Ministry Practice **Handbook** for SFE **Supervisors**

Adelaide **College of Divinity**

To be read in conjunction with the
Ministry Practice Handbook for ACD Enrolled SFE Students

Uniting College for Leadership & Theology

Contents

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Supervision of a Ministry Student in Placement

> Field education is not field education without the presence of a supervisor – an experienced mentor and evaluator in the field who can help the student grow in ministry. The term 'supervisor' can carry negative connotations in our culture. Sometimes we may have the idea of a supervisor as one who stands by the timecards and watches to make sure people punch in…and not clock out early. Or, we might think of a supervisor as an inspector, an overseer. Rather a supervisor (in this context) is a facilitator of learning – one who with humility and insight, can help craft the experiences the student will have and also reflect on those experiences with them.

> Ann M. Garrido

Introduction

Thank you for undertaking – or considering – a ministry student's supervision. It is an enduring gift to the student and the church as a whole.

The supervisor is the most important learning resource within a student's Supervised Field Education (SFE). They are mentor, guide, listener, clarifier, facilitator and friend. They are a colleague in ministry practice, indeed a sister or brother in Christ who feels called to this particular ministry for this time. Not only do they encourage and teach through considered words and wise counsel, they also learn and grow from the supervisory experience.

Supervision is a mutual exchange. However, with clearly defined roles, boundaries and responsibilities inbuilt into the learning structure, there is need for training and refresher education in its repeated practice.

In an article entitled 'The Art of Supervision and Formation', author Charlin Jin Lee defines a growing student/supervisor relationship in these terms:

> The interaction between supervisor and intern is a sacred one because of its creative and relational dimensions. Creation is at work in every engagement of learning: something new is formed, or something that always was is re-formed. The following haiku conveys the constructive activity of teaching and the experience of formation that a supervisor-mentor and student encounter…

> We meet awkwardly.
> I invite you to walk
> I find you dancing.[1]

You will find a **Select Reading List** at the back of this Handbook that will further enable and strengthen your supervisory practice. Please make use of such recent and helpful insight.

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[1]   From, *Welcome to Theological Field Education!* Haiku by Bill Maroon

Some Practical Matters & Processes

Only those who have been trained or accredited by the Uniting College, or who have completed training elsewhere with comparable content and ethos, can supervise a ministry student or candidate in placement. Correspondingly, is the supervisor's present sense of call. Supervision is not simply a task but a calling, not just a skill but giftedness to share.

The final assessment of the placement (a non-graded pass or fail) rests in the hands of the Lecturer in Ministry Practice (LMP), however, at the conclusion of their final report, the supervisor is invited to make recommendation regarding the assessment. This working knowledge will be fully taken into account together with other feedback gleaned, including the Ministry Reflection Team (MRT) report.

Core Responsibilities of the Supervisor are:

- A collaborative shaping of the student's learning covenant and knowledge of the ministry setting. Continually redirecting the student back to the learning covenant as an evolving point of reference is also an important task. Reinforcing the learning opportunity of the placement is always pivotal.

- Weekly (1 hour) or fortnightly (2 hour) meetings in which the supervisor practices the art of listening and theological reflection with the student. This includes a pre-reading of the student's report and some brief written feedback to it before the meeting.

- A written final report in open conversation with student to be sent to the LMP at the conclusion of the placement.

- Liaison with LMP and convenor of the MRT when and if necessary.

The regular meeting between supervisor and student is the key learning element within the placement process. The primary purpose of supervision is to facilitate space for theological reflection through which the student can continually learn from their ministry experience.[2]

The student's learning covenant will provide a needed context for supervisory meetings but it is the regular written reports that will give the conversation due content and directive outcomes. As is stated in the Student SFE Handbook:

- Twenty four hours in advance of the meeting, the student will forward to the supervisor either a case study, a critical incident report, a theological reflection, a sermon, a verbatim or any other written reflection applicable and 'alive' to their recent practice of ministry.

- The supervisor has ample time, then, to read through the report adding any comments and questions within the body of the text, returning the document in time for the meeting. The student can then reflect upon the issues raised and arrive well prepared for the supervisory session.

Please note: The Lecturer in Ministry Practice is available for any questions or raising of any concerns. Placements can be terminated but it is far better for potential conflicts to be discussed early on in the process. It is advisable for you to have copies of the Ministry Reflection Team Handbook and the SFE Student Handbook readily available for further process orientated issues. For supervisors of UCA ministry candidates, your reports will be made available to the student's Formation Panel. These provide a very helpful insight into the student's educational and spiritual development.

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2   See the Student Handbook, 'The Art of Theological Reflection' and the Select Reading List at the conclusion of this Handbook.

Open Conversation Responses

Responding Skill	Patterns of Responding
Reflecting *Purpose:* To establish a connection, to help the student to feel understood and to clarify what is happening for them.	**Summary statements or paraphrase:** What I hear you saying is … What you have said so far is…? You said … perhaps that makes you feel …? You feel that because …?
Exploring *Purpose:* To gently unpack the student's experience of a situation or issue, eg, allow the student to be more aware of the level and nature of involvement (emotional, intellectual, and spiritual). To gather all the relevant data, preparing a way for possible new approaches and/or strategies.	Tell me more about that as I've not yet grasped the full impact of … can you please say more about it … **Closed questions:** When did that happen!? What did you do!? Why did you do that, silly!? **Open exploratory questions:** How did you cope with …? What feeling or impressions are you left with? How have you moved on after …? **Leading questions:** Have you tried …? Might you consider …?
Affirming *Purpose:* to help the student to become more aware of their gifts and strengths and to raise the student's confidence and trust in God's equipping.	You displayed some very effective leadership when you … You obviously have gifts in … I was really impressed when you … I sensed the spirit was at work in you when …
Challenging/Critiquing *Purpose:* To help student become more aware of under-developed areas of skill, gift or knowledge and to encourage them to identify such gaps as God-given learning and growth opportunities. NB. Never point out a lack in skill or gift base without finding something to also affirm!	**Pointing out dissonances or inconsistencies:** On the one hand you say …, yet on the other hand you seem to … On the one hand you desire to … but what you really do is … Your words suggest one thing …but your face and body language seems to express something quite different. **Addressing a lack/deficiency:** I wonder how those gaps in theory and practice we've identified can be narrowed. What do you think is a creative, positive way forward?
Evaluating/Giving feedback *Purpose:* To help the student become ultimately responsible for their own learning and more attuned to the level of progress being made. NB. Where possible link feedback or evaluation with the student's own stated learning goal and objectives.	From the feedback sheets I note a consistency in comments around … what do you make of that pattern? What do you think is being said here? I and others have observed that you … and I therefore would invite you to …
Giving advice/directing *Purpose:* To direct the student toward needed change.	Given what we have explored and discovered together, I think it worthwhile that you … Where do you think in your ministry practice and perhaps even in your approach are you being invited to some modification or change?

Resistances to Identify and Work Through

> How do supervisors promote supervision to those who are resistant? Emphasising the mutuality of the supervisory relationship can be useful in that supervisees start to realise that there is a sharing of power in the process, and a sharing of vulnerability.
>
> Martin McAlindin

The supervisory relationship does not always develop and function according to initial hope or correct theories. It can become relationally strained, so that reporting and reflection becomes too cloaked to honestly and creatively work with.[3]

The scenarios listed below offer a brief description of [possible] student profiles, coupled with some practical strategies and pitfalls to avoid. At heart is either a conscious or unconscious resistance to supervision and, by extension, to learning the art of ministry practice itself.[4] Ironic as it may sound, this is not that uncommon. For some, Christian ministry need not to be learned over time, but to be practiced now through the direct inspirations of God. Such naiveté needs to be gently but firmly challenged, most effectively through mutual exchange, the offering of learned experience and accumulated wisdom.

1.　The Compliant Student (indirect resistance)

The compliant student resists learning and change by appearing to agree with the supervisor on most things or remaining silent when a personal conviction or opinion is warranted.

Strategies:

- The supervisor names the presenting problem: "I've noticed that no matter what we seem to discuss, there doesn't appear to be any disagreement between us, a contrast in perspective or a noticeable desire within you to learn something new. What do you make of that? Are my perceptions accurate?" The supervisor can encourage the student to share open and honest opinions around a specific issue or event, or to discuss values or beliefs that shape their current ministry practices. Obviously, making the supervisory session safe and confidential is critical to the whole process.

- The supervisor may, if appropriate to do so, involve the Ministry Reflection Team in the feedback process so that the student hears similar concerns from more than one source.

Danger:

Becoming too directive or critical, making it nigh impossible for the student to participate in the graces of formation. Passivity can change into genuine engagement when there is relational trust. Usually this takes time and is based on invitational learning.

3　See, 'Common Issues in Field Education', in *A Concise Guide to Supervising a Ministry Student*, p. 83ff.

4　At the heart of resistance is often a fear of vulnerability. And yet, "To be vulnerable is to be real, to be strong, and it invites reflection which leads to growth. Those who are reluctant to engage in supervision need to be reminded of this." Martin McAlindin.

2.   The Openly Resistant Student

The openly resistant student resists learning and change by arguing with, or simply ignoring, identifiable needs for renewed attitudes and practice. In other words, ministry formation is not a part of their faith or vocational vocabulary.

Strategy:

- In a detached manner, the supervisor adopts a reflective stance, refusing to buy into no-win arguments over 'nuts and bolts' issues. Instead, the supervisor can attempt to reflect the student's closed disposition directly back to them, inviting the student to share more about what they are experiencing in supervision by way of feelings. For instance, "I can see that you are uncomfortable with my feedback and perspective. Maybe I can understand more of what is happening for you here. Tell me something about the feelings that shape what you are saying to me."

Danger:

- Pushing the student into an entrenched, even hostile place. This comes with the possibility of the student seeking out allies within the community to the whole community's detriment. Mediation might be necessary and useful if the supervisory relationship breaks down. The LMP is obviously an appropriate and accessible person to contact early in the piece.

3. The Emotionally Charged Student

The emotionally charged student resists learning and change (and taking personal responsibility) by reverting to somewhat predictable and strong expressions of feelings, particularly when put under evaluative pressure. These are different from day to day, transitory emotional responses that we all experience.

Strategies:

There is little point trying to have a rational conversation with a student experiencing emotionally protective behaviour. Such situations need to be approached reflectively and respectfully, as best as one can offer such gifts in charged moments. For example, "I can see that you are very sad/angry/disappointed with what has been fed back to you through your sermon evaluations. In silence, let's sit together with that emotion for a while and then we'll try to name what might be happening for you."

By making room for the emotion the student does then not have to resort to more rehearsed or unrehearsed drama. There are a number of other ways to diffuse emotional charged responses:

- Encourage written expression of feelings.
- Direct the student to other ways of expression, eg, drawing, dancing, punching a bag!
- Promote detachment or indifference to the presenting emotions, prayer, counting to ten, going for a walk or swim etc.

Danger:

- To override the emotion and continue with the supervision.
- To belittle the emotion and invalidate the student's experience.

4. The Incompatible Student

The incompatible student resists learning and change by clinging to the belief or perception that they are too different from the supervisor to be able to learn effectively from them.

Strategy:

To discuss differences openly, sharing how you have learned from and been enriched by, those with contrasting theological convictions, personality traits, cultures or value systems. The supervisor may care to explore with the student the possibility of past difficulties in coping or dealing with difference. Conversely, the supervisor may want to explore the student's enculturation within faith systems of conformity and/or certitude.

Danger:

• To force the student into unwilling submission or to give up on them.

5. The Overly Invested Student

The overly invested student resists learning and change by becoming unhealthily enmeshed in the life of the faith community that is their learning context. If the *learning perspective* is blurred or lost, the student may seek to function as a fully-fledged minister in the community. Reflection time may well be neglected in favour of 'important' ministry tasks, potentially trespassing boundaries in the process. The student might also express how much at home they feel within the community. This is not to be confused with the student feeling comfortable and accepted, and needs to be tempered with the reality of leaving well once the placement is concluded.

Strategies:

• The supervisor addresses the problem honestly and non-defensively, particularly if they are in placement there themselves. The supervisor can refer the student to the Uniting Church's Code of Ethics in relation healthy boundary setting and can negotiate with them about ways of reinstating needed reflection times.

• Scheduling or participating in Beginning and Conclusion Services of a student placement is an important symbolic way of defining roles and setting time and purpose boundaries for the benefit of all.

Danger:

• The student's pattern of ministry practice is encouraged by the supervisor's unmanaged work load or even unfamiliarity with boundary issues.

• The student's over-involvement is applauded as dedication by the supervisor or community.

• In the process of reducing the student's involvement, they are needlessly isolated.

Evaluation in Supervision

What is the shape and content of evaluation? In a SFE context, evaluation is the process of measuring a ministry task against the broad learning goal and specific objectives framed prior to the task being performed. Sometimes the objective will be in need of enhancement and sometimes the action itself will need to be fine-tuned in order to achieve a desirable outcome.

Evaluation is progressively made in close relation to:

1.   The learning covenant

2.   The student's self reflection and demonstration(s) of self-awareness

3.   How well the student has listened to feedback and sought to integrate needed modification in attitude, disposition and ministry skills

4.   Final report writing and conversation around their content

To accurately evaluate a student's learning is to first measure it against formal criteria. Such criteria are obviously articulated in the learning contract.

Therefore, positive evaluation in the SFE context essentially means a demonstrable congruence – not withstanding needed modification – between learning objectives and outcome. Conversely, a negative evaluation would identify persistent areas of dissonance[5] or resistance to learning that have continued to prevent real growth – thus good ministry – to occur consistently.

There are four evaluative focus points that should remain at the centre of the supervisor's and the student's attention:

An Intentional Broadening of a Knowledge Base

• Due evidence of a creative and informed use of resources.

• A commitment to ongoing study and professional development.

An Intentional Development of a Skills Base

• Organising time and ministry resources to ensure skilful, professional delivery.

• Preparedness to observe closely and take instruction from skilled practitioners.

A Commitment to Personal Growth

• Consistently practicing the art of self awareness in ministry practice.

• A positive attitudes towards change and growth, ie, Christian discipleship.

• People skills, eg, warmth and emotional maturity, healthy boundary observance.

A Desire for Spiritual Development

• Discernible habits of prayer, meditation, theological reflection, journaling and the open-ended reading of scripture, ie, what might God be seeking to teach me in this contemplative moment?

• Discernible and imaginative paths of integration between faith and life issues.

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5   Dissonance is an interesting and important SFE word! In this context it can be an identifiable and discordant gap between professed knowledge and skilful/professional implementation. It can be a jarring gap between a perceived call to ministry and the non affirmation of call by a faith community.

Summary

The supervisory relationship is designed to further sharpen the student's self-awareness and skills base, thus enhancing the quality and scope of their ministry practice. It should also facilitate discussion around vocational gifting and where best those gifts can be best offered in the life of church and community. Such intentional mentoring and theologically reflective companionship is invaluable to the learning and development of ministry capacity. It is both oversight and partnership with a joint goal in mind: spirited participation in the mission of God to the world. It is a significant and highly responsible calling.

Assessment of a SFE Unit

Content:

> "SFE includes the development of a learning contract with goals and objectives related to practical ministry experiences. The goals and objectives of the learning covenant will be related to the ministry development needs of the students and the pastoral needs of the placement. The supervisor (who is a person formally accredited by UCLT) will enable the student to reflect pastorally, personally and theologically on developing experience in ministry in relation to the learning contract, with the development of self-supervisory skills and attitudes as an overarching goal."
>
> (ACD Handbook)

Unit Learning Outcomes:

Students with the assistance of an accredited supervisor will:

a)   Achieve personal growth in ministry through integration of theory and practice;

b)   Develop various skills for ministry and mission;

c)   Reflect on their particular ministry experiences.

(ACD Handbook)

Contract Between Supervisor & SFE Student

This covenant should be completed, signed and forwarded to the Lecturer in Ministry Practice within the first two weeks of the given semester.

Adelaide College of Divinity/
Uniting College for Leadership and Theology

34 Lipsett Avenue, Brooklyn Park. 5032.
Lecturer in Ministry Practice:
Rev. Sean Gilbert
8416 8432 / 0419 271 137

Learning Contract for MINS 2528, 2529, 2530, 3516, 3517

Student: Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel. No.: _____   Email: _____

Supervisor: Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel. No.: _____   Email: _____

Role in relation to Placement Settlement: _____

Type of Accreditation: _____

Placement: (congregation, institution, agency): _____

Address: _____

Tel. No.: _____   Email: _____

Name of Responsible Office Bearer: _____

Arrangements for Supervisory Meetings: Weekly/Fortnightly

on _____ (day) at _____ (time)

Place: _____

Dates of Placement: From _____ To _____

Proposed date for submission and discussion of the Final-Placement Reports:

_____

These arrangements have been agreed by:

Student: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Approved:

Co-ordinator: _____ Date: _____

Comments from the Coordinator for Ministry Practice

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Supervisor's Summary of Meetings with their SFE Student

This sheet should be completed during the course of the placement, and returned to the College's Ministry Practice Coordinator with the end-of-placement report.

Placement: _____

Placement period: From _____ To _____

Supervisor: _____ Student: _____

Meeting Date & Time	Pastoral/ Spiritual Issue	Critical Incident Report	Verbatim	Case Study	Sermon MSS	Other	Theol. Refl'n	Topics Covered/ Comments etc
1								
2								
3								
4								
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12								

Final Supervisory Report[6]

Supervisor's Summary Sheet of themes and meetings

NB. This report should also include a supplementary record of dates/times of supervisory meetings and their themes. The supervisor should carefully file all written reports of the student and the summary sheet in a safe, lockable place.

1.   Using the student's Learning Contract as the key reference point, how would you evaluate their *learning and growth* in ministry practice throughout this SFE experience? How open was the student to learning reflective ministry practice and how competent (and congruent) was the leadership and ministry offered? How well – and warmly – did they relate with those they were ministering to? Is self awareness a given or a growing edge?

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2.   How would you describe your unfolding relationship with the student? Were you satisfied not only with the way you exercised your ministry of supervision but with the student's response to it? How would you characterise the relationship and what was its strength and where were there points for growth?

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6   As with the Student Report Form, it is understood that reporting not directly related to the designated questions will be valuable also. Please feel very free to offer additional comment or reflection.

3. To what depths did your theological reflections go? For example, did they go beyond description of ministry to more vulnerable questions of being and faith? Did times of theological refection bring about changes in attitude and approach to ministry tasks? If so, please give an example. How did these times of reflection affect or even change you?

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4. In what ways has the student shown an awareness of call and the gracious presence of God in their ministry practice? How have they conveyed that to others and in what practical ways have they sought to encourage others in such a noticing?

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5. Please identify major growth or 'gap' areas the student should address in future ministry practice? Identify, also, particular areas of gifting that you would like to see the student develop further. Finally, are there any areas of dissonance within then student's ministry practice and their theological understandings that is not yet resolved or worthy of note here?

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6. Recommendation of the Supervisor re Assessment.

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Signed: _____
        Supervisor

Select Reading List

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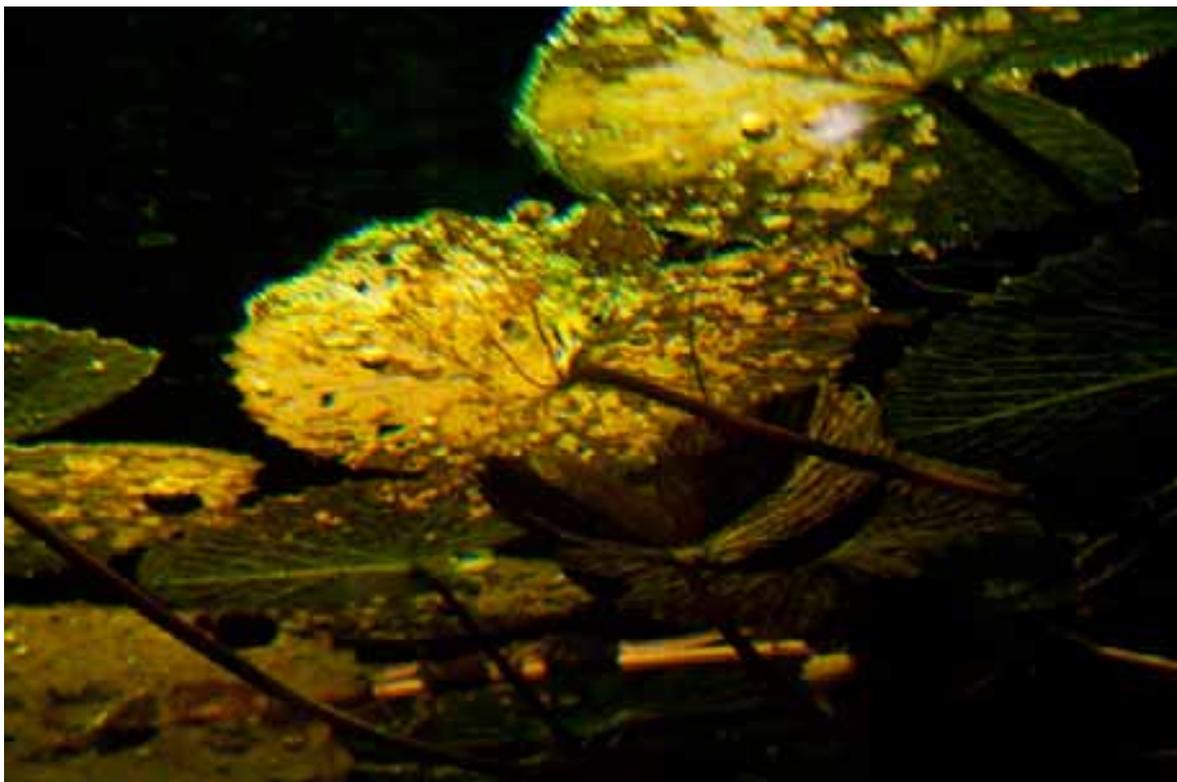
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for Leadership & Theology

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