

Section 1

Introduction to Theological Field Education

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Purpose

“The Whole Gospel for the Whole World through Whole Persons,” Palmer Theological Seminary’s (PTS) motto, calls us to understand the broad purpose of theological education: providing supervised experience in ministry to prepare the whole person to respond to the Gospel imperative to meet the varied challenges of our changing world.

Palmer Theological Seminary’s understanding is that TFE is an integral part of Seminary training. Using an action/reflection style of learning, seminarians are enabled to test their vocational calling, utilize persons and events as sources of theological and ministry learning, and integrate theory with practice. TFE provides a grounding of students' seminary training in ministry experience, enabling the development of professional competency and confidence in ministerial identity and authority. We are preparing students for the wider church. TFE is an opportunity to experience a variety of ministry settings.

Who We Are

PTS has vested the Supervised Ministries Office (SMO) with responsibility for these programs: Theological Field Education (TFE), Clinical Pastoral Care (CPC), Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), and Placement Information. TFE is our largest program. Please feel free to visit us online or call to receive information about our programs.

Curriculum Options for Students

Palmer students who are on the M.Div. Pastoral Leadership Track are required to take:

- TFE 1A & 1B (SUPV525 & 526) earning 3 credits

Entrance to the TFE program is singular, in September of each year.

- CPE (SUPV532) earning 3 credits for ½ Unit of CPE or CPC for 3 credits

Student may take a full unit of CPE for 3 elective credits. Students are encouraged to check with denominational requirements, if necessary.

Palmer students who are on the M.Div. Adaptive Leadership Track are required to take:

- TFE 1A & 1B (SUPV525 & 526) earning 3 credits

Entrance to the TFE program is singular, in September of each year.

You may also take as one of your courses

- CPE (SUPV532) earning 3 credits for ½ unit of CPE or 6 credits for 1 unit of CPE

Student Readiness for TFE

Prerequisites for TFE 1A & 1B are as follows:

- Minimum 24 credit hours completed
- PRMN510 Foundations of Pastoral Care and Counseling
- SFRM505 Nurturing Spiritual Life and Character I
- THLE520 Systematic Theology and Ethics: Vision of Community **or** THLE 521 Systematic Theology and Ethics: Reign of God (the course may be taken concurrently and must be successfully completed in the fall semester of the TFE year in order to continue in TFE)

Prerequisites for TFE 2A & 2B are as follows:

- Minimum 48 credit hours completed
- SUPV 525/526 TFE 1A/1B **or** SUPV 520/521 TFE 1A/1B

Academic Requirements and PTS Policies

TFE requirements are based on the academic policies and procedures of PTS, with adaptations made for the contextual education component that is also required.

Faculty has mandated that no student shall be waived from TFE. The amount of reading and written material required for successful completion of TFE 1A & 1B and TFE 2A & 2B meet the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and PTS standards required for granting these credits per semester.

Given the participatory nature of TFE, attendance in the TFE seminar group is **mandatory**. Small group dynamics are impacted by absences; therefore, students are expected to attend all classes. Work cannot be made up outside of class. Students are expected to arrive on time and to remain for the duration of the class. Tardiness of ten minutes or more for any three seminars will constitute one absence. Students are allowed no more than two excused absences for each semester. Therefore, students are strongly encouraged to restrict absences for emergency needs only. Collegiality and confidentiality are essential to the effectiveness of the seminar group formation.

Extensions given for written work must follow the guidelines in the PTS Student Handbook (Policy on Incomplete Coursework/Requests for Extensions). The SMO staff and Administrative Leadership represent the faculty in this case. No exceptions to the printed guidelines will be accepted.

A failure to comply with the requirements of the course will result in a designation of “No Credit” for the course. TFE courses are required for graduation with the M. Div. degree. The successful completion of **both semesters is required to earn credit for each**. All correspondence concerning TFE will be forwarded to students via “eastern.edu” accounts. Any Seminary forms that require an official TFE signature (e.g. Verification form) must come from the SMO.

PTS International Student Policy

The Primary Designated School Official (DSO) for PTS is the Director of International Student and Scholar Services for all of Eastern University, whose office is located on the St. David’s campus. International students on an F-1 visa must have curricular practical training (CPT) authorization

Consultation with the Supervised Ministries Office

Students with issues related to their ministry site placement and its continuation, relationship to their Pastor/Mentor, absences from class and other concerns related to the structure of the internship and its grading should contact staff members of the SMO.

Code of Ethics

It is expected that all the participants in TFE (Seminarian, Pastor/Mentor, Site Team, Supervised Ministries' staff and TFE faculty) be committed to the standards of ethics of the Christian church, which promotes the dignity and worth of all persons. We are accountable for our ministry as expressed in relationship to parishioners, clients, members of the community, seminarians, Pastor/Mentors, churches, agencies, and the seminary. Commitment to the following standards is expected in TFE internships.

Avoid discrimination against or refusing pastoral assistance or educational opportunity to anyone on the basis of race, gender, religion, national origin, age or physical attributes.

Do not engage in any forms of harassment, abusive words, or actions, or exploitative coercion.

All forms of sexual behavior or harassment by Pastor/Mentor, seminarian, or parishioner/client within the framework of the pastoral internship are unethical, even when a parishioner or client invites or consents to such behavior. Sexual behavior includes, but is not limited to, seductive speech, gestures and behavior, and physical contact of a sexual nature. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, comments, gestures or physical contacts of a sexual nature.

Confidentiality of the parishioner, client, and seminarian is expected. Records are to be kept in a manner that assures security. Communication from seminarian, parishioners and Pastor/Mentor are treated with professional confidence. Confidences are not disclosed except:

- as mandated by law
- to prevent a clear and immediate danger to someone
- for purposes of supervision or consultation, or
- by previously obtained written permission.

Pastor/Mentors, Supervised Ministries' staff and TFE faculty do not engage in ongoing psychological counseling with Supervised Ministries' students.

Seminarians engage in ministry appropriate to their level of training and within the boundaries of their serving/learning covenants. They are not to engage in professional services beyond their training, level of experience and competence. Seminarians are also responsible to uphold Conduct and Standards expectations as set forth in the PTS Student Handbook.

Charges of violation of these ethical standards are to be reported to the Director of Supervised Ministries. In the case of charges filed against the Director, they are to be reported to the Dean of Palmer Theological Seminary for evaluation.

Full Disclosure

Pastor/Mentors are required to offer full disclosure of the seminarian's performance and conduct while under their supervision. Disclosure of misconduct will be directed to the Supervised Ministries Director.

Pastor/Mentor Confirmation

Qualifications for Pastor/Mentors of Palmer Seminary students include an earned Master's level degree in theology from an institution accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and a minimum of two years of competent parish or professional ministry experience following degree completion. Pastor/Mentors who are ordained may be accepted into the TFE program at Palmer with ten years of competent ministry experience in lieu of a Master's degree.

TFE 700: The Ministry of Supervision

Pastor/Mentors must have completed, or be willing to complete, TFE 700, the training event offered by the Seminary every fall (and sometimes spring). The purpose of this training is to clearly communicate the PTS Field Education process and expectations, striving to foster the best first field education experience for all partners. Certification training must be completed within the academic year that the Pastor/Mentor serves in this capacity. Pastor/Mentors will not be considered for a second year of service until they have completed TFE 700. (Also see "Criteria for Selecting a Pastor/Mentor," Section 5.)

Ministry Site Confirmation

The SMO must approve all TFE ministry site placements for participation in the program. Official notification of non-approval will be communicated to the ministry setting. All ministry site placements must be fully endorsed by the Pastor/Mentor and, when appropriate, by congregational leadership. In instances where the Pastor/Mentor is off-site, endorsement comes from the ministry site, where the intern serves. Students may complete both levels of TFE in the same site, (except in the case of the Home Church Waiver which is not automatically renewed), but are not required to do so. Students should check with their denomination for other requirements.

Ministry Site Supervisory Personnel

No member of the seminarian's family may serve as their Pastor/Mentor or serve on the Site Team. Current Palmer seminarians may not be considered for supervisory positions regardless of years and quality of ministry experience, nor may they serve on Site Teams. Please refer to the section "Pastor/Mentor Confirmation" for further requirements. Non-traditional placements and supervisors will be assessed based upon their graduate education and professional experience equivalent to the M. Div. standard. Theological reflection, even in a non-traditional placement, is a core educational component of the supervisory experience. Non-traditional placements refer to any site other than the local church.

Early Termination

The Seminarian is expected to serve in the same TFE placement for the duration of both fall and spring semesters. As agreed in the Serving Learning Covenant, neither the seminarian nor the Pastor/Mentor may terminate the TFE ministry site placement without approval of the SMO. If the internship is terminated by the seminarian without approval, a grade of "No Credit" may be given to the student for the year. When an internship is terminated, the SMO will determine the next step. This may include participation in individual reflection on the circumstances of that departure.

This reflection would take place with a staff member of Supervised Ministries for the duration of the academic year. The purpose of this singular work is educational; it is an opportunity for learning from the experience through guided reflection.

Home Church Policy

A home church is defined as a church of origin in which the seminarian acquired membership or devoted a substantial amount of time in fellowship. Or, a church in which the seminarian has developed a substantial relationship with the congregation either as layperson or as part of ministerial leadership.

It is the policy of Supervised Ministries that no seminarian may serve in their home church except with the expressed written consent of the Director. Approval of one seminarian's proposal does not constitute precedent for another seminarian to obtain approval. Each proposal is treated as unique. Exemption from this policy may be granted under the following conditions and are for one year only. Students may reapply for a second year unless otherwise noted:

- The seminarian gives evidence that he/she is the senior pastor of the ministry site in consideration.
- The seminarian is not a senior pastor:
 - A completed Home Church Waiver Application must be submitted to the SMO.
 - An interview/meeting between the seminarian and staff or director may be required.
 - An interview or meeting between the potential Pastor/Mentor and the Director may be required.

Applications for a waiver from the Home Church Policy may be obtained in the SMO. The application and all other supporting materials need to be submitted to the SMO for review and action. The SMO will make a decision within two weeks of receipt of the completed waiver application.

TFE Elective Internship – SUPV 650

The TFE Elective Internship (SUPV 650) is an internship that offers the possibility of an intensive serving/learning experience in ministry. Arrangements must be negotiated with and approved by the SMO. The seminarian may earn up to a total of eleven credit hours in TFE of which only three may be electives. These three credit hours are in addition to the units required of TFE students in the M.Div. degree track.

TFE and Technology

Communication

All correspondence concerning TFE will be forwarded to students via "eastern.edu" accounts.

On-line Learning and Theological Field Education (TFE)

Palmer Theological Seminary courses utilize on-line learning in a variety of ways. Some courses are taught entirely online while others, such as TFE, are considered to be web-enhanced courses. As a web-enhanced course we utilize the resources of technology but do not use them as the sole means of instruction. **Note: All seminary classes, including TFE, will be online in Fall 2020.**

Expectations for Zoom Online Classes and Meetings

Since all classes have been moved online for the Fall 2020 semester, please see the below guidelines to help you succeed in an online environment:

1. Be on time, and check your equipment and WiFi connections before the start of class time.
2. Connect using audio and video (as much as possible). If you cannot connect using your video, please communicate with the instructor in advance.
3. If you have a poor WiFi connection, stay with your audio and disable your video, but again please communicate that with the instructor.
4. Make sure your full name appears in your participant box.
5. Mute your audio when you are not speaking but only listening to others.
6. Avoid distractions. Refrain from doing the things you wouldn't be expected to do while participating in a face-to-face class such as surfing the web, replying to emails, etc. It might also mean that you need to use headphones to help you stay focused.
7. Seek to have a private space as much as possible for these sessions. If you are in a space being shared by others please use headsets.
8. Use Zoom tools (i.e. reactions, chats, share screens, etc.) appropriately and for the purposes of advancing the class.
9. Apply the same rules and expectations for class interactions that you would in a face-to-face class (i.e. attentiveness, listening skills, avoiding interruptions, etc.)
10. Be present to your classmates and professors!

All Students

The handbook is available online as are all of the forms. This makes the Handbook and forms readily available to pastoral interns at <https://www.palmerseminary.edu/student-life/supervised-ministries/theological-field-education/theological-field-education-handbook>. Once on the Supervised Ministries Homepage, click on “Theological Field Education” (in the sidebar), then “TFE Handbook and Selected Documents” (under Quicklinks). You can then navigate from section to section. All forms are included and can be downloaded to print.

Pastor/Mentors and Site Teams

The Handbook is available on-line as are all of the forms. This makes the Handbook readily available to you and your ministry site at <https://www.palmerseminary.edu/student-life/supervised-ministries/theological-field-education/theological-field-education-handbook>. Once on the Supervised Ministries Homepage, click on “Theological Field Education” (in the sidebar), then “TFE Handbook and Selected Documents” (under Quicklinks). You can then navigate from section to section. All forms are included and can be downloaded.

Seminar Groups and Brightspace

Seminar Groups may use Brightspace for discussion, information sharing, assignment submission and tracking, and group announcements. Your group will be identified by your Seminar Leader's name and level TFE 1A&1B or TFE 2A&2B. You will use the same password that you have received for use with your eastern.edu/myEastern account. Your Seminar Leader will let you know to what extent your group is using Brightspace. TFE assignment forms and program documents are not available on Brightspace, but are instead on the TFE website.

Technical Support

For information including tutorials and FAQ about Tech support visit <https://whd.eastern.edu/helpdesk/WebObjects/Helpdesk.woa>. For Academic Computing

(Email/Computer Lab/Wireless Access): 484-823-0121 or helpdesk@eastern.edu. For Brightspace support, contact Sue Yavor: 610- 341-4363 or syavor@eastern.edu or Brightspace@eastern.edu.

Glossary of Terms

The following glossary for Theological Field Education represents terms useful for all TFE partners:

Pastoral Intern is the Seminarian enrolled in Theological Field Education. The experience is comprised of ministry performed in the field under supervision and faculty-led weekly seminars. Some seminarians serve in approved ministry sites new to them while others may function within established calls to the pastorate.

Ministry Site is the church/agency where seminarians serve and learn with persons in professional and lay ministry. While recognizing that some seminarians may serve in full-time pastoral positions, which are year-round, Theological Field Education credit requires a minimum 10-12 hours-per-week commitment in ministry from September through May. Students must begin placement in an approved setting before September 18. Students may complete both levels of TFE in the same site, (except in the case of the Home Church Waiver which is not automatically renewed), but are not required to do so. Students should check with their denomination for other requirements.

Pastor/Mentor is the professional person in the field who is responsible for guiding and supporting the seminarian's serving and learning. This person (usually a parish pastor, agency director, denominational leader or chaplain) provides a significant function in the theological education of the seminarian. Some serve as mentors to pastoral interns while not practicing ministry in the same site as the intern. We designate these mentors as "Off-Site" Pastor/Mentors. A key requirement of this education is the weekly supervisory conference with the seminarian. The Pastor/Mentor must agree with the program's philosophy and participate in its training events. The structure of the supervisory conferences between interns and their mentors may be different for Off-site mentors (See Section 5 for additional information).

Site Team is a mostly lay group that represents the larger church/agency in providing a channel of communication, education, and feedback between seminarian and congregation or agency in an atmosphere of support, accountability and practice of ministry experience. This group meets six to eight times throughout the year (monthly) and contributes to the mid-year and final evaluations of the pastoral intern.

Seminar Group is the gathering of students that meets weekly for theological reflection upon ministerial experiences for the sake of learning and growing. Written reflection papers/case studies are presented for discussion by students. The seminars are facilitated by TFE faculty.

Theological Field Education Faculty and Staff are the seminary personnel who coordinate and implement the program of Theological Field Education. This includes the Director of Supervised

Ministries and TFE faculty.

TFE Partners are the Palmer Supervised Ministries Office, the Pastor/Mentor, the Site Team, and the Pastoral Intern.

Serving/Learning Covenant is the basic agreement that defines the relationship between seminarian and church/agency in light of mutual expectations, commitments, and obligations. The covenant must be negotiated, completed, signed, and submitted to the SMO by October 2 in order to participate in the program. **The covenant is not to be terminated** prior to a meeting of the seminarian, the Pastor/Mentor, the director or a member of the Administrative Leadership Team, and when possible, the Site Team chairperson. The seminarian and Pastor/Mentor negotiate hours, including holidays and January term.

Theological Field Education Internship involves a time commitment to the TFE ministry site of 10 to 12 hours per week.

Financial Remuneration of at least \$12.00-\$15.00 per hour is strongly recommended, but it is recognized that some ministry sites are able to offer more and others offer less. While this is only one of the considerations in deciding upon a TFE site placement, increasing expenses are a concern for seminarians. We encourage both seminarians and Pastor/Mentors to think of other benefits that can be given when financial remuneration is not possible. Compensation from internships is taxable income requiring a federal W-2 form. U.S. Department of Justice form I-538 is required for all international students.

Diverse Ministry Experience is desired for each seminarian. While the church/agency has particular ministry needs, the seminarian needs to be challenged for professional growth by a full spectrum of ministry opportunities. The church/agency, Pastor/Mentor, and seminarian need to work together to make this possible.

Theological Reflection is an ongoing process of reflection upon ministry, used intentionally during supervisory conferences, and in the seminarian's TFE seminars. Theological reflection always concludes with the questions: "Where is God in this situation" and "What does God require of me in this situation?" The principles of that process undergird the supervisory conference with the Pastor/Mentor, in meetings of the Site Team with the seminarian and in participation in the TFE seminar.

Media Interaction Reviews provide the opportunity to think and to reflect upon theological themes as they are expressed through performance art and film.

Assessments related to the **Serving Learning Covenant** are:

- Appraisal by the seminarian, Pastor/Mentor, and the Site Team concerning their covenant-keeping
- Assessment of the seminarian's growth. While this is to be an ongoing process among seminarian, Pastor/Mentor, and Site Team, two written assessments are slated per academic year. The mid-year and end of year assessments will be administered among all three partners. Evaluations are to be jointly shared and discussed. The seminarian is responsible to return the completed and signed

evaluation forms to the Supervised Ministries Office. Note that the

assessment forms are different for each of the TFE partners

- Students are encouraged to assess their progress and growth throughout the year informally
- Throughout the year, the seminar groups will be involved in group evaluations. Written evaluations are requested at the end of each semester
- Assessment of student as ongoing process by Seminar Leader