designated by the seminary, the pay scale in the grant shall be used.

***Monitoring of the Research Assistant Program:***

Annually, the Dean of the Seminary, along with the Faculty Administration Committee will review utilization of the program to assess continuing need, budgetary requirements, and distribution of usage of the program. Hours allocated to each faculty member depend, in part, on how many people apply for assistants in a given year. The maximum amount for any given year is 150 hours. The deadline for applying for an assistant is December 15 of the previous year.

## **Student/Student Concerns**

### **Rationale**

The seminary community recognizes that interpersonal issues may arise between students that need to be resolved to avoid further problems. These may include but are not limited to: boundary violations, personality conflicts, inappropriate behavior, and differences in values and perceptions concerning events and issues. This policy is intended to provide for mediation, in which the parties themselves arrive at agreement and/or restitution. It intends to foster clarification and reconciliation. It is not a policy for disciplinary action.

### **Guidelines**

Normally, the first course of action is for the involved students to attempt resolution of the matter between themselves. A second step may involve consulting with the instructor (if the concern arises within a classroom setting), a faculty advisor, or the Dean of the Seminary. If involvement of any of those persons does not seem warranted, comfortable, or appropriate, the students may choose to seek further assistance toward resolution through a process of mediation. This mediation process may include defining the problem, clarifying the issues, exploring options, and helping to determine an acceptable avenue toward resolution.



The mediator helps to clarify and define the situation. The mediator may be a fellow student, a non-student, or staff person who can maintain an objective view and confidentiality. The mediator should have skills in listening, reflecting, and facilitating the process. The mediator should help to establish boundaries and refer students to other resources when appropriate. A mediator is not a counselor, therapist, or representative of the seminary, and does not function in any way as a professional. A mediator is there to help clarify the situation and explore possible solutions through the mediation process. A mediator should not be a relative.

## **Procedure**

- Students normally will first seek to resolve concerns between themselves.
- If an acceptable resolution is not found, it is suggested that one or more of the students meet with an appropriate staff or faculty member.
- If one or more of the students seeks further clarification and exploration of the concerns, the mediator process can be utilized.
- A mediator will be chosen for the parties with the assistance of the Dean.
- Guidelines, expectations, and procedures will be explained to the students before the mediation process begins.
- Each student may invite an advocate to be present with them at a mediation session.
- If no acceptable resolution is found within an established time frame, the matter may be referred to the Dean of the Seminary, as appropriate.

## **Student Complaint**

For an informal complaint, the first course of action is usually for the student to try to resolve the matter with the parties concerned. A member of the staff or faculty designated by the Dean is available for consultation and direct assistance in resolving informal complaints. After exhausting efforts to resolve the matter informally, the student may file an official complaint in the following situations:

- when a provision of the *Student Handbook* has been violated;
- when a student and a member of the faculty, administrative or support staff are in conflict which cannot be otherwise resolved; or
- when a student believes that s/he has been treated unfairly by the seminary.

See the “Nondiscrimination Title IX Policy” page on the United website (<https://www.unitedseminary.edu/>) for information on reporting sexual misconduct or harassment.

## **Procedure for Filing an Official Complaint**

1. The student complaint form is available to students online on United’s Student Resources page, available through Canvas. A paper form may also be obtained through the Dean’s Office.
2. The student shall complete and submit the form, which will be transmitted to the Dean of the Seminary. Although the form must identify the name of the submitting student, the Dean may elect to keep the source of the complaint confidential.
3. The student shall be available to meet with the Dean or Dean’s designee and the named administrator, staff member, or faculty member to help resolve the matter.
4. The Dean of the Seminary shall respond to the complaint in person or in writing within ten business days. The Dean may elect to make a decision in the matter or may refer the matter to an appropriate person, committee, or office.

5. In the case that the Dean of the Seminary is a party to the complaint, the complaint would be forwarded to the President, who shall follow the above procedures.
6. Students may appeal the decision to the Executive Session of the Academic Council (voting members of Academic Council). The decision of the Executive Session shall be final.

### **Complaints Related to Accreditation**

Students wishing to make complaints related to the failure of the seminary to adhere to the accrediting standards of the Association of Theological Schools or the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association may address their concerns to the Office of the Dean. Records of such complaints are kept in the Office of the Dean. The Dean shall review the complaint in consultation with the Educational Planning Committee at its next meeting following receipt of the complaint, using the relevant accreditation standard. The dean shall respond in writing to the student within one week after the EPC meeting. If the student is not satisfied with the response, they may address their complaint directly to the accrediting body whose standard they believe has been violated. The contact information is as follows:

The Association of Theological Schools of North America and Canada  
10 Summit Park Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103

The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association  
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 4000  
Chicago, IL 60602-2504

Copies of the accreditation standards and procedures are available from the office of the Dean of the Seminary.

### **Complaints Related to State Registration**

As a non-profit private institution registered with the Office of Higher Education (OHE), United is required to:

- comply with Minnesota Statutes 136A.61 to 136A.833
- comply with Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 4840 and 4880
- follow its own internal policies and procedures; and
- use marketing materials or recruiting practices that are not deceptive, misleading, or inaccurate.

If a student is not satisfied with the seminary's response to an official complaint related to its compliance with these requirements, the student may file a complaint with OHE:

Registration & Licensing  
Office of Higher Education  
1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 350  
St. Paul, MN 55108  
651-259-3975 or 1-800-657-3866  
<https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/>

The seminary shall not use nondisclosure agreements or other contracts restricting a student's ability to disclose information in connection with school actions or conduct that is covered under the student complaint process in Minnesota Statute §136A.672.

### **Complaints Related to SARA Policies**

As a participant in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA), United is committed to observe SARA policies for students enrolled in United courses who are residents of SARA states outside of Minnesota. The SARA Policy Manual can be accessed at <https://nc-sara.org/sara-policy-manual>.

If a student residing in a SARA state other than Minnesota is not satisfied with the seminary's response to an official complaint related to its compliance with SARA policies, the student may file a complaint with NC-SARA at <https://nc-sara.org/student-complaints>.

# SEMINARY-WIDE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION

See the “Seminary-Wide Policies” document located on United’s Student Resources page, available through Canvas, for more information on the following topics that involve United students, faculty and staff.

- United’s Mission, Vision and Values
- Institutional Governance
- Seminary Position Statements
- Freedom of Inquiry and Expression
- Non-Discrimination / Title IX Policy
- Policy on Sexual Misconduct & Sexual Harassment
- Confidentiality and Disclosure Within Small Group Settings
- Inclusive Language
- Use of Alcoholic Beverages
- Drug Policy
- Smoking
- Weapons
- Technology and Computer Use
- Electronic Communications: Email, Web Page
- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)
- Emergency Response and Evacuation
- Lending
- Potlucks and Catered Events
- Identity Theft Prevention Program
- Naming of Spaces
- Facility Rental
- Library Collection Development
- Campus Facilities
- Institutional Review
- Copyright