



# Formation & Ministry Skills (Mentored Modules): Before You Begin (For Students)

For questions, email: [SupervisedMinistry@seminary.edu](mailto:SupervisedMinistry@seminary.edu)

The MDiv and the MA in Christian Ministries Programs include modules of mentored learning in context that we call Formation and Ministry Skills. The MDiv includes 12 modules and the MACM includes 8 modules. These modules blend self-directed study in specified areas of learning with an Mentored Module experience. Therefore, each student will have both a faculty mentor at Northern and a pastoral/ministry mentor in your ministry setting. This method of learning is also known as Competency Based Theological Education (CBTE).

## Information Course Objectives – What to expect

There are important details that you will need to know in order to have a successful CBTE learning experience. This information is designed to help you be prepared. “Before You Begin” is designed to introduce you to Northern’s Formation & Ministry Skills courses. By the time that you finish this, you will:

- Understand the basics of the Formation & Ministry Skills modules and how to best prepare yourself for a great learning experience.
- Walk through exercises to help you think through the best mentored learning experience and decide who will be a good choice for your pastoral/ministry mentor.
- Be able to draft a good Learning Covenant.
- Learn about the required Appendices for the Formation & Ministry Skills courses, how to fill them out and when they are due to the Supervised Ministry Office.

## Lesson 1: Formation & Ministry Skills Mentored Modules – the Basics

### What are the Mentored Modules?

Mentored Modules provide the opportunity for you to learn practical ministry skills in a mentored ministry environment integrated with a self-directed learning component. This will look a bit different for each person who completes the program as you will have individualized goals within each Module. Additionally, you will be selecting your learning context and Ministry Mentor with your particular learning needs in mind.

While most students will complete their Mentored Module in a church-setting, students are able to serve in other areas of ministry as well. As lifelong learners, there are always places where each of us needs to grow and to be formed. The Mentored Module is an opportunity to integrate the self-directed online learning in the 8-12 targeted Mentored Modules for your Program and grow in your relational ministry skills.

Essentially, the Mentored Modules provide the opportunity for you to craft an experience that will help you to grow in unique ways for the ministry God has called you to do. Even if you are already serving in a ministry setting, the Mentored Module time gives you a chance to further develop ministry skills and receive wise counsel from a personally selected pastor or mentor.

Practically speaking, you'll take 8-12 Mentored Modules (SM 305 through SM 322) in a local church, or other ministry setting. The learning component is integrated with the practical ministry component for each of the modules. It is recommended that you begin with SM 305, Formation for Ministry 1. We also recommend that you try to commit to your Mentored Module site for a full academic year for continuity and relationship building. While this is not required, it may make your Mentored Module experience more beneficial.

## **When should I do my Mentored Modules and how long do they take?**

We recommend you begin your first module when you begin your Program, but not later than Winter or Spring quarter of your first year. Plan on taking one or two Mentored Modules each quarter.

Since these are designed to be self-directed, you might be able to reach competency and complete a module in less than one quarter, or, it might take you longer than one quarter to reach competency and complete other modules. This is ok. The goal is become competent in each of the Formation and Ministry Skills areas required for your Program.

## **How do I find a Mentored Module context?**

Before you start considering where or when you might do an Mentored Module and deciding the kind of goals that you should set to help you to best grow, it is important to examine what God is calling you to do and the things he has laid on your heart to accomplish.

Ask yourself the following questions: What is your calling? What are your vocational goals?

It's okay if you don't fully know the answers to these questions. If you're not clear on where God is calling you, what are some areas of ministry that you enjoy? What would you like to explore? Where do you suspect God is calling you?

If you are already working in a ministry environment, consider where God may be calling you currently in your ministry. Where is God challenging you today? In what areas may God's call on your life be changing?

Now that you have some ideas about how God might be leading, start considering what kind of ministry context could best help you reach these goals. Is it your current local church or a completely new environment? Should you consider a parachurch organization? Do you have any denomination requirements you need to consider when choosing a Mentored Module context?

Many students complete their Mentored Modules in their current ministry or church. For others, their current ministry setting might not offer the experiences you need. If you would like to explore a new context for ministry, several Mentored Module sites are listed under the Ministry Opportunities web page. In addition, the Supervised Ministry office is willing to help you find a Mentored Module context.

**If you wish to complete your Mentored Module in a setting not already approved**, you must receive approval from the Supervised Ministry Office before contracting to work there. Placement will be approved only with churches or agencies which agree to meet the established standards for a pastoral/ministry mentor.

**Do I stay in the same ministry context the whole time?** You can, if the ministry context is the best place for you to learn and grow. You can also change settings as you go along, or, select a new setting for a specific Ministry Module to maximize your learning and experience. This might require a new pastoral/ministry mentor, or you can have a secondary pastoral/ministry mentor to help with a specific Module, or you can decide to select a new mentor for a particular experience. (But, if you want a new pastoral/ministry mentor be sure to get prior approval from the Supervised Ministries Office in advance)

### **What is the best Mentored Module opportunity for me?**

You may have already identified what you feel is the best possible place for you to complete your Mentored Module. You may have a few possibilities and are trying to narrow it down. Or you might not have a clue where to start. Whatever your situation, consider the questions below carefully as they will help you to determine when you actually have found the right fit.

- Are there skills/experiences I desire to learn during the Mentored Module which will assist me in discerning new areas of ministry as part of my calling? What context will be able to further develop my skills?
- What would the "ideal" Mentored Module look like? What would the church be like: size, location, style, denomination, theology, ethnicity, etc.? What would I "be doing" in my ideal internship?
- If I am considering remaining in my current context for ministry, why do I want to stay here during my Mentored Modules? What would be the strengths of my current context? What would be the weaknesses?
- Am I perceived as a minister in my current context or as a regular member of the church? Will the church members allow me to make the transition to leadership? Will the pastoral staff allow me to make this transition?
- Does this context help me accomplish the questions answered above?
- Will I feel free to be pushed – and even to "fail" (i.e. learn) – in my current context? Will I have a spirit of adventure in trying on new roles?
- Is there a person in pastoral leadership whom I will trust as my spiritual advisor and my professional supervisor?

- If I am considering a new context for ministry, why am I interested in a new context? What am I hoping for?
- Does my denomination require me to change contexts for Mentored Module and ordination?
- Are there specific requirements from my denomination for internship?
- Are there specific time requirements from my denomination for internship?
- Am I able to accept a position which is not salaried or does not offer a stipend?

## Expectations for Students

Northern Seminary expects each student in the Mentored Module process to learn and grow. We hope that throughout your Mentored Module time you will discover new passions, develop new skills, gain insight from your supervisor's expertise, and deepen your walk with the Lord. The Mentored Modules are not simply another hoop to jump through to get to graduation. They are your opportunity to take everything you are getting in the classroom and apply them in real life.

Northern also expects you to complete all of the requirements for this course.

## Requirements

- Enroll in the SM (Supervised Ministry) Mentored Module Course that you need/want for each Quarter through Populi.
- Read through the Syllabus for the SM Course provided on **Populi**. This will acquaint you with the format and requirements for each SM course/module.
- The syllabus will direct you to a site called **Populi**. This will be the course system for each Mentored Module that you will use to complete your assignments, and that your ministry/pastoral mentor and your faculty mentor will access to assess your progress.
- **Complete and turn in the following before your Mentored Module (SM class) begins:**
  - **Ministry Mentor and Site Form**
  - **Creating the Learning Covenant**
- Begin working on developing your Learning Covenant once you know your site and ministry mentor/supervisor are approved. Make sure you give yourself and your mentor enough time to develop your plan well. Remember to contact your mentor early enough to get time on his/her schedule. They may not be able to meet with you the day before your Learning Covenant is due.
- Start your Mentored Module (SM course/experience).

*All necessary documents will be available in Populi*

## **Summer Mentored Modules**

If you need more time to acquire competency in a particular Mentored Module in order to complete it, you can continue to the next quarter and through the summer. Your ministry mentor and faculty mentor will continue with you.

## **For Students Already in Full Time Ministry**

*If you are not already in a ministry setting, scroll to the bottom and hit continue.*

If you are already in full time ministry, you may complete your Mentored Module at your current ministry/church. The Mentored Module courses are required of all Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Christian Ministry and Diploma in Ministry students regardless of their years of ministry experience.

The requirements for the course are the same. Some of the Mentored Modules requirements can be part of your current ministry position. Your ministry mentor should be someone who you consider “further along in the journey.” This could be a current supervisor, another pastor, respected elder, spiritual advisor, etc. It needs to be someone with whom you are accountable and who can meet all the requirements of a Mentored Module Supervisor.

Your Learning Covenant should challenge you to continue growing in ministry skills. It can include a project you’ve always wanted to work on or other skill/administration/leadership/growth goals.

## **All about Ministry/Pastoral Mentors**

Choosing the right Ministry/Pastoral Mentor might be the most important part of having a successful experience. Not just anyone will do. This person must fulfill certain education and experience standards and also must be willing to commit to meet weekly with you. In addition, you need to be able to trust the Ministry/Pastoral Mentor as a spiritual advisor and professional mentor. As you look over the qualifications and expectations for the Ministry/Pastoral Mentor, carefully and prayerfully consider who you would like to invite to join you in this journey of growth and learning.

Think about people in the past years who have influenced you spiritually and/or professionally. (These may or may not be people in ministry or good candidates for your Ministry/Pastoral Mentor.) If it helps, write down how this person helped you grow. What did they give you? What did they not give you? What qualities do you need in a mentor? What do you want in a relationship with a mentor (mentoring qualities, spiritual counsel, experience, etc.)?

## **Suggestions for Interviewing Ministry/Pastoral Mentor**

By now you may have someone specific in mind that you think would be a good Mentored Module supervisor. Set up a time to meet with that person and do a brief interview to be certain that you

have chosen well and that all expectations are clear. To get you started, here are some basic questions you should ask.

- Do you see yourself, as a potential Ministry/Pastoral Mentor, having the time to invest in me?
- Will you be able to meet weekly for at least one-hour?
- Are you able to observe the intern in ministry?
- What role would you see yourself taking as a Ministry/Pastoral Mentor?
- Who else might be involved, and to what extent?
- How open are you to an intern shadowing you in ministry in order to learn how you lead meetings, counsel, study, etc.?
- Is the congregation ready and open to an intern?
- What experiences have you had in the past with interns?
- What level of tension or conflict is there in the congregation on a scale from 1-10? What are the sources of the conflict?
- How do you (Ministry/Pastoral Mentor) see the church (or ministry) being able to fit into the requests below?

Northern Seminary suggests that each intern:

- Be given a title in the congregation such as: Student Pastoral Intern
- Have an article written about them, from the pastor or a self-introduction, in the church newsletter announcing the seminarian's presence and role.
- Be given a salary, scholarship, or honorarium recognizing their work.
- Participate regularly (and where appropriate) in the worship leadership of the congregation

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We look forward to receiving your appendices and helping you create a meaningful and challenging Mentored Module this coming academic year!