

# United Lutheran Seminary

GETTYSBURG + PHILADELPHIA

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*Unifying, Learning, Serving: United Lutheran Seminary is a welcoming and diverse learning community equipping people to proclaim the living Gospel for a changing church and world.*

## **MAML Professional Ministry Track SENIOR PROJECT**

A student seeking an MAML degree in the Professional Ministry track is required to complete a senior project as the culmination of the student's academic work in his/her specialization.

The selection of a specialization is to be made no later than the student's second semester of full-time study or equivalent. If the specialization has no assigned director or if the student seeks to create an alternate area of specialization, the student's instructional plan is to have the approval of the instructional Area in which the specialization resides or of the Faculty as a whole. As feasible, the student will then be assigned an academic advisor in the area of specialization. This advisor may be different from the advisor initially assigned to the student. The student and the student's specialization advisor must agree upon the courses the student needs to take in his/her MAML program.

Throughout his/her studies and especially during registration advising for the year of intended graduation, the student should initiate conversation concerning the senior project with his/her specialization advisor (and academic advisor, if other than the specialization advisor). Completion of the MAML senior project can earn one to two units of credit toward the degree program, one of which may be applied toward the five total units required in the area of specialization.

### **Calendar and Sequence**

Well before the student's final year of MAML study and preferably before registering for field education, the student should consult with the specialization advisor concerning his/her particular areas of interest, vocational goals, and possible senior project subjects. In no case should this consultation take place after the beginning of the semester in which the student plans to graduate. The consultation should consider:

- the appropriate site for the project—often the student's field education site but possibly the student's place of employment, home congregation, or other mutually acceptable institution. Congruent with the choice of site is obtaining agreement by the site that the student may conduct the project there.
- the goal of the project for the site

- the learning outcomes expected to be achieved by the student
- whether additional background research (readings, interviews, observations of similar programs elsewhere, etc.) is suggested
- appropriate strategies and/or methodologies for carrying out the project
- an appropriate manner in which to present the project, whether orally or as a major paper. A project that is presented both orally and as a major paper may be eligible for up to two units of academic credit.

Ordinarily, the student will register his/her project in the Fall semester preceding graduation, using the form on p. 6. At registration the student will indicate whether he/she expects to receive one or two units of credit. Because carrying out and presenting the project will normally take the entire academic year (or longer), no grade(s) will be assigned until the conclusion of the project.

The student and specialization advisor will agree upon and engage an appropriate third person to be the second project reviewer. Ordinarily, the second reviewer will be a ULS faculty member or the student's field education site supervisor or other mentor at the project site. A student may approach and make arrangements with an outside reviewer from another academic institution only with the prior approval of the Director of MA Programs. No compensation is available from ULS for senior project reviewers.

The student should begin by developing a project proposal that needs to be approved by both the specialization advisor and an appropriate person from the congregation or agency in which the student hopes to work. In the case of a field education site, the field education site supervisor is expected to approve the project proposal. Both the student and specialization advisor should bear in mind that projects involving research on human subjects must comply with the ULS Protocols Regarding Human Subject in Research (see page 9).

The student will then carry out his/her proposal, developing and launching the new program and analyzing the results. The student will address the entire process (background research, methodology, results) in his/her paper or oral presentation.

Upon conclusion of an oral presentation of the project, the reviewers will review the student's performance and agree upon the letter grade to be awarded. If a major paper is presented, the reviewers will independently read and evaluate the paper and then agree upon a final letter grade to be awarded. The student's grade(s) must be submitted to the registrar no later than one week prior to the student's graduation. The student must earn a grade of C or better in order both to satisfy the degree requirement and to earn a unit of credit toward the degree.

Should the student's performance in the senior project presentation and/or paper be judged as weak or deficient, the student may be accorded one additional opportunity to present the project. Depending on the amount of time remaining in the semester, this may necessitate the postponement of the student's graduation to the following year.

## **The Senior Project**

The purposes of the senior project are 1) to permit development of additional expertise in the student's area of specialization and 2) to provide the student an opportunity to initiate and organize a program new to the life of a congregation or agency. Whenever possible, it is recommended that the project be undertaken at the site of the student's field education under the auspices of his/her field education supervisor.

It is important to note that both the site and the student, as well as project reviewers, be aware that not all projects undertaken will be programmatic successes. When presenting his/her project, whether orally or in writing, the student should demonstrate how he/she organized the project, initiated it, evaluated its success or failure, and learned from the success or failure.

An oral presentation and ensuing conversation is generally expected to last approximately one hour. Normally, the student will meet on campus with his/her reviewers. If the three participants are unable to find a mutually agreeable time to meet on campus, it will be up to the student, as part of his/her project management, to develop and implement a means of presenting and "defending" the project through electronic means.

Project papers are expected to be approximately 20–25 pages long. The students should consult his/her specialization advisor as to appropriate format, given the nature of the particular project. In some cases, the advisor may recommend that the paper be submitted in thesis format (see the MAML Thesis Guidelines) for permanent archiving in the Krauth Memorial Library.

Should the student's performance in the senior project presentation and/or paper be judged as weak or deficient (i.e., graded below a C), the student may be accorded one opportunity to correct the deficiency. Normally, the student will be given at least two weeks in which to revise his/her presentation and/or paper. Depending on the amount of time remaining in the semester, this may necessitate the postponement of the student's graduation to the following year.

Should the student's performance in the revised paper or presentation be judged again as below a C, a grade of F will be recorded, and no academic credit will be earned. The student may elect to terminate his/her academic program and accept the award of a Certificate of Theological Studies at Commencement. Alternatively, the student may choose to register within the next academic year to undertake a new senior project. A new advisor/supervisor may be appointed only upon the mutual agreement of the initial specialization advisor, the student, and the Director of MA Programs (or the Dean on behalf of the Director of MA Programs).

In the case of a student who had elected initially to complete both a paper and a presentation in order to earn two units of credit but who performed satisfactorily in only one of the two formats, the senior project can be deemed to have been completed satisfactorily. However, if failure of the second format leaves the student short of the 20 units required to graduate, the student will be required to take one additional course in a subsequent term to earn the necessary credit. The advisor may require that the final course be in the student's area of specialization.

## Timeline in Brief

### No *later* than

### Steps toward completion and graduation

2<sup>nd</sup> semester of full-time study or equivalent

Student declares MAML track and specialization. Specialization advisor, likely replacing initial academic advisor, is assigned.

Beginning of final year of study

Student consults with advisor concerning appropriate senior project and means of presentation

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Register for MAML Senior Project, using form on p. 4

Six weeks after beginning of Fall Semester of year of graduation

Student prepares a project proposal that has approval of both specialization advisor and appropriate mentor at his/her project site (preferably the field education site)

January 1 of year of graduation

Student launches program in his/her project site

Midpoint of Spring Semester of year of graduation

Student and reviewers set date for project presentation or submission of final project paper

1 week prior to graduation

Specialization advisor submits final letter grade(s) to registrar



**UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY**  
**Master of Ministerial Leadership**  
**THESIS/PROJECT PANEL ACTION**  
**AND FINAL GRADE**

**STUDENT AND PANEL**

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIALIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_

THESIS/PROJECT ADVISOR (CONVENER): \_\_\_\_\_

2nd PANEL MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

3rd PANEL MEMBER, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

**PANEL ACTION**

**Panel Chair (Advisor), please submit this form to the Registrar only after the student has presented his/her senior project or defended his/her thesis. Submit this form immediately upon conclusion of the panel.**

\_\_\_ **MAML Senior Project successfully presented. FINAL LETTER GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_**

**[If project is for two units, supply two grades: Paper: \_\_\_\_\_ Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_**

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **MAMLThesis approved**; student will provide two final, archival copies to Faculty Assistant.

- \_\_\_ Document acceptable for archives as presented.
- \_\_\_ Document acceptable for archives after minor revisions
  - \_\_\_ revised document to be submitted to Faculty Assistant without review
  - \_\_\_ revised document to be reviewed by advisor

**FINAL LETTER GRADE FOR THESIS: \_\_\_\_\_**

Final Title of Thesis as approved (enter here or attach photocopy of title page):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Thesis or Project not successfully presented**

\_\_\_ Deadline for submission of revised thesis or project: \_\_\_\_\_  
(may entail delay of graduation)

**[NOTE TO ADVISOR: Submit new Panel Review Action form for new submission]**

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Advisor signature]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[date]

# United Lutheran Seminary

## Protocols Regarding Human Subjects in Research

(Page 30, ULS Faculty Handbook)

### Introduction

United Lutheran Seminary, in conformity with "The Common Rule" guidelines established by the U.S. government Office of Human Research Protections and general practice in academic research, requires all research<sup>2</sup> that is formally conducted under Seminary auspices be reviewed to protect human subjects and minimize potential risks or harm.<sup>3</sup> In order to do so the Faculty has established an Institutional Review Board ("IRB") and an institutional review process.

### Research Requiring Review

Research requiring review includes the following:

Research involving human subjects in which there is a potential for more than minimal risk of harm to the subject. As defined in the Common Rule, minimal risk "means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are *not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.*"<sup>4</sup> It is up to the IRB to determine whether risks involved exceed this definition, and if so, whether sufficient procedures are in place concerning informed consent and referrals in case of harm.

Research that falls within the content and methods of the social sciences (including pastoral care, psychology, sociology, anthropology), and research investigating human subjects' subjective experiences or feelings about issues normally considered private or confidential, such as sexuality, addiction, boundary violations, conflict, or violence requires review.

Research involving subjects who are not competent to evaluate the risks and benefits of participation themselves, including minors or people with cognitive disabilities, must be reviewed. All legal requirements for working with such persons, including directives by the Department of Corrections, must be followed.

Research in which dual roles may be present between the researcher and the subject(s), such as using students, employees, or counseling clients as research participants, must be reviewed.

Examples of research requiring review include:

- Faculty assigning a research project to students that requires the students to have interactions (interviews, small group projects in congregations, etc.) involving human subjects' subjective experiences or feelings, as described above, especially when it entails feeding back or incorporating the information gathered into papers, presentations or class discussion.
- Research involving small group discussion formats for learning in a congregational context that entail disclosure of private information of a sensitive nature, where the subjects could easily or readily be identified
- Research on specific issues of recent conflict in congregational life or in other organizations, when the actors are readily identified or identifiable

- Research that has the potential for causing harm or inciting further conflict in congregations or in the wider community

#### Research Not Requiring Review

Research not requiring review includes the following:

- Research solely for internal institutional use (e.g., course evaluations or institutional self-study)
- Research for a classroom project that does not involve outside participants and is not disseminated publicly or part of a permanent data base
- Archival or historical research
- Research in education settings on instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom-management methods
- Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless the subject can be identified and disclosure of the subjects' responses could put the individual at risk of criminal or civil liability or could damage the subject's financial standing, employability, or reputation
- Research involving elected or appointed officials or candidates for public office
- Research using existing data, documents, or records, as long as these resources are publicly available or the human subject cannot be identified
- Research conducted by students under the direction of a certified ACPE (Association of Clinical Pastoral Education) supervisor at an accredited ACPE site
- Research that does not place participants in a criminal or civil liability or damage their financial standing, employability, or reputation
- Research related to organization effectiveness in organizational settings for which there is no risk to participants' employability
- Scholarly review of literature, including other published social scientific research and social scientific data that is made available to researchers
- Archival historical research such as church records or public archives. Most archives restrict access to certain materials, and many require permission to cite or use material from persons who have died within the last 50 years. Research must conform to the rules of the particular archive or institutional body.

#### **Parameters for Research**

Potential risks that must be considered in a review include those of a physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal nature.

The review process must seek to evaluate risks and benefits that result to participants and the wider community from the immediate research.

Confidentiality is presumed and must be maintained in all research unless the investigator obtains the express permission of the subject to do otherwise. Risks from breach of confidentiality include invasion of privacy, as well as the social, economic and legal risks outlined above. Loss of confidentiality is the most common type of risk encountered in social and behavioral science research.

Deception is generally to be avoided in research and may only be used if there is no other way to reasonably obtain the data, the risk of harm is minimal, the knowledge sought is important enough to justify deception, and an appropriate procedure is proposed for debriefing of subjects after the conclusion of the research.

Student conducting the research will be responsible for maintaining all supporting documentation related to the research, including:

- Documented approval of the research proposal
- Signed consent forms
- Any further documentation related to the research of human subjects, including field notes or other reports
- In the case where oral interviews are included as a component of research, consent forms must be used

Researchers are expected to maintain supporting documentation for seven years following completion of their research projects.

#### **Procedure and Criteria for Review**

Any Faculty, staff or student who proposes to conduct or oversee research on human subjects under the auspices of the Seminary, for a Seminary-approved grant, or for Seminary course credit, must submit her or his research designs for approval.

An individual student should apply for review after having sought and received approval for his or her research proposal with the Faculty advisor involved in overseeing the project, and before actually beginning the research project. Students must receive approval as part of the overall proposal approval process, prior to beginning the demonstration project.

A Faculty member should submit a proposal on behalf of her or his students in the case of a class assignment or project before distributing the syllabus if the assignment is identical for each student. In the case of such class assignments, the Faculty person monitors and maintains responsibility for the potential risks to research subjects. Approval applies to subsequent years of the course assignment, as long as no significant changes were made.

Any substantive changes in project design or research instruments that are made after initial approval has been granted must be submitted for re-approval

Approval is made in light of the following criteria:

- The value of the research project for the overall advancement of knowledge. Validity of research design, methodology, and sampling is determined by weighing the value of the proposed research against any possible risk to participants.
- Credentials of the investigator or plan for student supervision
- Selection of subjects and competency to consent
- Voluntary informed consent/assent and confidentiality
- Plans for dissemination of the data

Risk/Benefit assessment should include weighing of potential harm, use of deception if any, and steps to be taken to minimize risk and care for subjects.

### **Expedited Review**

Expedited review may be used for certain kinds of research involving no more than minimal risk, and for minor changes in approved research per 45 CFR §46.110. In case of an expedited review, the chair of the IRB or his/her delegate(s) may review the research activity, applying the standards of this policy, granting approval when warranted. The review may, at his/her option, refer the item under review to an IRB meeting. Revisions may be requested in an expedited review, but a motion to disapprove the research must be referred to an IRB meeting.

A researcher may request certification that a particular research activity is either exempt from review or not human subjects' research. Upon such a request, the IRB chair shall make a determination on the basis of the Common Rule, sending notification of the determination to the researcher and placing a copy of the determination in the IRB record.

### **The Institutional Review Board**

The ULS IRB, in a properly constituted meeting with quorum present, shall review all research activities covered by this policy except where this policy provides for expedited review or exemption from review.

The IRB will be constituted annually as one of the regular standing committees of the Faculty, with members of the committee being permitted to serve continuously. The IRB normally will consist of three representatives from the tenured and non-tenured Faculty, two from the community-at-large who are members of a congregation of the ELCA or a full-communion church partner, and one advisory member from the student body. At least one shall have documented training and/or documented expertise in research methods involving human subjects.

The IRB will meet as needed to review proposals. Proposals may be submitted in writing or by email in a timely fashion to allow adequate consideration by the IRB.

The IRB may approve by majority vote any proposal as submitted, require revision and re-submission of the proposal, or reject the proposal. Approval must be in writing, and delivered in a timely fashion to the individual proposing to undertake the research. In the case of revisions or rejections, the IRB will provide a written statement to the Faculty member or student detailing the reasons for rejection.

The IRB will maintain records of all its deliberations and will report these to the full Faculty at its regular meetings.

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<sup>2</sup> "Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge," (Code of Federal Regulations, 45 CFR 46.102[d]).

<sup>3</sup> The Common Rule, formally titled "Protection of Human Subjects" is part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations ("45 CFR 46"). See also American Association of University Professors, "Protecting Human Beings: Institutional Review Boards and Social Science Research," <http://www.aaup.org/statements/Redbook/repirb.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> 45 CFR 46.102.h.i, cited in AAUP.