VST | VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Theological Field Education

Preparing Thoughtful, Engaged & Generous Christian Leaders through Reflective Practice

2025 - 2026

Vancouver School of Theology

August 2025

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Welcome to Theological Field Education (TFE) at the Vancouver School of Theology.
Whether you are a student on your TFE journey or a supervisor guiding and mentoring others, we are thrilled to have you join this collaborative program grounded in mutual learning.

At VST, there are many ways we prepare thoughtful, engaged, and generous Christian leaders who are ready to serve at this time and in a variety of contexts. Our approach embraces dialogue with other faith traditions and the Indigenous church, and TFE is a component of this preparation. Within the Master of Divinity (MDiv) and the Master of Arts in Public and Pastoral Leadership (MA-PPL) degree programs, TFE offers students a unique opportunity to reflect on the practice of ministry.

In TFE, students collaborate closely with leaders and supervisors in various ministry and community sites. The hands-on experience combined with the insights gained from others in these settings enriches the learning journey. These vital relationships are an invaluable resource for the student's learning and form the heart of our field education program. Students will engage with faculty in practical theology, learn alongside their peers, and find moments of reflection in the quiet spaces of life, all contributing to a rich and holistic learning experience.

A distinctive feature of TFE at VST is *The Studio* – the creative yet messy environment where the art of leadership is explored. *The Studio* draws on the 'case-in-point' experiential learning method pioneered by Ronald Heifetz and colleagues in leadership education at the Harvard Kennedy School of Business. Time in the studio seminar prepares students to develop stamina, resilience, and a creative engagement with what Otto Sharmer calls "the future that is seeking to emerge." Running parallel with TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice*, the *Studio* is a space where students intentionally integrate ministry, leadership theory, and practice.

In the following pages, you will find essential information about field education at VST, including program descriptions, student responsibilities, key expectations and requests of supervisors and sites. We believe in transparency and shared understanding so everyone knows our roles within the ecology of learning.

In every aspect of our program, we uphold the value that adult learners do best when they take responsibility for their learning process. From choosing their sites and mentors to planning, integrating, and evaluating their learning experiences, students are actively involved in shaping their education journey. Field education at VST fosters dynamic, self-directed learning which is initiated, developed, and evaluated by each person who is part of the learning context.

I am excited to welcome you to the learning and partnership of Theological Field Education at VST.

Rev. Mary Nichol
Director – Theological Field Education

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Directors of Denominational Formation

Please contact one of your Director of Denominational Formation, if you have any questions pertaining to your specific denomination's process and requirements.

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Theological Field Education Calendar: 2025-2026

FALL TERM 2025

September 2-5	**Orientation**
September 8	**First Day of Classes.** Fall term begins.
September 9	First meeting of *The Studio* PT651
September 15	**Placements Begin**. *TFE-P: Leadership in Practice* and *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community* placements begin this week.
	TFE-P: Leadership in Practice Learning Goals and Covenant Due, upload to Populi
October 20-24	**Reading Week.** No classes at VST Students are entitled to take one week off from their placement, during the Fall Reading Week, or at another time, as negotiated with their mentors.
November 6-8	**PT651 *The Studio* – Intensive onsite at VST Campus**
December 2	**Last meeting of *The Studio* for Fall Term**
December 1-5	**Exams & Make-Up Classes**
December 9	**Mid-Year Evaluations due** Student and mentor written mid-year evaluations for *TFE–P: Leadership in Practice* and *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community* placements are due; upload to Populi.
December 22-January 5	**Term Break** Students are not expected to be in their field placements during the Christmas holidays unless otherwise negotiated with their mentors/supervisors as relevant to learning goals.

SPRING TERM
2026

January 5-16, 2026	**Interterm Classes**
January 19	**First Day of Classes for Spring Term. Placements Re-start.** *TFE–P: Leadership in Practice* and *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community* placements begin again. First class of PT 505 + TFE-E: Exploration
January 21	First class of PT 652 / *The Studio*
March 2-6	**Reading Week.** No classes at VST. Students are entitled to take one week off from their placement, during the Spring Reading Week, or at another time, as negotiated with their mentors.
April 8	PT505 Class presents their TFE proposals to PT652 Last class for PT652
April 10 **April 13-17** **April 13**	Last Day of Classes for Spring Term. Exams & Make-Up Classes. Last class for PT505
April 17	**Final *TFE–P: Leadership in Practice* and *TFE–FC: Leadership in Faith Community* <u>Evaluations due for Graduating Students</u>** Both students and mentors must have their final written assessments and evaluations from TFE-P or TFE:FC placements completed and submitted.
April 24	**Final *TFE–P: Leadership in Practice* and *TFE–FC: Leadership in Faith Community*** <u>Evaluations due for non-graduating students</u> **Spring Term Ends.**

1. Theological Field Education at VST

1.1 Educational Philosophy

Field education placements in church and community at VST are designed to be mutual learning experiences in which students, mentors, and the school's faculty establish a teaching and learning network. Although our backgrounds in ministry and our levels of engagement in a student's placement may vary, each of us is engaged in the teaching and learning process.

If our learning, as adults, carries with it a sense of interdependence, or mutuality, the more satisfying our learning will be.

St. Paul's image of the body of Christ, one with many complementary parts, commends itself to Theological Field Education (TFE). We are mutually accountable to God and to one another. VST strives to develop an educational experience in which dialogue fosters a respectful learning environment. Posing questions, offering insights, giving encouragement and direction are the norm.

Theological Field Education programs are grounded in adult education theory and practice. Principles of adult education are employed in the following ways:

- Students are self-directed independent learners who take responsibility for their learning. They work with mentors, student peer groups, and instructors to develop Learning Goals and Covenants, which include clear strategies for achieving goals, objectives, action plans and evaluation tools.
- Public and Pastoral Leadership courses and Theological Field Education placements encourage students to discover and celebrate their spiritual gifts, identify their limitations and to discern their potential in ministry in the light of their faith, the Christian tradition (or other tradition), life circumstances, context and vocational journeys.
- The student's personal, cultural and denominational histories are respected in all pastoral theology courses and field placements.

1.2 Requirements

All students in the M.Div. program are required to complete **three full units** of supervised Theological Field Education **(*TFE-E: Exploration; TFE-P: Leadership in Practice* and *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community*)**. Students in the MA-PPL program are required to complete two full units of field education **(*TFE-E: Exploration; TFE-P: Leadership in Practice*)**. Though mandatory for degree completion, these units are not counted in the credit hour requirement of the degree, nor are students charged tuition for any unit of theological field education. To encourage students not to hold paid employment during TFE programs so that their attention can be focused on the experiential learning experience, a scholarship will be awarded to each student in TFE.

Students should register for TFE when registering for their other courses.

The actual hours spent in TFE units will include (a) the Sunday worship service and preparation for it (if appropriate to the placement), (b) sessions with the student's mentor, and (c) special projects, meetings or events in which the student is engaged as part of her/her/their learning covenant. Travel to and from the site is not considered part of the actual hours worked.

1.2.1 Police Information Check (PIC)

A Police Information Check (PIC), formerly called a Criminal Record Check, is required for all students in TFE. Students are responsible for obtaining the PIC from their local police department and for the cost (See, for example: https://vancouver.ca/police/organization/records-checks-fingerprinting/index.html or https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/policing-in-bc/publications-statistics-legislation/publications/police-information-checks-guidelines-for-police). Students will be provided with an individualized letter at orientation to assist them in obtaining a PIC. If the student has a current PIC (within the last twelve months), a copy of that document will be accepted. A copy of the PIC (current or within twelve months) is to be uploaded to Populi by the student before the beginning of any course with a field component, or before any unit of TFE begins.

Placement sites and mentors for *TFE-P: Leadership in Practice* and *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community* usually last for an entire academic year (or comparable summer period in the case of *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community*) unless there are compelling reasons to change placements. Arrangements for TFE placements and mentors must be discussed with the Director of Field Education before final decisions are made regarding their appropriateness.

1.3 TFE Programs: Goals, Organization, Descriptions

The are three basic units of TFE.

Unit One: PT505 and *TFE-E:- Exploration*

- Required for students in MDiv and MA-PPL.
- Normally introduced by PT 500 *(Spiritual and Theological Foundations for Pastoral and Public Leadership)* which is taken in Fall Term. Concluding papers in PT 500 provide direction and lead into PT 505.
- In PT 505 - *Leadership in Context*, **scheduled during Spring Term**, students explore potential field sites where they might follow up their vocational interests expressed in the work of PT 500. They interview potential mentors, conduct site analysis, consider their learning styles and reflect on the ethical requirements of research with human subjects. They prepare a Project Proposal that will be suitable to the requirements of *TFE-P: Leadership in Practice* /PT651-652 *(The Studio)* or *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community*.

The work in PT505 for *TFE-E: Exploration* is assessed as APPROVED/NOT APPROVED. Successful presentation of the Project Proposal, which contains a description and analysis of the proposed learning sites, an introduction to the proposed mentor and the project proposal, completes *TFE-E: Exploration* and admits the student to a subsequent unit of TFE (either TFE-P: Leadership in Practice or TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community). If the student is not planning to proceed in the following term to a further TFE unit, it is possible to delay the Proposal Presentation upon discussion and approval of the TFE Director.

- Credit is given for PT505 and *TFE-E: Exploration* separately.

Unit Two: *TFE-P: Leadership in Practice* – PT 651 & PT652 *The Studio*

- Required for students in MDiv and MA-PPL.
- *The Studio* (PT651 & PT652) is VST's core experience in Theological Field Education and action-reflection learning on leadership.
- Students in *The Studio* form a crucible where the skills and practices of strategic leadership can be taught, tested, and refined within an intentional and creative collaborative environment. The term "Studio" evokes the individuality and creativity of artistic practice within a communal enterprise. *The Studio* aims to engage the leader as a whole person in interaction with traditional and developing leadership practices.
- TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice* &*The Studio* is comprised of two terms of supervised field-based learning (as developed in the student's work in PT505), consisting of 8-12 hours per week for 10-12 weeks of each term. At the same time, students are in PT651 & PT652, *The Studio,* where they engage the creative, sometimes messy, adaptive character of leadership required for the future that is emerging.
- Students should plan their academic coursework cognizant of required significant time commitments of *TFE – Leadership in Practice* and *The Studio*.

Unit Three: *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community*

- Required for MDiv students.
- *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community* is an immersion in either a congregation of the student's denomination, or a social agency that is specifically emerging as an interest for the student. Students participate in these sites in ways which are appropriate to their Learning Goals, the site context, and the requirements of their denomination (See *Appendix V* "Denominational Learning Outcomes"). Interaction with a supervisor provides support and feedback on the student's hands-on experience. Theological Reflection – exploring, discerning and articulating the presence and activity of God in the field experience - together with the supervisor is a key element of this unit of TFE.
- *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community* normally takes place over two terms and is comprised of approximately 100 hours of onsite supervised learning

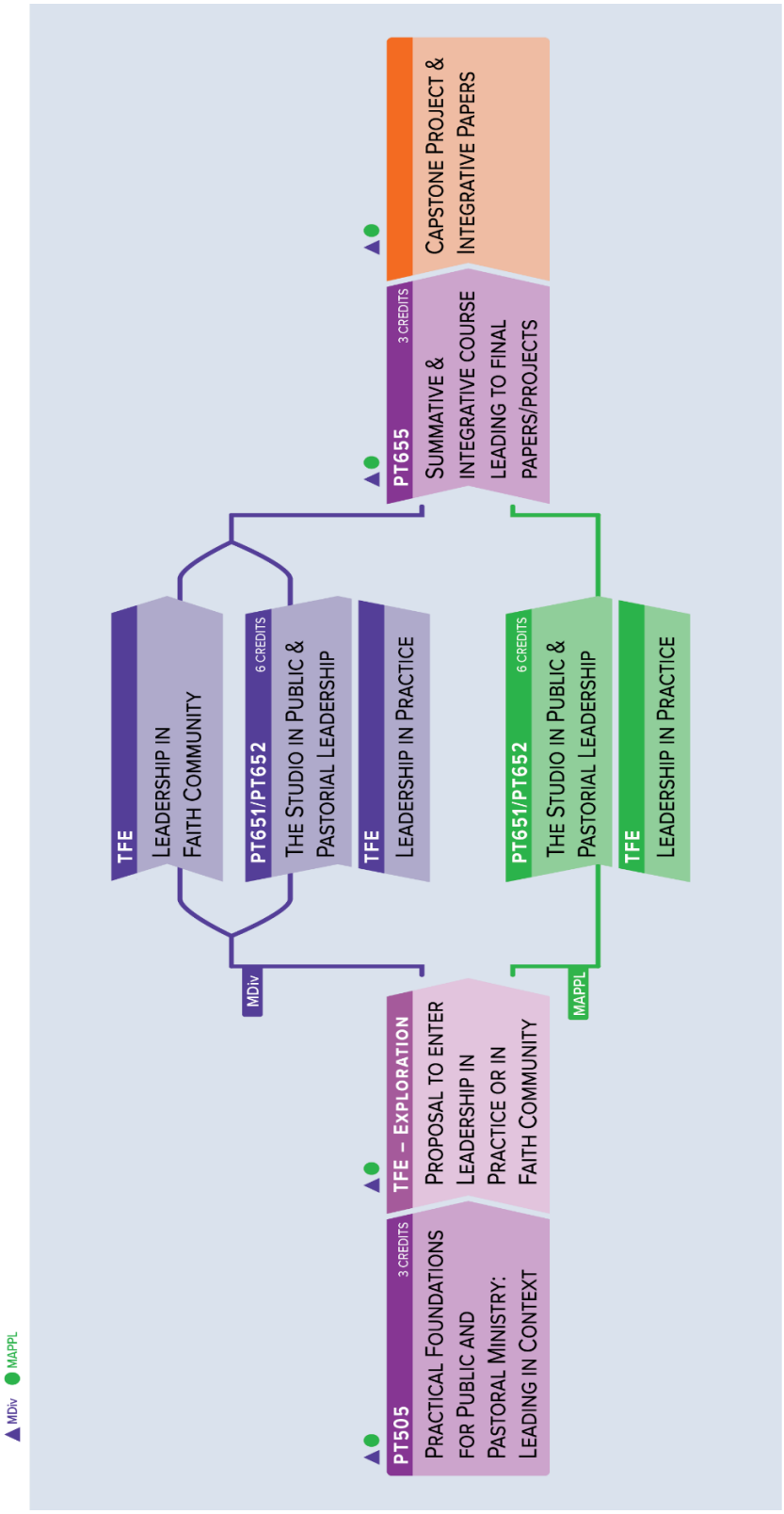
in each term. It is possible to complete the 200 hours during a summer period.

- Overseas placements in TFE will be considered by the TFE Director.
- Summer placements could be considered for *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community*, with approval of the TFE Director.
- The requirements for a summer placement may include the following:
    - The student may be required to participate in a concluding integration seminar to be held during the first weeks of the fall term.
    - The commitment is 16-20 hours weekly for ten to twelve weeks.
- One Unit of Clinical Psychospiritual Education (CPE) could be considered for *TFE–FC: Leadership in Faith Community*, with approval of the TFE Director (see section: 6.7.8).

Students in the MDiv Program complete their degree program with the Integrative Ministry Paper.
Students in the MAPPL complete their degree program with the Capstone Project and Paper.

Students in both degrees register for PT655 in the Fall Term prior to their respective papers/projects. While TFE is distinct from these papers/projects, the theological reflection that students engage in TFE contributes substantively to this integration.

See the diagram on the following page


MDiv
MAPPL
PT505
3 CREDITS
PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR PUBLIC AND PASTORAL MINISTRY: LEADING IN CONTEXT
TFE – EXPLORATION
PROPOSAL TO ENTER LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE OR IN FAITH COMMUNITY
MDiv
TFE
LEADERSHIP IN FAITH COMMUNITY
PT651/PT652
6 CREDITS
THE STUDIO IN PUBLIC & PASTORIAL LEADERSHIP
TFE
LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE
PT655
3 CREDITS
SUMMATIVE & INTEGRATIVE COURSE LEADING TO FINAL PAPERS/PROJECTS
CAPSTONE PROJECT & INTEGRATIVE PAPERS
MAPPL
PT651/PT652
6 CREDITS
THE STUDIO IN PUBLIC & PASTORIAL LEADERSHIP
TFE
LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

2. Assumptions and Definitions

2.1 Theological Reflection

A key component in Theological Field Education is the development of skill and the habit of doing theological reflection. This requires a commitment of time and use of varied methods to assist the student to integrate experience and theory. (See *Appendix IV* "Theological Reflection")

2.2 Site

A site is a setting for ministry (congregation, parish, hospital, prison, service and/or social agency, etc.) that has been approved by the Director of Theological Field Education for a student placement. Field Education sites provide placements for students under the guidance of a mentor as they experience ministry firsthand and complete specific learning goals. Sites will be chosen that demonstrate a willingness for mutual learning and analysis. An approved Learning Covenant is required for each site annually. (See *Populi* - "Forms for Theological Field Education") This covenant must be signed by a legal representative of the congregation's governing board i.e. The Chair of Council, the Warden, an appointed Elder.

2.3 Mentor and Supervisor

A mentor/supervisor is a lay, commissioned, ordered or ordained person serving in ministry or a social agency who provides on-site guidance and support to field placement students. She/He/They is appointed by and accountable to the Director of Theological Field Education for this purpose. Mentors/supervisors offer their students support and feedback through a disciplined educational process in which they reflect on all aspects of the student's ministry leadership at the field placement site. Mentors/supervisors also assist VST by contributing written evaluations by the due dates as set out in the Theological Field Education Calendar (pages 7-8). See Section Three for details regarding Mentors and Supervisors).

2.4 Learning Goals and Learning Covenant

Learning Goals:

- are developed by the student in consultation with the TFE Director and others as appropriate (Director of Formation, denominational representatives)
- are specific to the student and focus on the student's learning
- if required, need to connect to any practical theology course connected to the TFE unit.
- need to be manageable and appropriate to the scope of time and the context of the field placement site and context.

Learning Covenant:

- is a contractual agreement concerning terms of accountability between a student, mentor and the VST, which includes the specific Learning Goals (above) that the student will strive to achieve during a field placement.

- is developed by a student in consultation with their mentor and the TFE Director.
- must be approved by the TFE Director as must any subsequent amendments to the Covenant.
- may be reviewed mid-year with the approval of the mentor/supervisor and TFE Director. A draft of any changes to the Covenant, stating the reasons for the revisions, must be submitted to the TFE Director when the mid-year evaluation report is submitted.
- serves to clarify expectations of both student and mentor, as well as the focus of the placement.
- includes the Site Covenant, which is the agreement between the student, school and the site and must be signed by a legal representative of the congregation, organization or agency governing board (i.e. The Chair of Council, the Warden, an appointed Elder. Board Chair).

See *Appendix II* for an Example of Learning Goals and Learning Covenant.

2.5 Conflict Resolution

If any part of the teaching, learning or evaluation process breaks down, the Director of Theological Field Education must be notified immediately. Upon notification, a consultative process will be initiated to resolve the differences or to terminate the field placement agreement.

3. Mentors/ Supervisors

Vancouver School of Theology is indebted to ministry leaders in congregations and organizational leaders in social placements who volunteer their services as mentors/supervisors of students in their field placements.

3.1 Description of Role

A mentor or supervisor is a lay, ordered or ordained person serving in ministry (or an approved agency) who provides on-site guidance and support to placement students. In the normative context of change in the church and society, the mentor/supervisor is a seasoned leader, normally with at least 5-years employed pastoral experience, who is willing to venture with the student into unknown territory presented by new challenges and opportunities. The Theological Field Education program at VST generally uses both terms *mentor* and *supervisor* in the program; sometimes the nuances of each are helpful in the relationship with a student. Often the roles are mixed. The term *mentor* focuses on the character of the leader and the student's involvement in choosing their mentor. This is, generally speaking, the focus of TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice.* In TFE-FC: *Leadership in Faith Community*, we tend to place the emphasis on the experience and skill of the *supervisor* in the tradecraft of their ministry leadership and in the church's identification of that person as a teacher.

> "Mentors give us the magic that allows us to enter the darkness, a talisman to protect us from evil spirits, a gem of wise advice, and sometimes simply courage. But always the mentor appears near the outset of the journey as a helper, equipping us in some way for what is to come."
>
> Laurent A. Daloz. *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners* (2012), 18.

> Conventional understanding is that a supervisor oversees performance, manages operations, and directs others to carry out delegated tasks. … A supervisor of a ministerial intern must be understood more by her person than by her functions. It is impossible to separate the roles of a minister from who the minister is. Likewise, it is impossible to lead others in discerning a vocation in ministry without having contemplated and continuing to contemplate one's own sense of call. … A supervising pastor supervises by the very act of ministering.
>
> Charlene Jin Lee, "The Art of Supervision and Formation," in M Floding, ed., *Welcome to Theological Field Education!* (2011), 21.

Field placement mentors and supervisors have developed finely tuned skills in pastoral ministry, theological reflection, spiritual discernment and adaptive leadership over many years of study, spiritual discipline and experience. The teacher as learner is a key principle in successful Theological Field Education and so mentors / supervisors recognize that they, too, are learning as they guide their students.

The role of the mentor/supervisor is to assist students to reflect on their experiences of doing ministry. While the mentor/supervisor may express compassion, he or she also needs to be firm in the

expectations of the covenant. TFE, with skilled oversight, can be an opportunity for the student to reflect on the realities of life they are going to encounter in ministry.

Mentors/supervisors may wish to consult with their students regarding texts being currently used in their pastoral theology courses. Often mentors/supervisors have benefited from reading a chapter, article or book during the period of the placement.

Mentors/supervisors will have the opportunity to meet with the Director of Theological Field Education for orientation to the program and will have resources and forms made available to them.

3.2 Responsibilities and Opportunities

Once an appropriate match has been found between a mentor/supervisor and a student and officially confirmed by the Director of Theological Field Education, a Learning Covenant is signed and submitted to VST. (See *Appendix II.* The form is located on *Populi)*

The relationship between student and mentor/supervisor is a collegial one in which they respect the fact that each is on a journey of following God's call. The mentor/supervisor offers the student support and feedback through a disciplined, educational process in which they reflect together on the challenges of ministry in the context in which they serve. They agree to adhere to the VST's pertinent policies, outlined in Section Six.

The key component in the educational process by which the mentor/supervisor endeavours to guide the student's reflection is the regular weekly or biweekly reflection sessions they hold together. Sample processes for a reflection session are included in *Appendix IV*. Mentors and supervisors assist VST by providing written evaluative reports due to the TFE Director by dates set out in the Field Education Calendar, pages 7-8.

3.3 What does the role of mentor/supervisor involve?

3.3.1 Mentoring of students in TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice and The Studio* involves:

- willingness to support the Educational Philosophy of TFE and the specific focus of this unit of TFE.
- self-understanding as a learned and experienced guide willing to venture into unknown territory ("the future that is seeking to emerge") with a student for the purpose of mutual learning in the face of change
- willingness to prompt strategic thinking about the ministry leadership opportunity the student is exploring/pursuing
- willingness to prompt on-going, sometimes in the moment, discernment and reflection about adaptive leadership
- willingness to be consulted about assignments

- willingness to offer and discuss with the student recommended resources relevant to ministerial or community leadership
- willingness to provide mid-point and final-year reports to the Director of Theological Field Education
- willingness to develop, agree to, and remain faithful to terms of accountability in the Learning Covenant approved by the Director of Theological Field Education

3.3.2 Supervision of students in TFE-FC: *Leadership in Faith Community* involves:

- willingness to support the Educational Philosophy of TFE and the specific focus of this unit of TFE.
- self-understanding as a learned and experienced guide willing to venture into unknown territory ("the future that is seeking to emerge") with a student for the purpose of mutual learning in the face of change
- willingness to prompt strategic thinking, including theological reflection, on the challenges of ministry leadership in the specific ministry context
- willingness to work with the student to focus on the requirements of their denomination or faith group
- willingness to prompt on-going, sometimes in the moment, discernment and reflection about adaptive leadership
- willingness to be consulted about assignments
- willingness to find ways to provide 'hands-on' experience as appropriate
- willingness to offer and discuss with the student recommended resources relevant to ministerial leadership, with specific focus on the denomination
- willingness to make mid-point and final-year reports to the Director of Theological Field Education
- willingness to develop, agree to, and remain faithful to terms of accountability in the Learning Covenant approved by the Director of Theological Field Education

3.4 Constructive Feedback

Good feedback is an essential part of a praxis (action-reflection) approach to education. Constructive feedback can result in new approaches, directions and behavioral changes. Feedback identifies both our strengths and weaknesses, i.e., those areas that we need to develop to achieve greater competency. Feedback works best when it is offered within relationships of trust and respect. The Learning Covenant provides a framework in which constructive feedback may be offered in specific areas. Helpful feedback might include some of these characteristics:

- descriptive

- specific
- appropriate
- useful
- timely
- clear
- accurate
- directly related to the learning goals.

Bearing in mind that it is essential to provide affirmation to the student, we also recognize that it is more difficult to give negative feedback. Please see *Appendix III* for further suggestions.

4. Students

4.1 Responsibilities and Expectations

Early in their degree program, students will have various opportunities to meet with the Director of Theological Field Education, the Director of Denominational Formation (if applicable) and the professors in the Practical Theology area of the school. Some of these encounters will be informal, some more formal in interviews or courses. Through this time, there is opportunity to discuss vocational goals and how these might be met through the student's program of Theological Field Education.

TFE-E: *Exploration* and PT505 (3 credits), which are taken concurrently take place in Spring Term and students are advised to take it early in their program. Students explore possibilities for a ministry site and mentor which will fulfill their personal ministry vision. Students will participate in *TFE-E: Exploration*/PT505 seminars. An "Exploration Log" will record their progress toward the goal of a prospective site, project and mentor.

At the close of that term, the student makes a live presentation of the Project Proposal and, if accepted, *TFE-E: Exploration* is complete. A formal Learning Covenant is signed by the student, supervisor/mentor and the Director of TFE.

In a subsequent year, students move into either *TFE-P: Leadership in Practice* (which is taken concurrently with*The Studio* (PT651 and PT652) or *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community* (MDiv students only). In the placements of these units, students are expected to engage in their learning site for 8-12 hours per week over 10-12 weeks of each term. See the diagram on page 13.

In all units, students in field site locations are expected to:

- meet for one hour weekly or two hours bi-weekly to reflect theologically on the student's progress in attaining the goals, objectives and action plans listed in the Learning Covenant
- to prepare evaluation reports (mid-year &final) as required by each program
- take one week off during Reading Week and have a Christmas break. Any other time away from the site must be negotiated with their mentor/supervisors. The time required to plan for other meetings, workshops and worship services should be included in time spent in the field placement work and must be negotiated with the mentor.
- to abide by all applicable policies of VST (See Section 6) and of the appropriate denominational authority.

4.2 Student's Responsibilities in Relation to the Mentor

In all TFE programs, the field placement mentor/supervisor and student set a mutually agreeable time and place to meet for reflection sessions, either one hour weekly or two hours bi-weekly. In consultation with the mentor/supervisor, the student draws up a formal Learning Covenant with clearly stated Learning Goals that

are suitable to the context and tasks in ministry available at the site, that meet the VST's requirements, and the student's personal goals.

All students who are undertaking *TFE-P: Leadership in Practice* or *TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community* are required to submit a Learning Covenant for review by the Director Theological Field Education.

Discussion with the mentor/supervisor should include criteria regarding how the student's work will be evaluated, and the establishment of a procedure to follow in case conflict arises during placement at this site.

During reflection sessions, students will debrief, analyze, strategize and set out action plans for achieving the goals in their Learning Covenant. (See *Appendix IV* "Theological Reflection," which describes some approaches to theological reflection to use in these sessions.)

4.3 Student's Responsibility in Relation to Evaluation

In all TFE programs students are required to submit a self-assessment report mid-way through the unit and a final self-assessment report at the end of the unit (or term). (See *Populi for* these forms.)

Mentors/supervisors are requested to submit a mid-year evaluation report on the student's work at the placement site, as well as an end-of-year evaluation report. All written reports are discussed with the other party before being submitted to the Director of Theological Field Education.

If the student, or mentor/supervisor, do not agree with a report or any sections in it, they must note that disagreement in the report and provide a brief comment regarding a plan for resolution.

4.4 Theological Reflection

Expressed very simply, we do theological reflection when we examine an event or other experience in the light of the question, "Where is God in this experience?" (See *Appendix IV* "Theological Reflection")

5. Assessment and Evaluation

5.1 General Information

Evaluation involves a formal process of reflecting on the learning experience to make meaning of it. The student and mentor/supervisor participate in a process that allows the student to reflect on how their functioning in ministry in each context. In turn, the experience contributes to the student's on-going self-awareness and construction of a vocational identity. Goals attained and unfinished tasks are named during the evaluation process. Areas of growth and on-going challenges are also identified. If possible, the evaluation process at the end of the final term may be concluded with an exercise of intentional closure and leave-taking (perhaps in the context of the Sunday worship service, or a staff meeting at an agency).

Constructive feedback can empower mentors/supervisors and students alike and can contribute to life-long learning, transformation and faithfulness. Feedback must be constructive, respectful, honest and open.

Students and mentors must deal with issues of concern as they arise, so they can be resolved as soon as possible. Feedback on any topic that is not included in the Learning Covenant must be negotiated with the student before it is offered. Refer to *Appendix III* for suggestions on "How to Provide Constructive Feedback."

5.2 Evaluation Process and Written Reports

Guidelines and process for student evaluation on the TFE forms will be provided to the mentors/supervisors and are also available from the student. Written reports should contain information and only comments or concerns that have been discussed with the student during scheduled meetings. Reports should not include issues or concerns that have not been raised already with the student.

We recommend that each party prepare a draft of their report that they circulate to each other, and then, if necessary, amend. All reports are signed to indicate that they have been read, understood and discussed. "Signing-off" on a report indicates that both parties have reached consensus. It does not indicate that the signing parties agree 100% with the report, but that they can live with the report's conclusions.

Students and mentors must report any disagreements that arise during the evaluation process. You may need to schedule additional meetings to resolve any disagreements or conflicts. In the event of a disagreement, evaluation reports must include a signed addendum outlining the nature of the disagreement, the process followed to date and steps planned to resolve the disagreement.

In addition to scheduled meetings with mentors and supervisors, the Director of Theological Field Education is available to students and mentors/supervisors for consultation and conflict resolution. (604-822-9035 or mnichol@vst.edu)

The TFE Director will review all reports (and participation in integrative seminars where applicable). The Director will report completion or non-completion of TFE Units to the registrar's office via Populi. It is greatly appreciated by VST and students when mentors/supervisors write their reports in time for the students to meet all

due dates (**most crucial are dates for graduation**). Students are responsible for the submission of reports in a timely manner. Please note due dates for mid and end-of-year reports listed in the Field Education Calendar, page 7-8.

5.3 Denominational Requirements

For students preparing for ministerial leadership in a denomination in which they are a candidate or postulant, there are specific outcomes and requirements that may be required. Many of these are satisfied within TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice / The Studio* (PT651 and PT652) and TFE-FC: *Leadership in Faith Community,* however, students will need to ensure that all relevant areas are covered. Discussion on this with Directors of Denominational Formation is advised. (See *Appendix V* for the "Denominational Learning Outcomes.")

5.4 Denominational Reporting Guidelines

The Evaluation Process

Directors of Denominational Formation will report to a student's denomination throughout the student's entire program.

The primary criteria included in reports are:

- Personal Characteristics,
- Understanding and Practice of Ministry, and
- Disqualifying Patterns of Behaviour.

Reports may also include consideration of information obtained through a student's participation and performance in VST programs of study as well as relevant information that is provided to VST from community members or other external sources.

Normally, an annual report will be submitted by the student's Director of Denominational Formation to the appropriate Denominational Officials. Students will be provided with a copy of the annual report when it is released to Denominational Officials. Students may provide a supplemental statement in response to the annual report which will be provided to the Denominational Officials with the annual report.

If the Faculty/Student Review Committee identifies any serious concerns, the student shall be notified and may be referred to the Dean's Advisory Council, in consultation with the student's Director of Denominational Formation, for consideration of appropriate remediation or other action.

Access to the Recommendation Decision and Record

Students entering the MDiv are required to submit an application for denominational reporting at the time of their admission to VST. The MDiv application includes the student's written authorization for the collection, use and disclosure of their personal information to appropriate Denominational Authorities for the purposes of the reporting process.

Any information obtained for the purposes of denominational reporting will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed, except with the student's consent or to the extent that such disclosure is authorized or required by law, including in accordance with the provisions of the Personal Information Protection Act. Additional information about the categories of information that may be collected for the purposes of denominational reporting is included in the attached "Guidelines for Denominational Reporting").

Guidelines for Denominational Reporting

Personal Characteristics

- Faithfulness to Persons and Tasks: Respects and cares for others. Values ideas and needs of others. Practices adequate self-care. Communicates honestly. Demonstrates leadership abilities.

- Personal Integrity: Demonstrates authenticity, sincerity and congruity in word and deed.

- Personal Responsibility: Maintains commitments, schedules, promises, inner convictions. Manages personal finances in a responsible way. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Shows consistency in responses to persons and circumstances.

- Flexibility: Adaptive to new situations and contests. Copes well with the unexpected. Able to relate to a wide variety of people, e.g., age, gender, cultures, economic status, etc.

- Gifts of Caring: Sensitive to needs and feelings of other people. Encourages others to share their problems and to seek appropriate help/support. Helps others evaluate options and make their own decisions. Speaks the truth in love.

- Self Awareness: Aware of how others perceive her or him. Able to solicit honest feedback. Able to be self-critical.

Understanding and Practice of Ministry

- Vocational Clarity: Has a clear vocational identity and direction. Gives evidence of spiritual growth and development. Has a disciplined life of prayer. Able to articulate a well-grounded personal faith.

- Mission of the Church: Demonstrates support for the mission of the church. Committed to public ministry. Concerned about justice issues. Cares for the marginalized, the alienated and the needy.

- Denominational Collegiality: Feels at home in the student's denomination and is familiar with the denomination's ethos and history. Can work within denominational structures. Is respectful of other traditions within the student's denomination and of other denominational and faith traditions.

- Coping with Stress/Conflict/Life Crises: Understands conflict as an inevitable part of community life. Seeks fairness, openness and good communication in a conflict situation. Deals with stress in a balanced, healthy way. Is constructively supportive when others ask for help.

Disqualifying Patterns of Behaviour

- Pursuit of Personal Advantage: Inappropriately manipulates institutional structures to meet personal needs. Tries to control situations to an inappropriate degree. Rejects others' needs or desires and aggressively pursues the student's own.

- Inappropriate Self-Protective Behaviour: Under stress becomes guarded and secretive or, alternatively, aggressive and bullying. Excessively self-interested. Inflexible about schedules, appointments, etc. Tends to shift blame to others or to circumstances.

- Aggressive/Abusive Behaviour: Attacks persons not issues. In intense situations consistently bursts with anger or withdraws in hostility.

These criteria are shared with mentors/supervisors to guide their assessment of students engaged in Theological Field Education. Students receive information on this during Orientation.

More information on this and the Faculty Student Review Committee can be found in the *Student Handbook* at:
https://vst.edu/students/current/academics/handbook.

6. VST Policies Relating to Theological Field Education

6.1 Applicable School Policies from the Student Handbook.

For a complete listing of school policies, see the *Student Handbook*, published annually. https://vst.edu/students/current/academics/handbook.

6.2 VST's Theological, Educational, Curricular and Communal Commitments

(A) Our Theological Foundations:

1) God calls a people from and for the world to be a blessing for all creation.
2) The God revealed in the history of Israel and in Jesus Christ, calls us to think together with tradition for the sake of the present and the future.
3) We meet God's image in our neighbour and in all creation.

(B) Our Educational Objective:

We are called to educate and form thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders together with friends of other faith and cultural traditions.

(C) Our Curricular Goals:

1) Faithful discernment of the demands of Christian service
2) Rigorous engagement with Christian tradition and contemporary learning
3) Hospitable and respectful collaboration with Indigenous spiritualities and other cultural and faith traditions for the good of all creation.

(D) Our Educational Community Commits to:

1) Theological education and formation (theological, biblical, pastoral, ethical, liturgical, historical, indigenous and inter-religious) for the flourishing of God's people
2) Inspiring discerning Christian discipleship within and outside this community
3) Respect for the dignity of every person
4) Learning and scholarship undertaken with diligence and openness
5) Encouraging prophetic speech and just action for the love and welfare of creation

6.3 Student Responsibilities

Responsibility for course selection to fulfill program and degree requirements rests with the student. The Registrar, Program Chairs and all faculty members are available to give advice and guidance.

It is the student's responsibility, however, to read and understand the academic policies and procedures as set out in this Student Handbook and in the course descriptions and syllabi. Additional information about regulations and deadlines will be communicated by the Registrar during the term.

6.4 Inclusivity

VST is a multi-denominational school that encourages respect for the capabilities and contributions of all people. Students are expected to treat each other with respect in order that all may learn from each other in a nurturing environment.

VST admits qualified students to its programs of study regardless of age, colour, gender, sexual orientation or preference, national or ethnic origin, or disability. VST does not discriminate on the basis of any of these in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, bursaries, or other programs administered by the School.

6.5 Language of Worship/Words We Choose

The language used in worship at VST ecumenical services should be consistent with the mission and values of the school and reflect our theological diversity and ethos of the community. Worship leaders are encouraged to be thoughtful in their choice of language with attention to experiences of the gathered community. General principles to guide this include: Seeking balance between the historical and the new; finding words that include all the people of God and don't exclude on the basis of gender, race, age, ability or social economic status; using a variety of metaphors to draw close to God: Mother, Father, King, Water, Wind, Spirit, Divine, Creator. This includes attention to gender-inclusivity, postcolonial interpretation, avoiding super-secessionism, respect for all religions and multicultural sensitivity.

6.6 VST Anti-Harassment Policy

VST is a community that operates on Christian values, including caring and integrity in relationships. We endeavor at all times to provide a working and learning environment that is free from discrimination, supportive of spiritual and academic life, and that promotes the dignity, self-esteem, and fair treatment of all members of the community.

The basis of interaction at the School is one of mutual respect, cooperation, and understanding, and we will not tolerate any behavior that is likely to undermine this.

Harassment is against the law: The Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Labour Code protect us from harassment. The Criminal Code protects us from physical and sexual assault. You have a right to live, study, and work without being harassed, and if you are harassed, you can do something about it. This policy tells you what to do if you experience harassment at VST, or if you, as a student, become aware of a harassing situation.

VST treats all complaints of harassment seriously, whether they are made informally or formally. We undertake to act on all complaints to ensure that they are resolved quickly, confidentially, and fairly. VST will discipline anyone who has harassed a person or group of people. VST will discipline managers who do not act properly to end harassment.

For more information, see the VST Anti-Harassment Policy in the VST Student Handbook on the VST website (https://vst.edu/students/current/academics/handbook), or contact the Anti-Harassment Officer, Shari Coltart.

6.7 Policies pertaining specifically to Theological Field Education

(As approved by Faculty Council, August 2019)

6.7.1 Faculty Supervision

VST Faculty are not normally eligible to supervise students in Theological Field Education. Consideration will be given to Sessional Instructors to serve in this capacity, as long as students are not currently in a course being taught by the instructor.

6.7.2 VST Organizational Bodies

VST, or any of its boards, committees or student or alumni associations are ineligible to be used as learning sites for TFE.

6.7.3 Students of VST

Students in a Theological Field Education site may not be in a counseling or supervisory relationship with another VST student at that site. This is not to exclude the peer learning model employed in *The Studio*, where students are expected to offer feedback to one another and to partner in learning.

6.7.4 Payment for Theological Field Education

Students and mentors/supervisors in TFE do not receive salary payment. No field work is initiated for the purpose of obtaining paid employment. If a student already holds a paid position, the student may request of the TFE Director to have hours of/within that paid employment used toward TFE-FC: *Leadership in Faith Community*. All requirements of TFE would be in place, including the stipulated hours. The TFE supervisory relationship and some activities defined under the TFE Learning Covenant would be in addition to paid hours.

In order to encourage students not to hold paid employment during TFE programs so that their attention can be focused on the experiential learning experience, a scholarship will be awarded to each student in TFE.

6.7.5 TFE in a 'Home Community'

Many students who enter TFE will have had some experience in a local community of faith. This may have been for a long period of time or for a short time. Since TFE is concerned with initiating opportunities for new mutual learning experiences, learning sites would not automatically be approved where a student has had some previous involvement or history.

6.7.6 Required for Completion

Students are normally required to take all TFE units (or equivalent) and as many as necessary to successfully meet requirements of the specific degree and specific denominational learning outcomes. Students entering the Master of Divinity with professional ministry experience may be considered for advanced placement by the Director of Theological Field Education.

6.7.7 Police Information Check

A Police Information Check (PIC), formerly called a Criminal Record Check, is required for all students in Theological Field Education (TFE). Students are responsible for attaining the PIC from their local police department and for the cost (See: Section 1.2.1). Students can be provided with an individualized letter to assist them in attaining a PIC. If the student has a current PIC (within the last 12 months), a copy of that document will be accepted. A copy of the PIC (current or within 12 months) is to be uploaded to Populi by the student before the beginning of any course with a field component, or any unit of TFE begins.

6.7.8 CPE and TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community

A unit of CPE may be considered as a replacement for 100 hours of TFE – Leadership in Faith Community, with the approval of the TFE Director. CPE may not replace any of the courses required by a degree program

Appendix I: Theological Field Education FAQ

General Questions:

1. **Do I have to do TFE?**
   Three units of TFE (TFE-E: *Exploration*, TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice* and TFE-FC: *Leadership in Faith Community*) are required for the MDiv degree; Two units of TFE (TFE-E: *Exploration* and TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice*) are required for the MA-PPL degree.

2. **Do I register for TFE?**
   Yes, just as you would for another course in any other term.

3. **I'm taking PT551 "Pastoral Identity and Practice" which includes supervision. Does this count for TFE units?**
   No. This course includes supervised experience arranged by the instructor of that course and is separate from the TFE credits.

4. **If a conflict emerges in my field education, what do I do?**
   If any part of the teaching, learning or evaluation process breaks down, the Director of Theological Field Education must be notified immediately. Upon notification, a consultative process will be initiated to resolve the differences or to terminate the field placement agreement.

Questions about *The Studio:*

1. **Who can apply to be in *The Studio*?**

   Students preparing for public and pastoral leadership who have completed the prerequisites.

2. **Does everyone who applies get in?**

   No. All eligible students who need *The Studio* to graduate at the end of the current academic year will be admitted upon approval of their completed TFE Proposals. Other registrants will be admitted according to the strength of their proposal and space available.

3. **What are the academic prerequisites?**

   PT500 or equivalent from another institution (the Registrar is responsible for assessment of equivalencies), PT505, and PT551 [MDiv Only].

4. Are there other requirements for admission to *The Studio*?

Yes, you must have your completed proposal, Learning Goals and Learning Covenant Form signed and approved by the Director of Theological Field Education.

5. Should I be in *The Studio* in the middle of my program or at the end?

The Studio/*TFE-P: Leadership in Practice* and TFE-FC: *Leadership in Faith Community* need to follow TFE-E: *The Exploration* (PT 505). The order in which these units of TFE are taken will be determined in discussion with the Director of TFE.

6. What happens to my TFE if I delay registering for *The Studio* until my final year?

If you keep space to register for *The Studio* to complete the degree requirements, there isn't a problem. Your ability to exercise leadership depends on your level of comfort in the environment, including your relationships with those with whom you will work. If you carry sufficient confidence within yourself and with your mentor to begin offering leadership in a community with whom you have had only a short-term relationship, you are strongly encouraged to take *The Studio* as early in the program as you are able. If, however you do not feel comfortable enough, or sufficiently well established in the community, to build your team and offer leadership to the project you have identified, it is better to delay registering for *The Studio* until you do. There may be other reasons to delay as well. You will be advised to enroll in TFE-FC: Leadership in Faith Community first as it is not permitted to take two units of TFE at the same time.

7. Can I do only one term of *The Studio* instead of both?

No. *The Studio* is an eight-month, two term, program.

8. If my leadership project is over or not yet started, can I do *The Studio* anyway?

No. *The Studio* requires concurrent practice of leadership in TFE (8-12 hours a week).

9. Can I do *The Studio* concurrently with Clinical Psychospiritual Education (CPE)?

It is possible, but both *The Studio* and CPE require significant time commitments and students should be cautious about taking them concurrently. CPE, taken from September to April is part-time – about 15 hours/week. *The Studio* / TFE–P: *Leadership in Practice* expectation is 8-12 hours per week in the placement plus the hours in the classroom. It isn't impossible to do both, but it's a heavy load.

10. What if I have leadership experience and already consider myself a competent leader?

If you are an experienced leader, you will be the first to acknowledge that there is no such thing as having achieved perfection in leadership or even in being beyond the need for raising the bar on your own capacity for leading adaptive change. In addition, practical field experience in this case is within a framework of your overall theological education; if you have internship experience as a social worker or another professional, for example, that is not the same as preparation for leadership in public or pastoral ministry. *The Studio* is designed to meet you where you are and take you to the next step. As someone leading from within with the capacity for skillful, reflective and effective leadership in a context of significant organizational and cultural change, you will identify your own need for growth and use *The Studio* to develop your leadership.

11. Will I learn anything?

Unlike a course where a professor brings content material to you, in *The Studio* YOU bring material to the instructor and your peers, who in turn give it back to you for your own learning. The depth and extent of your learning is in direct proportion to what you bring into *The Studio*. Only the artist who brings appropriate materials and fresh desires to *The Studio* creates a work of art, or at least a work in progress!

12. What if I don't see myself as a leader or don't believe ministers should be leaders?

Leadership is not a job description or a personality trait; it is an activity. It is a term we use to describe a way of offering yourself to people facing into what matters most to them with a desire to close the gap between their aspirations and their reality. Pastoral and public ministry, by definition, involves offering leadership to individuals and communities living in the gap between their current situation and the promise of fullness of life, the future that is emerging.

13. What do I need to do to apply?

You need to complete 1) PT505 – *Leading in Context* and 2) have your Project Proposal (which signifies completion of *TFE-E: Exploration*) approved by the Director of Field Education prior to the first day of class in Fall Term and pay the course fee.

14. How much does it cost?

The Studio comprises two 3.0 credit courses at VST. The cost of 3.0 credits is posted on the VST website.

15. Where do I exercise leadership during my *Studio* year?

TFE-E: *Exploration* gives you the opportunity to locate a site, project and mentor for your work in *The Studio*.

16. What is expected of the mentor?

The single most important expectation of the mentor is an understanding and commitment to the goals of *The Studio*. If you and the Theological Field Education Director are confident of this, ask the mentor to fill out the appropriate documentation, which outlines further related expectations and include this in your TFE Proposal document.

17. What do we do each session?

Each session varies and is critically dependent upon what each participant brings to the session. We use that raw material in our learning.

18. What is the workload?

In addition to spending 8 – 12 hours in your learning site working on your leadership project each week, you will be expected to:

- Be physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually present for *The Studio* session and for other participants.
- Meet the assignments as outlined on the syllabus for PT651 and PT652.
- Attend at least 80% of *The Studio* sessions and give notice of, and reason for, absence

The workload, however, rests almost entirely with you. You work as hard as you choose and your increased competencies for leadership will be reflective of your efforts.

Appendix II: Sample Learning Goals and Learning Covenant

This is a sample only. The Learning Goals and Learning Covenant form two parts of one document. See the illustration of "Learning Goals and Objectives' on page 35.

PART ONE – Student Information

Information about the student, the mentor/supervisor and the site.

PART TWO - Learning Goals

General Goals

- To complete the requirements of (TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice* / *The Studio* or TFE-FC: *Leadership in Faith Community*) with special attention to (for example, my growth as a facilitator, religious education, pastoral care, team leading, leading worship) in consultation and collaboration with my mentor (name).

Goal 1: To Gain Experience in Leading Bible Studies

Objective: To design, plan and take primary leadership in an educational ministry event.

Action Plan:

1. Meet with the Christian Education Committee in October to discuss the possibility of a Lenten Bible study. We will discuss conducting a "needs assessment" asking such questions as "Does the congregation want a Lenten Bible study?" "What is the level of commitment to attend a Lenten Bible study?" "What are the burning issues that people are concerned about that might be addressed as topics in a Lenten Bible study?"
2. Meet in November with VST faculty members responsible for religious education for their input and advice. Draw up a proposal and present it to my mentor and the Christian Education Committee.
3. Determine an evaluation process by January. Design an evaluation form that addresses (a) Bible study design and content, (b) teaching skills, (c) general comments about my effectiveness as a religious teacher (theology, teaching style and delivery) and (d) suggestions for my further development as a religious educator.
4. During January and February, prepare a teaching plan and an outline for each session.
5. During Lent, teach the Bible study.
6. Meet with my mentor after Lent to debrief the experience, review suggestions and offer ideas for "next steps" in my development as a religious educator.

Resources:

- Faculty responsible for educational ministry at the School
- The Christian Education Committee

Goal 2: To Develop Skills in Leading Public Worship with Children

Objective: To gain experience by leading “The Children's Time” during worship.

Action Plan:

1. Meet with the worship planning team and worship committee to discuss the possibility of leading “The Children's Time” every other week during October and November.
2. Meet with the Sunday school teachers in September. Ask if they might design two sessions in which they would teach me how to teach children and lead them in worship. These sessions would include resources they use, for example, how to teach Sunday school children, teaching tools, storytelling techniques, etc. Attend the two teaching sessions in October.
3. Lead "The Children's Time" every other week in October and November (at least four occasions).
4. Meet with the Sunday school teachers after each occasion to debrief and receive feedback.
5. Share what I have learned about working with children in worship with my mentor.

Resources:

- The faculty who teach religious education and liturgical studies at the School
- Sunday school teachers
- Resources on storytelling, teaching children and children in worship found in the School’s library
- The Sunday School Teachers, Christian Education Committee, and Worship Committee
- My mentor

Goal 3: To Learn How to Make Pastoral Visits

Objective: To attend pastoral visits as an observer and to make at least one pastoral visit on my own.

Action plan:

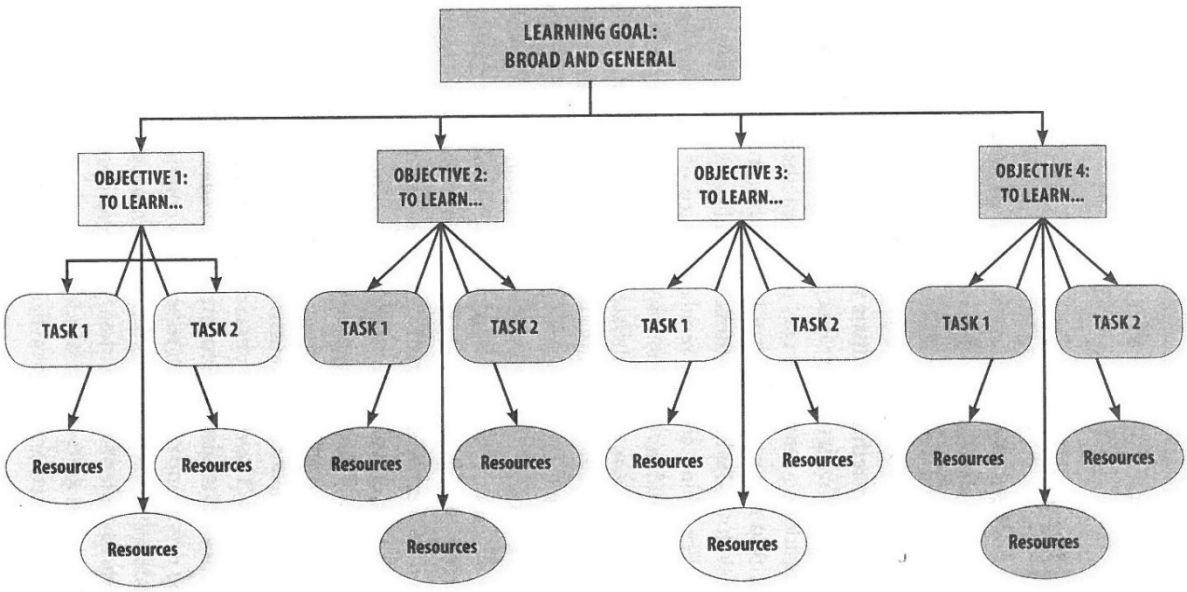
1. Accompany my mentor on at least two pastoral visits in September and early October, one to a hospital, the other to a home, and write a verbatim on each of these visits.
2. Discuss the verbatim during a reflection session with my mentor following these visits.

3. Conduct one pastoral visit on my own and provide a verbatim regarding that visit to my mentor.

Resources:

- My mentor
- Faculty with experience in pastoral care
- Print resources regarding pastoral care
- The pastoral care team of the congregation

FIGURE 11.1: Learning Goals and Objectives



From:

Sarah B. Drummond, "Assessment and Theological Field Education," in Matthew Floding, ed., *Welcome to Theological Field Education.* Alban, 2011, p. 177.

PART THREE – Learning Covenant

This section identifies the General Terms of the agreement between the student, mentor/supervisor, the site and the school. This also contains the approval of the TFE Director.

Appendix III: How to Provide Constructive Feedback

The following suggestions are provided to assist mentors/supervisors to develop skills in this part of their role.

Descriptive

Be descriptive rather than judgmental. By describing your own reaction, you leave the other person free to use the feedback as they see fit. When you use judgmental language, the person receiving feedback is likely to become defensive and "shut down" (i.e. no further learning will take place during this exchange). Use "I" language when you offer feedback. By doing so, you acknowledge that you are speaking from your own perspective, observations, perceptions and feelings. Example: "When you use the word 'girl' or 'dear', I feel put down and not recognized as an adult woman."

Specific

Be specific rather than general. Example: instead of saying, "You are very dominating", offer this statement "Just now, when we were deciding the issue, I felt you were not hearing what others were saying. I felt forced to accept your arguments."

Appropriate

Feedback can be destructive when it serves only our own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end. What we offer must be supportive and responsible. Example: "Speaking in large groups is difficult for you, isn't it? I appreciated the effort it took for you to make your contribution to the Board meeting. Your comments were helpful. How can we help you to continue to build your confidence?"

Requested

A Learning Covenant requests feedback on specific and clearly stated learning goals. If a student wants additional feedback, he/she/they should ask for it. If a student wants to offer feedback, she/h/they should wait to be invited to contribute it or seek permission to offer feedback at the receiver's convenience. Feedback is most helpful when the receiver develops a framework in which constructive criticism might be offered. For example, a student may want to develop a worship feedback sheet listing the areas in which they/she/he wants feedback.

Useful

Direct your feedback toward behaviour that the person can change. Most of us find it frustrating to be reminded of shortcomings over which we have no control. Example: "I enjoyed your Children's Time last Sunday, but I would have found it more helpful if you had used the microphone so that I could have heard the story, too." Note the use of "I" statements in this example.

Timely

Consider the timing of your feedback carefully. In general, the feedback is most helpful when offered sooner rather than later. It is not helpful to make a quick critical comment

immediately following an observed behaviour unless you are prepared to spend time with the person receiving your feedback. Example: "I'd like to offer some feedback on the process you used in Bible study tonight. Do you have time to sit down and talk about it or can we set up a time soon?" Under normal circumstances, it is better to offer constructive feedback during a regularly scheduled meeting with the Mentor or Ministry Reflection Group.

Clear

Check to ensure that you are communicating clearly. One way of doing this is to have the receiver rephrase the feedback to see if it corresponds to what you intend to convey. Example: "Let me see if I understand what you are saying to me. Was it the specific word I used in a sermon that concerns you or the general message I was trying to convey?"

Accurate

Check for accuracy. When feedback is offered in a group, both the giver and the receiver have an opportunity to check with others about the accuracy of the feedback. Is this person's impression shared by others? Example: "In this evaluation session, someone suggested that more printed resources would have been helpful. What do others think about this idea?"

Connected to the Learning Covenant

As much as possible, limit feedback to the goals stated in the Learning Covenant. Example: "I've been thinking about your goal to develop your pastoral skills. When John told us about his daughter's illness, it really seemed to throw you. Could we set aside some time at our next meeting of the Ministry Reflection Group and role-play the various pastoral responses to crises?"

A Model for Non-violent Communication

Marshall Rosenberg offers an excellent model of communication for constructive feedback. It provides the kind of feedback discussed in previous pages of this Guide. Rosenberg's model empowers people to exchange resources and resolve differences in non-aggressive ways. He advises us to speak honestly and responsibly about our own perceptions, feelings, values and desires, as well as listen to the perceptions, feelings, values and desires of others. Rosenberg's model focuses on four essential pieces of information:

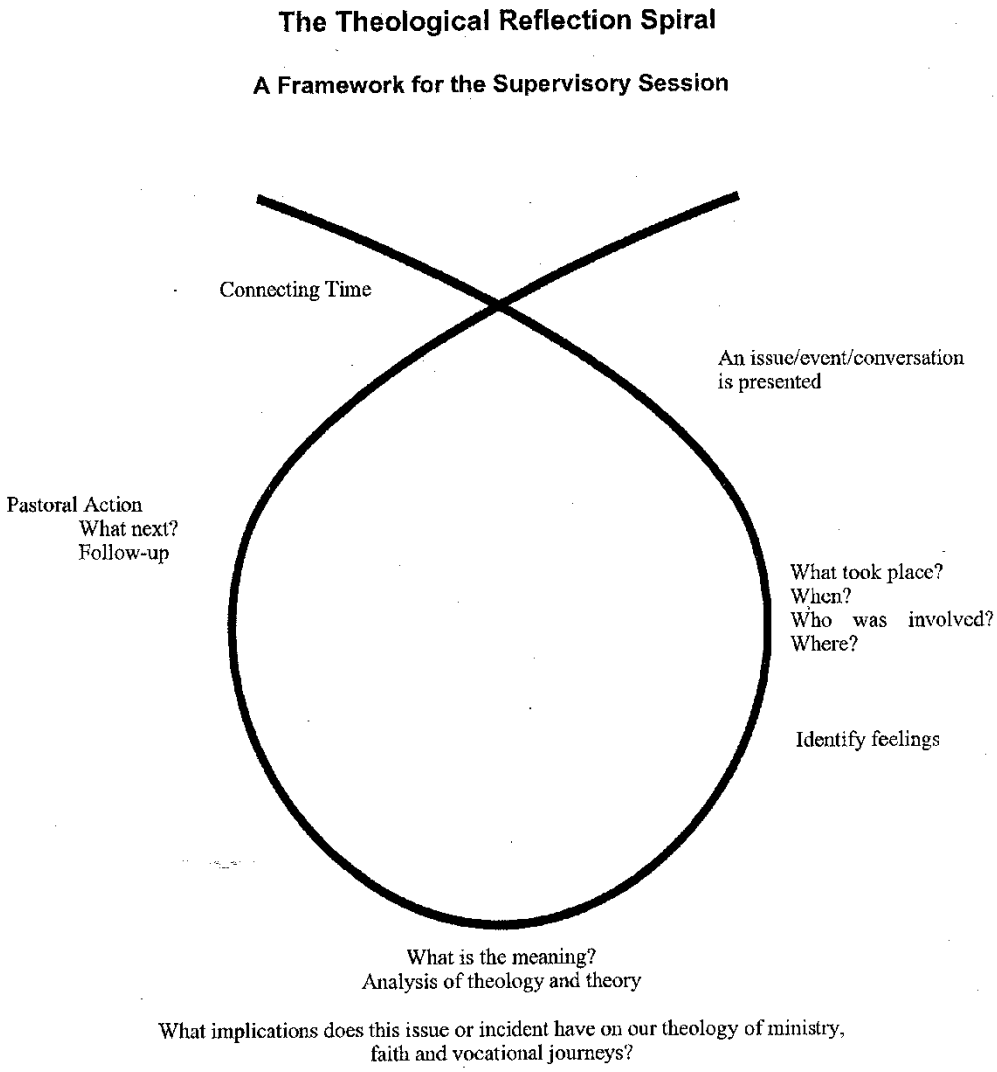
"When you said (or did) _____, I felt _____."

"And because I value _____, I would like _____."

This material is from Marshall Rosenberg, who is the Director of the Center for Nonviolent Communication, P.O. Box 2662, Sherman, Texas.

Appendix IV: Theological Reflection

A. The Theological Reflection Spiral



1. **Prepare**: Identify and name your assumptions. This might include considering:

   - Who are you in relation to your faith community?
   - How do they perceive you?
   - How do you locate yourself socially, economically, culturally?
   - What questions do you carry into this experience?
   - Why are they important to you?

2. **Experience**

   - Assume the role of a participant or observer.
   - What do you observe?
   - What feelings, questions and concerns do you have?

3. **Describe**
    - Record briefly what you saw, what you think was happening and why.
    - Note what you already knew prior to the experience, i.e. your assumptions.
    - What cultural, social, economic norms are operative in this experience?
4. **Analyze**
    - Describe what you really think was going on and why.
    - Put the biblical images, themes, stories that have come to you into the conversation.
    - What new insights emerge?
    - What affirmation or challenge emerges from the biblical themes, stories or images?
5. **Reconsider**
    - *Repenser* or 'think again' – revisit your knowledge, assumptions, expressions of Christian faith and practice in the light of the previous steps.
    - Identify the areas in which you are feeling challenged, confirmed, strengthened, disturbed by the process so far.
    - Name any change that you think may be required of you and/or of others.
    - How could such a change occur?
6. **Practice**

    Review the previous steps. Can you name any shift in your perception, faith perspective, ministry, mission or vision of the church? In turn, these identified shifts may provide new starting points for theological reflection on another experience. The spiral invokes an image of continuous theological reflection, change and learning.

B. Theological Reflection Based on Life Experience

1. **Choose an experience.**

    One from your life that has meaning and significance for you.
2. **Describe the significance of the experience.**

    Use the following questions as a guide. You do not need to answer all the questions. They will guide you through the process of your reflection.

    - What makes this experience significant?
    - What questions came to mind as you engaged in this experience?
    - What feelings did you experience?
    - What did you fear?
    - What was the resultant effect of this experience on you?
    - Is there an image or word that describes this time for you?
3. **Broaden your consideration of the experience.**
    - Have any authors, preachers, friends or colleagues referred to a similar experience?

- How have they responded?
- What does my culture say about this kind of experience?

4. **Begin to theologize.**

   - Are there biblical motifs in this experience?
   - Where is God in this experience?
   - What biblical text, story or image comes to mind?
   - What does my religious tradition (theologians, authors, denomination, etc.) say about this experience?
   - What are the implications for ministry?
   - How does this experience affect my view of God or of what it means to be a believer?

   Examples of theological concepts that you might be able to identify in your experience may include:

Kingdom	Incarnation	Creation	Solidarity
Conscience	Honesty	Sacrifice	Hospitality
Church	Sin	Hope	Vindication
Grace	Reconciliation	Repentance	Balance
Redemption	Peace	Service	Judgment
Faith	Love	Revelation	Joy
Justice	Covenant	Vocation	
Ministry	Compassion	Freedom	
Renewal	Discernment	Celebration	
Prophesy	Obedience	Images of God	

C. Theological Reflection Based on Field Placement Site Experience

1. **Name the experience.**

   Consider recent conversations, events or incidents in which you have played a significant role.

   Choose only one which challenged you or left you with lingering questions or concerns. This may have been either a positive or negative experience.

2. **Reflect on the experience.**

   Prepare a straightforward narrative using the following questions to guide you.

   - What happened?
   - Who was involved?
   - What role did you play?
   - How did you react?
   - How did others respond?
   - Where did this experience leave you?

3. **Analyze the experience.**

    - What factors were at work in the situation? Name the emotions, assumptions, attitudes, social and cultural issues, power dynamics, etc.
    - What was at stake for you? How did your interaction reflect your personal history, experience, convictions, values, faith, etc.?
    - How did this experience challenge your assumptions, perceptions, values or beliefs?
    - What did you learn about yourself?
    - What insights have you gained from this experience?
    - What questions or concerns remain with you?

4. **Make some theological connections.**

    Probe more deeply into the experience for insight using these questions:

    - What biblical stories, images or symbols come to mind?
    - What theological ideas, concepts or authors come to mind?
    - What insights gained from your theological studies are particularly relevant?
    - How does this experience or situation relate to other faiths, cultures or traditions as you understand them?

5. **Reflect on your learning.**

    Identify some of the insights that emerge as you reflect on this experience using these questions:

    - How has your faith been enriched or challenged by this experience?
    - What did you learn about God?
    - What did you learn about the practice of ministry?
    - What did you learn about your pastoral identity?
    - Will you do anything differently as a result of this experience?
    - How does your reflection on this experience relate to your learning goals?

6. **Conclude your theological reflection.**

    Suggest themes or questions that invite a broader discussion of the theology and the practice of ministry.

D. Written Report Formats for Reflection Sessions

Methods for the student's reporting for reflection sessions are included in this section. Some written reporting during the semester is valuable. The student should come to a session having thought about what she/he wants to discuss and have some plan for presenting data.

The following are suggested written formats for reporting:

1. **Social Analysis**

    When you begin working in an agency or congregation research and observation about values, history, issues, resources and structures are helpful.

Congregations

Prepare a report for your reflection session on your observations of congregational life. The following are questions to consider:[1]

- What are the major theological beliefs of this congregation?
- What is the larger context in which this community exists?
- Is the congregation "like or unlike" the surrounding community?
- How would you describe the culture and identity of the congregation?
- What are the formal and informal programs that are the most important to the congregants?
- Who makes up the congregation?
- How would they describe their community to outsiders?
- How does the community make decisions - formal and informal processes and leadership?
- What is the budget? How does it get created?

Agencies/Organizations

Prepare a report for your reflection sessions on your observations of the agency or organization. The following are questions to consider:

- What are the agency's basic beliefs and primary values?
- How do the people who work here understand the purpose of their work?
- Describe the situations/issues that inform the work.
- Describe the agency's culture and identity.
- What is the agency's history and structure?
- How are decisions made: formal and informal?
- What is the budget? How is money generated for the agency?

2. **Critical Incident in Ministry Format**

Describe the most critical incident in your ministry during the past two to four weeks. The assignment assumes no a priori criteria for what is considered critical; rather it encourages students to allow themselves the fullest latitude in recalling the event which, in whatever way it is important, seems to typify their experiences. A critical incident can be a personal involvement that may have caused anxiety, or it may be an event that was exceptionally gratifying. In any case, it should be some experience that can be marked as the "high point" or the "low point" of the two to four-week period. Attempt to cover as many of the following areas as possible.

- Describe the event, including critical verbal and non-verbal communication involved and your response.

[1]See Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, & William McKinney, eds., *Studying Congregations* (Abingdon, 1998), for detailed congregational analysis. The authors provide information on how to assess the theological perspectives of the congregation; the larger context in which the congregation exists; its culture and identity; the processes by which the congregation takes action; and the resources it has. The book provides a much more extensive resource if you would like to do further research.

- Describe any emotions you perceived in others.
- Describe your personal feelings about the situation.
- If it is a "low point," state the problem as you see it; if it is a "high point," state why it is so.
- If it is a "low point," list some other ways you might have responded or handled the situation; if a high point state, any new insights or growth you perceive in the situation.
- Address the question, "How do I understand or make sense of this incident theologically?"

3. **Verbatim Report Format**

As a tool for the discovery of one's leadership style and one's strengths and weaknesses, the verbatim focuses on one specific concrete example of experience. It indicates to the student and to the mentor what the student did, not what she/he would like to have done. It allows for clarification of the experience, identification of significant moments in the relationship, presentation of alternatives and integration of theological, social, spiritual, etc. perspectives. (Use 2/3 width of page for the verbatim, saving the right-hand 1/3 for mentor's responses.)

A. Introduction

- Time
- Place
- Brief description of the person (confidentiality should be considered)
- Relationship to the person
- Context of the conversation (what you thought of and felt about the person and her/his situation before this conversation)
- Other details or circumstances which are relevant

B. Verbatim Record of Conversation

An exact record of the conversation: (make notes as soon as possible after meeting), including pauses, non-verbal communications, facial expressions, etc., insofar as they help to catch the "tone" of the experience. If the conversation is longer than can be conveniently reported, give highlights, being sure to indicate where breaks occur, and summarizing missing parts. The effort in this part is to be purely descriptive - omitting explanation of why you did what you did. This effort calls for candor that will be, at times, difficult to achieve.

Example: Key: S = student, D = Mrs. Doe; Number the responses to make analysis and evaluation with mentor easier.

S1: How are you today, Mrs. Doe?
D1: Fine. How are you?
S2: We missed you in church Sunday.
D2: I missed being there (blushing) ...

Don't try to "doctor" your report to make it look better. Rather, indicate changes you would make in the next step of your analysis.

C. Analysis and Evaluation

- What took place? Where do you and the person now stand in your relationship?
- Intention at beginning (discrepancy between intention and performance; shift in expectations, etc.)
- An evaluation of your responses, trying to identify your dominant feelings during the conversation. This is not an invitation to probe the depths of your unconscious, but a simple effort to catch the feelings on or near the surface (i.e., is this a person who makes you feel angry, happy, frustrated, etc.?). What did you see as the person's needs, and did your responses get at these needs? Are there any points that strike you as particularly significant now?
- Would certainly want to omit or do differently (indicate by number - D2 - etc.)?
- What does this interaction reveal about the person and about you? What kind of person are you in this interaction?
- 6. What effect did this interaction have on the person? How do you think she/he felt when it was over, and why?
- Other details or circumstances which are relevant.

D. Goals, Learning, and Future Involvement

- What goals and plans will you have for your next meeting with this person?
- What did you learn by studying this relationship and reporting on it (another person, yourself, own attitude to the other person)?

E. Theological Analysis and Evaluation

- What are the theological dynamics of the actual situation as you perceive them?
- Does your normative understanding of your faith shed any light on the situation and future possibilities?
- How has this report helped you to integrate your experience and theological understanding?

E. A Sample Process for Reflection Sessions

1. Presentation of agenda for the session that has been prepared by the student. Issues that the mentor might want to discuss may be added.
2. Student describes the first issue, situation, concern that prompted the need for reflection.

   Data

   Student presents the data. The focus is on getting an accurate picture of the event or situation.

Mentor asks for clarification about what took place or what prompted concern; what role the student played; who said and did what; what were the circumstances surrounding the event or situation.

Analysis of Dynamics

Personal: what were the feelings involved? What do you think are the relational dynamics, conflicts, confusions? What are the expectations? What did you hope for yourself in this situation? How did your hopes affect your sense of what was expected of you? How do you think the others involved were affected?

Social: What is the larger community context in which this situation arises? What are the power dynamics? What values and world views are being expressed? Who will be affected by what happens? Are they part of the decision making? What are the historical & structural relationships?

Theological Issues

What faith issues come out of the situation or event? Were there conflicts about belief and the meanings attributed to the situation? What theological questions were raised for you? What resources from the Bible/sacred text and your faith tradition may give insight into this situation?

Interpretation

What is your interpretation of the situation now? What would you change? What would that require? What do you see as alternatives? Do you have greater clarity about your role, needed skills, others? How does your theological insight inform and guide you in this situation? Do you have new insights about God, self, human nature, church, the world, sin, etc.?

Next Steps

What is your next step? What resources do you need? What faith questions and responses are called forth? What will you do about them?

Reminder: Learning objectives stated in the learning/serving covenant should be addressed regularly during the reflection sessions. If they are not, reassessment of the learning objectives needs to be undertaken.

(Portions of the above are excerpted from Kenneth Pohly, *Pastoral Supervision* (Houston: The Institute of Religion, Texas Medical Center), pp 69 – 70 and Pacific School of Religion, *Field Education Manual* 2009-2011).

Appendix V: Denominational Learning Outcomes

The denomination to which the student is connected will have specific Learning Outcomes or Competencies that relate to field education. Over the course of the TFE at VST, it is expected that students will fulfill their respective denominationally specified competencies to a satisfactory level. Following consultation with the appropriate Formation Director at the school and judicatory representatives, if applicable, students should integrate these denominational learning outcomes into their Learning Covenants. Students are encouraged to keep an on-going assessment of their learning, relative to their denominational expectations, throughout their program.

Students are normally required to take all TFE units (or equivalent) and as many as necessary to successfully meet the learning outcomes. Students entering the Master of Divinity with professional ministry experience may have advance placement in the learning outcomes.

A. Anglican Church of Canada Denominational Learning Outcomes

https://www.anglican.ca/faith/ministry/education/competencies-priesthood/
https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/108798/PriestsGrid110406.pdf

From the Anglican Communion:
https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/108795/DeaconsGrid110406.pdf

The following relate to the discernment processes of the Diocese of New Westminster and the Diocese of British Columbia:
https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/diocesan-resources/ordination

https://bc.anglican.ca/programs/ordained-ministry-discernment

B. Presbyterian Church of Canada Denominational Learning Outcomes

1. "Entry into The Ministry Of Word And Sacraments Or Diaconal Ministry Of The Presbyterian Church In Canada For Lay Persons"
https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/36423/

2. "The Candidacy Process Of Preparation And Discernment" https://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/mcv_candidacy_process_of_preparation_and_discernment.pdf

Presbyterian students should also familiarize themselves with the Presbytery's criteria in evaluating a Certified Candidate's suitability and readiness for ministry found in *The Book of Forms* 202 to 212 with particular focus on section 206.

C. United Church of Canada Denominational Learning Outcomes

https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/guide-to-competencies-for-ministry_oct2022.pdf

NOTES