



**Guidelines & Expectations
For Mentor-Proctors
2011-2012**

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📖 Guidelines & Expectations for Mentor-Proctors

Introduction

This booklet should provide you with the basic guidelines and expectations you need to know to serve as a *mentor-proctor* on behalf of the student who has requested your assistance. If you still have questions regarding your role as the student's mentor-proctor after reading this booklet, please feel free to contact the seminary dean. For more information about the seminary—its nature and purpose, doctrinal position, faculty, curriculum, academic standards, etc., see the seminary's website or academic catalog.

Working with the Local Church

As a “church-based ministerial academy,” RBS is committed to help pastors and churches train men who aspire after and show potential for the pastoral ministry, as well as laypeople, church leaders, and men whose aspirations to full-time ministry may still be tentative (Eph. 4:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:2). For this reason an applicant must be a member in good standing of an evangelical church whose pastor(s) is supportive of his pursuit of theological training. If an applicant is already a pastor, it is assumed that the local church has already recognized the applicant's gifts and graces and is supportive of his pursuit of more training.

RBS expects that the applicant will work together with his pastor(s) and home church throughout the course of his training. Practically, this means that the applicant can humbly receive the initial and ongoing assessment of his pastor(s) and church regarding his qualifications if he is pursuing the pastoral ministry. The applicant will also select one of his pastors to serve as his mentor-proctor to provide guidance and input on coursework, writing projects, preaching, and practical ministry. The mentor will also be responsible to proctor the student's quizzes and exams. By working together with his pastor(s) and home church, the applicant will not only be following the biblical pattern for ministerial training (Eph. 4:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:2), but will be more effectively commending himself to the church (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:15), the world (1 Tim. 3:7), the Lord (1 Pet. 5:5), and his own conscience (Acts 24:16; Heb. 13:18).

In keeping with our “church-based” philosophy of ministerial training, RBS has asked the student to select one of his pastors to serve as his mentor-proctor. In this role, you will provide the general oversight of the student's training. What that practically entails will be delineated in the following pages. If the student is already a pastor, then we have asked him to select a fellow pastor to serve as his mentor-proctor. If no fellow pastor is available, then he will need to select another trustworthy person and submit his name to the seminary for approval. If you are that fellow pastor or trustworthy person, your role will not be exactly the same as it would if the student were not yet a pastor. Nevertheless, in addition to any advice he may solicit from you, the student will need your services as a proctor. The guidelines and expectations for proctoring are explained below.

How to Get Started

The most basic requirement for entrance into the “Marrow of Theology” program, which is designed for laypeople or as the “first stage” for ministerial aspirants is membership in good standing in an evangelical church and the commendation of one's pastor(s). Layman and laywomen who are members in good standing of an evangelical church and who have their pastor's commendation may apply for enrollment in the Marrow program.

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A man wishing to enroll in the Divinity program should be a recognized aspirant for the ministry. We have asked the potential student to make his desires and/or aspirations known to you, his pastor. If you as his pastor deem his aspirations to be legitimate and appropriate, then he may apply for admission to the seminary. By deeming his aspirations “legitimate” and “appropriate,” you are not necessarily declaring him to be fully qualified for the pastoral office. You are simply declaring that his aspirations do not appear to be misguided at that point. No man should be engaged in studies for the pastoral ministry when there are glaring immaturities in Christian grace or insurmountable deficiencies in ministerial gift. You are also reserving the right to review his progress on a periodical basis and to withdraw your support of his ministerial training should you determine there are significant deficiencies in either grace or gift.

Once you approve of his aspirations, the student may apply for admission to the seminary. Admission is continuous, and he may apply for enrollment any time throughout the year. After receiving his application, the seminary dean will contact him and set up a time for a phone interview. Sometime after the interview, the seminary dean will contact you, his pastor, to confirm your approval of his enrollment and your willingness to serve as his mentor-proctor. The dean will then contact the applicant and notify him that his application for enrollment has been approved. However, his enrollment in the seminary will not go into effect officially until his enrollment fee is received.

Student Conduct

All students of RBS are expected to conduct themselves at all times as mature Christians. The seminary reserves the right to turn down or to dismiss students whose conduct fails to conform to the ethical norms and principles set forth in Holy Scripture.

Overseeing the Coursework

Since you are the student’s pastor, you should have significant input into his ministerial training. Therefore, we ask you to be willing to provide the student with initial and ongoing input and guidance as he seeks to complete his coursework.

Planning the Coursework

We have asked each student to develop a “study plan” once he is officially enrolled in the seminary. This study plan should include a tentative timeframe and schedule for completing his coursework. Under “timeframe,” the student will specify the average amount of time per week he can devote towards his studies. He will also estimate the overall amount of time he expects to take in order to complete his training program. Under “schedule,” the student will specify the sequence in which he plans to take the courses (2-year; 3-year; 4-year; 6-year; 8-year). RBS has provided the student with recommended schedules for coursework. We have also provided him with a time-budget worksheet. We want to make sure the student doesn’t neglect his fundamental responsibilities (i.e., personal health, family, work, church, etc..

We have asked the student to work with his pastor in putting together this “study plan.” We would like you to insure that the amount of time the student plans to devote towards his ministerial studies is consistent with the other responsibilities God has given him. Of course, we recognize that providential changes in his circumstances may require significant adjustments to this plan. We only ask that the student keep his pastor and dean informed (see “looking for

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monthly progress reports” below). When the student has completed his “study plan,” he should send it to the seminary dean for approval.

Completing the Coursework

Once his application has been approved and enrollment fees paid, the student may begin his coursework. The procedures for completing his coursework will differ according to the format and nature of the courses. To order distance coursework, he will need to contact Truth for Eternity Ministries, the correspondence arm of the seminary, to request the course materials and media. Or he can login to RBS “Virtual Campus” and access much of the course material online. He should also communicate to the dean indicating which course he has commenced. Each course should come with a course “syllabus.” The syllabus will provide a course description, identify the instructor, and specify the textbook(s) and reading requirements, as well as other course requirements, such as book reviews, lecture outlines, quizzes and exams, etc. If you or the student has any questions about the particular course or requirements, please contact the dean.

RBS encourages students to take as much live instruction as is possible and feasible. Our goal is to offer at least two or three-weeklong live modules per year in different locations in the continental United States. A tentative schedule of upcoming modules will be provided on our seminary website and may also be requested by emailing the dean. The seminary will also endeavor to notify students of upcoming modules at least three months before the event, so that travel plans can be made in advance. Generally, the procedure for completing the modular coursework is as follows: Once the student pre-registers for a course, the dean will send to him a course syllabus with the reading requirements. Some instructors provide full manuscripts of their lectures while others do not. Therefore, the student should be prepared to take careful notes of the lectures if necessary.

The students may seek your input and advice regarding the content or requirements of a course. However, RBS expects that the work turned in for credit will reflect the student’s own careful study and diligent effort.

Proctoring the Quizzes and Exams

All courses require some forms of aptitude assessment, whether book reviews, papers, quizzes and/or exams. The student should take the quizzes and/or exams while the material is still fresh in his mind. The student should notify the seminary dean once he is ready.

The dean will forward the quiz or exam to you as the proctor, usually in MS Word or PDF format. Or, if the student elects to take the quiz or exam online using our “Virtual Campus” portal, the dean will forward you the password for the particular quiz or exam. As the proctor, you should inform the student when you have received electronic files or password and arrange a time for him to take the exam. We suggest that you have the student come to your home or meet you at the church building. It is not required that you remain in the same room the entire time the student is taking the exam. We do, however, ask that you remain in the general vicinity.

Each exam should come with some instructions, indicating what resources the student may or may not use in taking the quiz or exam. As a general rule, students can use their Bible, but they may not use lecture notes or other resources such as textbooks or online resources. The instructions may also indicate a time limit. RBS asks that you read the instructions before administering the quiz or exam to the student. It is your responsibility to insure that the student complies with the instructions.

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Once the student is finished taking the quiz or exam, he should give the quiz or exam with his answers to you. You may mail a hard copy of the exam to the seminary. Preferably, though, we recommend that you scan and email the quiz or exam as an attachment or fax it to the seminary. The dean will immediately forward the exam to the instructor who will grade the exam and return it to the dean. If the student takes the quiz or exam online, it will be graded automatically or (if an essay test) the teacher will login and grade the quiz or exam. After the dean has recorded the grade, he will return the exam to the student. If the student has any questions about the grading of his quiz or exam, he should contact the dean.

Putting Learning into Practice

RBS recognizes that the demands of pastoral ministry not only require that a man be well-grounded in sound doctrine but that he also gain experience in practical ministry. Therefore, we require each student to work together with his pastor(s) in fulfilling his Writing Practicum, Preaching Practicum, and Ministerial Practicum.

Writing Practicum

RBS requires the student to write four major term papers through the course of his program, each dealing with a different area of theology: historical, systematic, exegetical, and pastoral. It is recommended that he begin his first paper after he has finished a third of his coursework and sometime before he has finished half of his coursework. We do not recommend that he begin writing his exegetical paper until he has finished the biblical introduction courses, hermeneutics, and language courses. Generally, we recommend that he take church history courses earlier in his program and write his first paper on historical theology. Then he should write his second paper on systematic theology. By that time, he should have had time to acquire a sufficient knowledge of the biblical languages to write his exegetical paper. Finally, we recommend that he complete his writing practicum with a paper focusing on the area of pastoral theology.

Some students may opt for writing a Master's thesis, especially if they plan to pursue an advanced degree. The thesis will focus on a particular topic and will be approximately four times the length of a term paper (see below).

The student should begin by choosing a topic. It may be appropriate to write each of his four papers on the same topic, since each paper will address the topic from a different perspective. We have asked the student to discuss the topic or topics with you, his mentoring pastor. Feel free to make suggestions and offer him guidance in choosing a suitable topic. In order to have the topic approved, we have asked the student to provide you and the dean with a brief prospectus and bibliography for review. The prospectus should include a brief description of the topic, the thesis or proposition he will be expounding or defending, and the outline or method of procedure he will be following. The bibliography should include the initial sources he intends to use for his paper. Once again, feel free to suggest modifications to his prospectus and additional sources for his bibliography. Once his pastor and dean have approved his prospectus and bibliography, he may begin writing the paper. The same process is necessary for the Master's thesis.

As a general rule, each paper should be a minimum of 20 pages and a maximum of 30 pages (double-spaced), not including the bibliography. We have provided the student with some basic guidelines for writing and formatting the paper. We have also referred him to Kate Turabian's *A*

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Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) for further guidance.

Preaching Practicum

Since the pastoral office requires a basic level of teaching and preaching ability (1 Tim. 3:2) and since this ability, though a gift from God, may be cultivated (1 Tim. 4:15), RBS desires that each student have the training and opportunities by which his ability may be properly developed and assessed (2 Tim. 2:2). Thus, in addition to a course on preaching and teaching, RBS requires the student to teach and/or preach at least four times through the course of his program in a context where his gifts may be assessed by his pastor(s).

RBS recognizes that you have the prerogative, as the student's pastor, to decide the appropriate context for him to teach or preach. You should take into account his current level of ability and the edification of the church. If he has never publicly taught or preached in the context of your local church, you may want to suggest that he teach or preach in a less formal context, such as a children's Sunday School class, a home Bible study, or a Nursing Home ministry. This should provide you with an opportunity for an initial assessment of his gift. You may also want to ask him to take the RBS courses on sermon preparation and delivery before he attempts to minister publicly.

RBS only asks that you provide him with the context to fulfill his Preaching Practicum requirement when you believe he is ready. We have reminded the student that an opportunity to minister God's Word in the context of a local church ministry is a privilege not a right. We have asked him to be humble and submissive towards you, as you decide the best timing and context for him to fulfill this requirement. If you do not believe he has the basic level of gifts requisite to fulfill this requirement, then you should probably encourage him to pursue another calling in life.

We have asked the student to work together with his pastor in the process of preparing the sermon. You may recommend helpful resources and review his outline or manuscript before he teaches or preaches. Each lecture or sermon must be at least 30 minutes long. He may teach or preach before the gathered church in the context of an adult Sunday School class or worship service. He may also teach or preach in a more private and less formal context. RBS does require that at least one of his pastors listen to his message and provide him with an evaluation and constructive input. We also request that you send the dean a brief note indicating the date, the passage or theme expounded, and a summary assessment, as the student completes each of the four lectures and/or sermons.

Ministerial Practicum

RBS recognizes that the gospel ministry entails more than the public ministry of the Word. Therefore, we also require that the student be engaged in various kinds and levels of other ministries associated with the pastoral office. This would include such ministries as leading worship, organizing church outreach and special events, visiting the sick, carrying out church administrative tasks, and sitting in on counseling sessions or elders' meetings. Once again, you, as his pastor, will have to decide which of these ministries are appropriate to his current level of gift and the present needs of the church. In order to earn 3 credits for PT 921 Ministerial Practicum, the student must log at least 150 hours of practical ministry in keeping with the requirements specified on the course syllabus. If you or the student have any questions about what might qualify for practical ministry, please contact the dean.

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Looking for Semester Progress Reports

In order to facilitate the working relationship between the student, the pastor, and the seminary, RBS requires that the student provide the dean with a semester progress report. The report can be filled out online and emailed to the dean. The student should make sure that you, his pastor, also receive an update. This will keep you aware of your student's progress and any difficulties he may be having with the coursework.

Supporting the Seminary?

A seminary education can be very expensive. A comparison of tuition rates in 2010-2011 among conservative evangelical seminaries reveals that average tuition rates can range from between \$250 to \$600 per credit. This puts the total amount of tuition for an 85 to 95 credit divinity program somewhere between \$21,000 and \$57,000. As a result, the student is left with a heavy financial burden.

To free the student from this financial burden, RBS charges the student a nominal tuition of \$60 per credit hour, along with a semester enrollment fee of \$425. The total cost per credit depends largely on the rate of the student's progress. If the student can devote 20 hours or more per week, his rate per credit should be somewhere in the range of \$100 per credit. That means a total cost of around \$8,500 for an 85-credit divinity program. If the student can only devote approximately 10 hours of week toward studies, his rate should be somewhere in the range of \$140 per credit. An 85-credit divinity program would cost around \$11,900. In both cases, the student's cost is significantly lower than he would find at most traditional seminaries.

How can RBS offer a ministerial education at such a reduced cost? Part of the reason lies in the fact that we are a distance learning school. We do not need to charge the student to maintain the overhead expenses of building facilities and a resident faculty. Another part of the reason lies in the fact that RBS is partially supported by the generosity of local churches. Indeed, this is one more reason why RBS is a "church-based" seminary. We believe local churches should be willing to invest in those who aspire after and show potential for the ministry. In light of this, we would like you to consider supporting RBS financially (if you have not already begun to do so). Students of churches that pledge and contribute \$2,000 or more per year receive their education tuition fee (though they're still required to pay the semester enrollment). If you are interested in knowing more about our financial needs, please contact the seminary dean.

Working with the Seminary

RBS is overseen by the pastors of local churches who are sensitive to your role in the life of the student as his pastor. We want to honor that role God has given you. As we stated earlier, RBS is committed to help pastors and churches train men who aspire after and show potential for the pastoral ministry. We stress the word "help," because we do not want to hinder, bypass, or undermine your role in mentoring and preparing the student for the ministry. Therefore, we ask that you openly communicate with the seminary if you have any concerns or questions about the training we are providing the student. You may also have some suggestions that would help us improve or better facilitate our working relationship.

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Further Questions?

If you have any further questions about matters not addressed in these “Guidelines & Expectations,” please contact the seminary dean. We are eager to improve our program and to provide the student under your care with the best ministerial training possible. We pray that your experience with RBS will be positive and rewarding.

Contact Information

Please direct all general questions about the seminary to the seminary secretary or dean:

Academic Dean

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