

Section 5 • Education and Continuing Formation

CHAPTER 18

Licensing School and Course of Study

For more information, visit www.gbhem.org/localpastors or contact the Office for Course of Study, localpastors@gbhem.org or 615-340-7416.

The Assistant General Secretary for Clergy Formation and Theological Education can be reached at 615-340-7388.

Visit the [Licensing & Course of Study webpage](#) for additional information about these programs.

Studies for License as a Local Pastor

A certified candidate is eligible for appointment as a local pastor upon completion of License for Pastoral Ministry (¶ 311). All persons not ordained as elders who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry (¶ 315).

The BOM (¶ 635.2h) may recommend to the clergy session the licensing of local pastors who have completed the following as noted in (¶ 315).

- The conditions for candidacy certification in ¶ 310.1-2
- The Orientation to Ministry
- The studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed and supervised by the Division of Ordained Ministry, or one-third of the M.Div. degree
- Examination and recommendation by the dCOM

[Licensing School schedules and locations](#) are posted on the GBHEM website. A candidate who cannot attend a school in one conference may attend in another conference, and receive recommendation to their home dCOM from that school's faculty.

Authority and Initiative

The Studies for License as a Local Pastor are a joint enterprise among the dCOM, the BOM, and the Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM). The DOM prescribes the curriculum for licensing a local pastor, but the operation of a licensing school is the BOM's responsibility. The DOM offers guidelines based on competence in the skills of ministry rather than academic achievement. Within these guidelines, however, each annual conference has latitude as to method, time, place, instructors, accents, and interest.

The purpose is to provide the best quality of this initial preparation for ministry. Studies should be relevant to the annual conference while establishing high educational standards. GBHEM prescribes the basic curriculum, offers the resources currently available in the church, and maintains a system of supervision and accountability.

Scope and Purpose of Licensing Studies

Most candidates' first education about the practice of ministry comes through the studies. However, they are not a substitute for seminary education or the Course of Study schools. They provide an opportunity for full and active members of the annual conference to take part in the initial preparation of future colleagues.

The school assumes that candidates have been certified for ministry (¶ 315.2a), and have already explored the basic vocational questions of call and the meaning of ministry. These studies are a crash course for those who may be appointed when license studies are completed. The license permits regular appointment and should not be granted unless the faculty recommends that a candidate is fit and has the beginning competencies to be a pastor in charge.

Further, granting the license is only the initial stage in ministry. The 80 hours required for completion of studies for licensing does not give adequate preparation for church work. A candidate who is granted a license must continue in education for ministry, either through college and seminary, or through the Course of Study school (¶ 319). Although most local pastors will be appointed to a charge, they also may receive an appointment to an extension ministry (¶ 316.1).

Limitations of the License

- After the candidate meets study requirements, the school's faculty and/or administrator can certify the completion of the prescribed studies; the dCOM and BOM can recommend the license; and the clergy session can approve the license. However, the license shall not be awarded until an appointment to a pastoral charge is made in accordance with ¶ 337 (¶ 318).
- The license is limited by three specific provisions that are repeated for emphasis several times in the *Discipline*:
 - Authority extends only within the appointment or extension ministry and does not extend beyond that setting.
 - The local pastor is under specific and direct supervision of the DS.
 - Continuation of the license is subject to annual renewal by the dCOM and BOM.

Philosophy for Full Members as Licensing School Faculty

Deacons and elders have a continuing responsibility to support the preparation of new candidates. They can fulfill that responsibility by sharing practical knowledge and skills, enhancing theological education and illustrating the shared responsibility of BOMs and schools of theology to prepare candidates for ministry.

Those who are licensed must exhibit basic minimum competencies before the dCOM and BOM recommend an appointment. These studies are not simply a formality. They provide the knowledge and skill the church considers essential to the practice of ministry.

Every practicing pastor recognizes that these competencies are never perfected, but that work begun in the license studies is developed through the practice of ministry. The studies offer the basic preparation for new candidates to receive their first appointment.

Duration, Settings, and Faculty

The BOM decides where licensing schools are held, for how long, and who leads and teaches the school. Once decided, the BOM should send the dates, location, and director's name with contact information to the Licensing School/Course of Study office for posting on the GBHEM website.

Duration

A minimum of 80 contact hours is required. Studies may be offered in a two-week residential school, in one week of instruction followed by a several month gap for continued study and reflection, or in a series of four or five weekends. The BOM decides the structure that best meets the annual conference's needs. In addition to setting a timeframe, one of the first tasks of the school is to find ways to add enrichment and additional studies for students from a variety of educational and experiential backgrounds.

Settings

The BOM should consider geographical location, cost, housing, and meals when selecting a site. They also will take into account classroom and study space, accessibility, access to medical assistance, and whether or not there is a chapel.

Faculty

There is not a set number for faculty. They should be able to share their skills with new candidates, and should have experience and expertise in leading prayer and worship, preaching, church administration, education, and pastoral care. Some faculty may have experience in specialized ministries, counseling, chaplaincy, and Christian education. The teaching team should include diversity in gender, ethnicity, and theology.

Every school should have a director to oversee registration and secure the location, instructors, and materials. At larger schools, a registrar or other administrative personnel is helpful. These persons will communicate registration procedures to the dCOM, DS, registrars, and others who keep records for the BOM.

Practice varies among schools for paying faculty. Generally, expenses are paid for those with minor or brief responsibilities, while a modest honorarium may be appropriate for one who devotes a full two-week period. This should be considered part of the basic pastoral responsibility of the clergy involved, and not considered vacation.

Mentoring

The assignment of clergy mentors to local pastor candidates attending licensing school is a vital part of the educational process.

- District superintendents identify and invite clergy members in the district (full conference members, associate members, and full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study) to be trained and serve as clergy mentors to local pastors.
- The dCOM assigns clergy mentors to those attending licensing school and the mentor's names are included on the registration form.
- Mentors may be asked to be present at a licensing school and participate in a class on mentoring which reviews their responsibilities and provides practice in the process of theological reflection through case studies or role plays.
- Upon completion of the licensing school and the appointment of a local pastor, the local pastor and the clergy mentor develop a covenant for ministry following guidelines found in *Clergy Mentoring – A Manual for Commissioned Ministers, Local Pastors, and Clergy Mentors*, p. 15.
- It is the local pastor's responsibility to initiate contact with the assigned mentor in order to establish their meeting schedule.

Teaching Methods and Resources

Instructors and school directors have latitude in establishing teaching methods and resources so that the licensing school will be relevant to the students' context and needs. A wide variety of teaching methods should be used. Written resources should be practical and current, and each instructor should recommend applicable materials. Basic texts listed below are required; however, each licensing school will decide what additional resources to add. This varies from school to school.

These basic resources should be included in any curriculum.

- *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*
- *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (New Revised Standard Version)
- *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, 1992
- *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 1989

These textbooks are required as a minimum, and can be ordered in a bundle from Cokesbury for Local Pastor License School students.

- *Administration in the Small Membership Church* – John Tyson
- *Christian Education in the Small Membership Church* – Karen Tye
- *From Pew to Pulpit* – Clifton F. Guthrie
- *Pastoral Care in the Small Membership Church* – James L. Killen, Jr.
- *Worshipping with United Methodists* (Revised Edition) – Hoyt Hickman

To get the discounted price, orders should be placed under the Kit [ISBN-13 of 9780687654826](#). The bundled books will be sold under this ISBN for \$44.99—a 43 percent discount. This price is subject to change and no further discounts apply.

Instructors should design courses based on students' needs, experiences, cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and theology. Include time for community building throughout the school. The knowledge/skill competencies expected at the completion of licensing school are listed below and based on demonstrated practical ministry needs. Instead of giving specific required course outlines and teaching methods, consider the desired results and design the courses to achieve these outcomes.

Basic Minimum Competencies

Basic Skills

A candidate's effectiveness in an appointment or in other educational settings is dependent upon reading, math, and language skills. Since proficiency in these areas is not always apparent, licensing school students are tested using the McGraw-Hill Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to determine whether or not they have basic skills required for pastoral ministry.

The TABE tests are achievement tests in reading, mathematics, and language adapted from the California Achievement Tests. They reflect language and content appropriate for adults, and measure the understanding and application of principles. They are not intended to measure specific knowledge or recall of facts.

TABE provides pre-instructional information about the student's level of achievement in the basic skills and identifies areas of weakness in these skills; measures growth in the skills after instruction; involves students in appraisal of their learning difficulties; and assists the instructor in preparing a program to meet the student's individual needs. TABE test forms are available through the Licensing School/Course of Study office by emailing localpastors@gbhem.org.

Each BOM should establish a policy about the use of TABE tests. The policy may require all licensing school attendees to use this assessment tool; or a conference policy may use the TABE test for individuals without baccalaureate degrees, or a policy may require the TABE test be administered when a dCOM requests such an assessment in language skills.

Where deficiencies are found, the student shall be encouraged to seek remedial help through the adult education program of a local high school or community college. The licensing school instructors shall be aware of the reading and language needs of the students, and the dCOM and BOM shall be given a report on the basic skills measurements. When applicable, the measurements should be sent to the director of the Course of Study school the local pastor attends.

Although deficiencies in basic educational skills do not automatically disqualify a person for licensing, they do indicate that a review is necessary to determine whether or not the student can meet the skill level necessary to serve a local church. Deficiencies are normally regarded as indications that remedial work is necessary. In a few cases, students may be required to make progress in their tutorial work before being allowed to register for Course of Study school.

United Methodist Tradition

A local pastor needs to be grounded in UM tradition and able to articulate and live out of that tradition in the local church and world. Instructors in the area of UM Tradition should review the disciplinary questions asked of those seeking ordination and full membership. This sets the context for understanding the knowledge and skill sets outlined below (¶ 324.9).

Knowledge: Develop an understanding of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Skill: Know the distinction of the four components.

Skill: Develop an ability to use the quadrilateral in articulating one's own theology.

Resource: *Discipline* ¶ 104. Section 4—Our Theological Task

Knowledge: Develop an awareness of the distinctive Wesleyan Beliefs.

Skill: Appreciate the differences between Wesleyan doctrines and other Christian traditions.

Skill: Develop a working awareness of Wesley's prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace.

Skill: Connect the theology of an individual's personal "call to ministry" and how it is developed from the moment of salvation into a life of discipleship.

Knowledge: Begin to learn UM history.

Skill: Review early Methodist history and examine its connection with ecumenical history.

Skill: Express the relationship of works of mercy and works of piety.

Resources: *Discipline* ¶ 102. Section 1—Our Doctrinal Heritage

Discipline ¶ 103. Section 3—Our Doctrinal History

Additional Recommended Resources:

Methodism 101 – General online introduction to Methodism for everyone.

Belief Matters: United Methodism's Doctrinal Standards, Charles Yrigoyen

John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life, Charles Yrigoyen

Public Worship/Liturgy

Knowledge: The forms, purposes, and theology of ritual, liturgy, and music, the basic elements in The United Methodist Hymnal and The Book of Worship.

Skill: Use liturgy effectively as it relates to the liturgical year, special services, or community occasions, with demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of the congregation.

Skill: Select hymns and other music to use in the service, and explain the reason for selection and appropriate use in worship.

Baptism

- Knowledge: Understand the sacrament of baptism in the UM tradition, including the work of God in infant baptism and confirmation.
- Skill: Communicate an understanding of God's role in baptism, including infant baptism, believer baptism, and confirmation.
- Skill: Understand and demonstrate the ability of conducting a service of baptism, related to the various modes of baptism and to the different ages of baptismal recipients.

Holy Communion

- Knowledge: Understand Holy Communion as a means of God's grace.
- Skill: Demonstrate an understanding of this sacrament and an open table with Christ as the Host.
- Skill: Demonstrate an understanding of the practical matters of conducting a service of Holy Communion.

Weddings

- Knowledge: Awareness of the elements involved in premarital consultation, wedding rehearsal, and the service of Christian Marriage as indicated in resources provided by the church.
- Skill: The ability to discuss openly and to enable others to discuss the issues relating to the marriage covenant, as well as the liturgy and symbolic ritual of the ceremony.
- Skill: Demonstrate an understanding of the practical matters of conducting a wedding.

Funerals and Memorial Services

- Knowledge: Understand the preparation, purpose, form, and content of the funeral or memorial service as well as pastoral understanding of the local situation.
- Skill: Develop and identify passages of scripture, music and prayers for use in the service, employing the Book of Worship.
- Skill: Identify and understand the practical performance of a funeral or memorial service, including liturgical and professional attire and proper funeral conduct.
- Skill: Identify places in which family members and others can participate in the service.

Preaching

Paul wrote to the Romans: "but how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent" (Romans 10:14, 15a)?

- Knowledge: Understand the significance of preaching in worship and its biblical and theological basis.
- Skill: Clearly state the purpose of preaching: namely, to make the Word of God alive in the context of a congregation and to invite a transformational response.
- Skill: Demonstrate a disciplined life of prayer, study, and meditation on the scriptures.
- Knowledge: Understand various methods of selecting sermon topics for consideration in preaching the whole Bible, as well as caring for special days and concerns in the life of the congregation or larger community.
- Skill: Demonstrate an ability to create a preaching plan for a liturgical season, a lectionary series, and/or current events affecting the congregation's life.
- Skill: Choose a subject and Biblically reflect upon how it could be used in a sermon.
- Skill: Produce a sermon that demonstrates an organized structure.

- Knowledge: Understand some essentials of sermon delivery including voice, tone, gestures, posture, etc., as well as the appropriate use and limitations of video and computer graphics.
- Skill: Distinguish the posture, tone, and language which communicates acceptance and warmth and those which communicate rejection and hostility.
- Skill: Receive and give constructive critical evaluations of the sermon delivery.
- Knowledge: Know that preaching should invite the listener into a healing relationship with God and the Christian community.
- Skill: Demonstrate in a sermon appropriate use of life experience.

Leadership and Administration

The pastor is the servant leader of a local church – a complex organization no matter what the size. The organization of the UMC is contained in the *Discipline*, particularly Part IV, which describes the ministry of all Christians, and Part VI, Chapter One, which describes the organization of the local church. Local pastors do not have to be experts in the *Discipline*. It is important, however, to know how to refer to the *Discipline* when organizational questions arise.

- Knowledge: The call to servant leadership is lived out through various leadership styles which are natural and appropriate to different persons in different situations.
- Skill: Develop a consciousness of the servant leadership style of Jesus.
- Skill: Understand and name one's strengths and weaknesses and the impact of those traits on leadership style.
- Knowledge: Develop an awareness of the polity, structure and connectional nature of the UMC as presented in the *Discipline* and understand the interrelationship of the various levels of decision-making and ministry in the UMC (local church, district, annual conference, jurisdictional, and General Conference).
- Skill: Access other UM pastors, district, conference staff and general church agencies to interpret the connection to the congregation.
- Resource: *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*
- Knowledge: The UMC's understanding of the church, the charge, and local church membership as contained in the *Discipline*, (¶ 201-205 and ¶ 214-242) and familiarity with the structural and administrative responsibilities of the charge conference, the church council, and the four administrative committees of the local church (¶ 243-252, ¶ 258).
- Skill: Outline the necessary steps for the construction of a local church budget, using the disciplinary responsibilities of the charge conference, church council, S/P-PRC, and committee on finance.
- Skill: Ability to access *The Book of Discipline* to answer questions that might arise.
- Knowledge: The meaning and method of apportionments and of the reporting forms used to keep both personal and financial statistics audited within the local church.
- Skill: Ability to use the membership, baptismal, and financial report forms of the local church, as well as the pastor's report to charge and annual conference.
- Skill: Appreciate, appropriate, and support value of the itineracy in carrying out the mission and ministry of the church.

Spiritual Formation

A spiritual leader has personal/social discipline, an awareness of God in all of life's circumstances, and the abilities to continue on a spiritual journey.

- Knowledge: Learn and understand the spiritual disciplines and recognize the importance of self-formation.

- Skill: Be able to explain and participate in the classic spiritual disciplines.
- Skill: Participate in a devotional life.
- Skill: Develop a realistic, balanced and healthy schedule for pastoral life in a particular setting, taking into consideration issues such as time, formation, and boundaries.
- Knowledge: Understand the role of the covenant group in community formation.
- Skill: Experiences covenant groups.
- Skill: Understand appropriate ethical and pastoral boundaries.
- Knowledge: Understands the importance of engagement with the world.
- Skill: Can reflect and talk about Biblical stories of Christ's work in the world.
- Skill: Show awareness that a healthy spiritual life is lived out through engaging the world beyond the local church with acts of mercy and justice.
- Resource: *Three Simple Rules*, Bishop Ruben Job

Educational Ministries

Pastors serve as preachers and teachers. The pastor's involvement in the church's teaching ministry models to the congregation lifelong learning, spiritual growth, and transformation. The pastor's involvement in teaching emphasizes the importance of this ministry. Pastors need to know how different people learn, and incorporate various learning styles into their presentations. They also need to recognize the cultural and theological diversity of their students.

- Knowledge: An understanding of the process and purpose of developing a comprehensive plan for the educational ministries of the church.
- Skill: Articulate the purpose of teaching ministries as making and maturing disciples for Jesus Christ and to see this as a lifelong spiritual journey of Christian formation and transformation.
- Skill: Identification of the learning opportunities in the local church in addition to Sunday church school including administrative committees, confirmation classes, weekday education for children and adults, pastoral emergencies, fellowship experiences, retreats, small groups, mission trips, and youth groups.
- Knowledge: An understanding of cultural styles, ways in which persons learn, and teaching methods that are needed in each learning experience.
- Skill: Identification of effective teaching methods for various learning styles and settings.
- Skill: Demonstration of at least one new teaching method by each student.
- Knowledge: The pastor's role in teaching and in equipping and supervising persons in teaching ministries.
- Skill: A review of resources, methods, and current models for studies, especially Bible, in the local church.
- Skill: Develop a plan to call, equip, and support leaders for teaching ministries.
- Resources: *Christian Education in the Small Membership Church*
The Ministry of Christian Education & Formation: A Practical Guide
United Methodist Guidelines for Christian Education

Pastoral Care

James L. Killen, Jr. in his book, *Pastoral Care in the Small Membership Church* says, "The first step in offering pastoral care is moving into relationship with others. You must take the initiative in offering a special kind of friendship." Pastoral care is a practical answer to Jesus' call to the ministries of healing and empowerment for healing lives and relationships.

Counseling

- Knowledge: The pastor learns how to listen and reflect theologically in order to help persons identify where God is in their life situation.
- Skill: Display the ability to show active listening skills.
- Skill: Display the ability to reflect theologically with the person in order to see new possibilities in each life situation.
- Skill: Seeks out other resources in the community and makes referrals as necessary.

Visitation

- Knowledge: Understands that persons are nurtured in their faith through pastoral calls made for showing concern, for supporting persons in crises or ongoing situations through visitations, in homes, hospital, nursing homes, hospice or incarceration.
- Skill: Initiate a plan for pastoral visitation.
- Skill: Develop sensitivity to the nature of specific visitation situations.

Crisis Ministry

- Knowledge: Develop sensitivity to situations in need of crisis intervention into which a pastor might be called: i.e., child abuse, depression, suicide threat, alcoholism, drug addiction, divorce and spouse abuse.
- Skill: Development of the ability to assess the depth of the problem and to be aware of the limitations of any pastor in confronting these issues.
- Skill: Recognize specific dynamics of a crisis situation.

Surviving Conflict

- Knowledge: Understand the nature of conflict and a pastor's responsibility in conflict situations.
- Skill: Development of skills for responding to conflict, either with or within the congregation.
- Skill: Developing a thick skin while maintaining a tender heart.

Mission and Evangelism

- Knowledge: Have a biblical and theological understanding of mission incorporating our Wesleyan concern for balancing vital piety and works of mercy.
- Skill: Interpret and articulate the mission of the church in its local, national, and global context.
- Skill: Interpret and articulate the mission opportunities through the denomination.
- Knowledge: Understand the ways in which the local church can be organized to build and coordinate mission.
- Skill: Assess missional needs and available resources in a congregational setting.
- Skill: Resource a congregation to organize and carry out its work in mission.
- Knowledge: Awareness that communities are expressed through a diversity of cultures.
- Skill: Assess and work in the midst of cultural diversity.
- Knowledge: Understand the pastor's role in modeling, promoting, and defining an evangelism process within a local context.
- Skill: Assess the needs, opportunities, and resources for "disciple making" in the local church.
- Skill: Set goals and priorities and implement a program of evangelism in partnership with district, conference, or general church agencies.

Reporting and Other Accountability

The DOM prescribes the outline and supervises the administration of the studies for licensing (¶ 315.2c). At the completion of licensing school, a recommendation is made and a report given by the licensing school to the student, the dCOM, the BOM local pastor registrar, and the DOM that indicates if a student has successfully completed the coursework. The report indicates the student's strengths and areas of growth. The coordinating director submits a list of students to the DOM who have been recommended for licensing and, when requested, an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the school. This information is reported on the Licensing School Faculty Evaluation and Recommendation Form.

Following Through With Local Pastors and Mentors

Local pastors are clergy members of the annual conference (¶ 602.1) and are no longer listed as certified candidates. They do not continue with candidacy mentors, but are assigned a clergy mentor (¶ 311). The licensing studies begin a lifelong process of preparation for the effective practice of ministry. No one imagines that these studies can be an end unto themselves or serve as the completion of the process for ministry preparation.

Clergy mentors, therefore, are assigned to each local pastor in the Course of Study to support the local pastor in ongoing ministry formation. The clergy mentor:

- Works with the local pastor while in the Course of Study program or in seminary (¶ 316.4).
- Develops a covenant of supportive accountability for growth and decision making in the pursuit of effective ministry.
- Supports and counsels the local pastor regarding preaching and teaching the Scriptures, celebration of the sacraments and other services of worship, ordering the life of the congregation for nurture and care, and all other aspects of the practice of ministry.

The selection and assignment of effective clergy mentors is important for the local pastor's ongoing formation. Where possible, mentors should be present for at least part of the license studies and even during faculty evaluation so that mentors may gain insights into the strengths and the needs of the local pastors they will mentor.

The *Discipline* requires that each local pastor make satisfactory progress in the Course of Study. At a minimum, each part-time local pastor will complete at least half the basic assignments that are expected in an academic year (two courses), and a full-time local pastor will complete a full year of Course of Study work each academic year (four courses).

The dCOM has ongoing responsibility for the care and supervision of candidates throughout the Course of Study, and after that through the annual recommendation to renew the local pastor's license. The dCOM must keep track of students' progress as well as their current ministry practice.

Available Resources and Funding Responsibilities

Although the DOM provides materials and guides for the licensing schools, all of the funding for the school comes from the annual conference, district, local church, or students. Many conferences find that this is a legitimate and valuable use of the 25 percent of the Ministerial Education Fund retained by the annual conference. Other conferences apply resources set aside for leadership development.

Conferences that offer residential schools have found that candidates' local churches are often willing to support their candidacy by offsetting some portion of the registration fees, room and board, or travel expense. When a seminary or college campus is used, the costs of these institutions must be considered. Finally, it is important that the student make a financial investment.

The United Methodist Course of Study

The Course of Study is a basic theological education program of the DOM. It is provided for those who are licensed as local pastors and unable to attend an approved seminary. Participants in the program shall have been certified as candidates, completed the studies for license as a local pastor, and approved for license by the dCOM.

The Course of Study is offered at regional Course of Study schools each summer on the campuses of eight United Methodist theological seminaries. Most courses are offered in two-week modules that allow both full-time and part-time local pastors to attend. Many of the regional schools have extension centers for part-time local pastors only. These extension centers usually offer courses in a two or three weekend format which allows bi-vocational local pastors to participate without taking too much time away from work or family. Students who are unable to attend any of these schools may, with the BOM's permission, take courses through the DOM's correspondence curriculum.

Students are discouraged from moving through the Course of Study at a pace that inhibits adequate preparation or time to integrate information being learned. Therefore, Course of Study students are limited to four courses per conference year. This allows for the reading and writing needed for class preparation, for the integration of learning while working with a clergy mentor, and maintaining the time needed to adequately minister to the congregation(s).

Information and official transcripts for the Course of Study program are available through the DOM:

Course of Study Office
Division of Ordained Ministry
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
P.O. Box 340007
Nashville, TN 37203-0007
Phone: 615/340-7416 Fax: 615/340-7377
Email: cosregistrar@gbhem.org

Evaluation of Transcripts for Applying Previous Coursework to Course of Study

A candidate may request that work completed at a recognized school of theology be evaluated by the DOM for transfer to the Course of Study curriculum. The BOM requests an evaluation, and a transcript must be supplied. Requests, along with transcripts, should be emailed to cos@gbhem.org, or faxed to 615-340-7377.

No undergraduate credit is recognized in the Course of Study unless the BOM requests an exception. However, some graduate studies in counseling, business, and education may be applied to the Course of Study.

The DOM policies allow up to three courses from a regionally accredited graduate program to be applied to the Advanced Course of Study. Graduate transcripts must be sent to the DOM for evaluation before such credit is granted.

Ordination

Local pastors who complete the Course of Study may continue their preparation for full conference membership and ordination as elders through the Advanced Course of Study program.

The 2012 *Book of Discipline* requires that local pastors seeking ordination (¶ 324.6):

- Earn a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate, or in some instances, for missional purposes, a minimum of 60 semester hours of undergraduate credit;
- Must be at least 40 years of age;
- Complete the five-year Course of Study of which no more than ten courses may be taken by correspondence or online;

- Complete 32 semester hours of graduate theological study or its equivalent as determined by GBHEM that shall include United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity.

It is further recommended that the 32 semester hours of graduate theological study required for ordination and full conference membership through the Advanced Course of Study, include the requirements of the Basic Graduate Theological Studies (¶ 324.4a). The other hours may be electives, including a basic unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE). UM history, doctrine and polity classes may be taken at an approved school of theology or through the DOM's independent study program.

Course of Study Schools

Regional Course of Study schools are held on the campuses of United Methodist theological seminaries. Consult the GBHEM website at www.gbhem.org/cos for the list of schools, dates, and contact information.

Correspondence/Online Curriculum

Course of Study students may complete DOM correspondence courses when circumstances prevent them from attending a regional school or the extension program for part-time local pastors. They also may take online courses. The BOM must approve enrollment in correspondence or online courses using Form #110. Students may enroll in one to four courses in a given year and, if it's available, may choose to complete work online. The tuition fee is \$75/course for correspondence, and \$125/course to complete work online, not including the cost of the textbooks.

When the DOM receives an enrollment application, the student is sent a study guide for correspondence work. The study guide contains unit assignments, study suggestions, and directions to prepare reports. If the student chooses to complete the work online, further instructions are sent.

Correspondence or online work is graded by United Methodist seminary or adjunct faculty, which requires approximately four weeks. Online work is graded by the instructors as the student progresses through the course, and the DOM receives a report from the faculty when all assignments are completed. If a student does not complete the work in 12 months, the grade is listed as an Incomplete, and the student must re-enroll to complete the course.

Information regarding the Course of Study correspondence curriculum and official transcripts of the Course of Study program are available through the DOM:

COS Correspondence
Division of Ordained Ministry
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
P.O. Box 340007
Nashville, TN 37203-0007
Phone: 615/340-7416 Fax: 615/340-7377
Email: coscarr@gbhem.org

For more information, visit www.gbhem.org/localpastors or contact the Office for Course of Study, localpastors@gbhem.org or 615-340-7416. The Assistant General Secretary for Clergy Formation and Theological Education can be reached at 615-340-7388.

Visit the [Licensing & Course of Study webpage](#) for additional information about these programs.