

CCS Learning Guidelines

Introduction

The Centre for Christian Studies uses the "Learning Guidelines" as a means of determining whether a student demonstrates increasing competence in each of the areas identified as essential for functioning effectively in ministries of education, spiritual care, and social justice. These guidelines are used by student colleagues and Program Staff in the Review of Learnings/Assessment process at the end of each course or learning circle. They are also used by Program Staff in a final year-end review each year. We believe that an acceptable degree of competence is essential in each category of the guidelines in order for a student to progress from one year to the next and to complete the program. Students will normally be assessed on their individual competence for ministry based on a combination of institutional expectations as stated in these guidelines, their own learning goals, and demonstrated cumulative progress from year to year. We believe that every person always has more to learn.

The Centre for Christian Studies has a particular responsibility to certify to The United Church of Canada that, upon graduating from CCS, a student has met the testimonial/educational requirements for commissioning as a Diaconal Minister as prescribed in *The Manual of The United Church of Canada*. These Guidelines are the primary resource used for making that determination.

Guidelines

(amended and approved by CCS Central Council, May 2013, reordered in 2014)

1. Formation

1.1 Spirituality

- Understands and tends one's own spirituality.
- Lives out of a sense of gratitude and hope.
- Respects a variety of spiritual understandings and practices.
- Encourages others in their spiritual journeys.
- Articulates one's own understanding of prayer and how that is related in ministry.
- Accepts different understandings of prayer.

1.2 Self Awareness/Self Understanding

- Has a realistic sense one's strengths and weaknesses.
- Is gracious toward oneself and practices self-care.
- Stretches and challenges oneself appropriately.
- Understands and accepts of one's own sexuality.

- Acknowledges the diversity of one's gifts in ministry.
- Is able to be self-directed in one's work.
- Discerns when to be serious and when to be playful.

1.3 Self in Relation to Others

- Holds others with respect and positive regard.
- Recognizes, and appropriately monitors, one's own privilege, power, and vulnerability.
- Develops and sustains respectful relationships in a variety of ministry contexts.
- Works effectively in a variety of team configurations.
- Is aware of differences of race, class, age, sexual orientation, gender, culture, language, abilities and religion and understands the implications for ministry.
- Demonstrates interpersonal skills for ministry.
- Understands, and is committed to, appropriate boundaries in ministry.
- Exercises good judgment and understands how one's words and actions affect others.

1.4 Diaconal Identity

- Understands and values the history of diaconal ministry - biblically and within Church tradition.
- Is familiar with diaconal networks - denominationally, regionally, and internationally.
- Understands and is committed to diaconal perspectives on education, pastoral care, and social justice.
- Identifies and articulates one's own role and identity in diaconal ministry.

1.5 Integrated Understanding of Ministry

- Is grounded and centred in one's own value and worth, perspective and world view, faith and vision.
- Acknowledges one's own gifts and skills for ministry.
- Understands one's vocation as related to the whole church.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the importance of accountability in ministry.
- Integrates one's knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills, and self-awareness in ministry.
- Demonstrates the ability to integrate theologically and theoretically; prophetic, pastoral, educational, spiritual, administrative and liturgical elements of the practice of ministry.
- Understands oneself as minister and can relate to others within that role.
- Understands the significance of global perspectives for ministry and for the life and work of the church.
- Understands how life transitions affect self and others and is able to implement personal strategies to cope effectively with transition and change, including developing support networks.

2. Christian Heritage

2.1 Theology

- Explores and articulates one's theology.
- Demonstrates understanding of Christian doctrines.
- Discerns how doctrine is integrated into one's faith.
- Respects a variety of theological perspectives.
- Facilitates others in reflecting on their own theological beliefs.
- Sustains a theology of hope and vision in a variety of situations.

2.2 Faith and Church Tradition

- Understands the history and diversity of the Christian tradition, both denominationally and ecumenically.
- Can identify one's own theological, spiritual, and cultural roots in Christian tradition.
- Understands how theology informs one's faith and relates to one's worldview.
- Demonstrates skills in biblical interpretation and theological reflection.
- Demonstrates theological beliefs which confront hierarchy, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, classism, racism, ableism, militarism, religious and cultural discrimination, and anthropocentrism^[1].
- Demonstrates a theology and spirituality of respect for creation.
- Values a variety of theologies of the church and understands the strengths and limitations of each.
- Understands the polity and the ethos of one's own denomination.
- Functions effectively within church structures.
- Is familiar with the basic structures of both the Anglican Church of Canada and The United Church of Canada.

3. Context and Culture

3.1 Diversity

- Appreciates a variety of cultural, social, political and religious perspectives.
- Has knowledge of and understands denominations and faith traditions other than one's own.
- Willing to enhance ecumenical and interfaith relations.
- Acknowledges and respects cultures other than one's own.
- Demonstrates a readiness for nurturing intercultural connections.
- Understands the historical place of aboriginal peoples in Canadian society and the impact of colonialism, racism and residential schools, and demonstrates a willingness to respectfully engage these concerns.

3.2 Social Ministry

- Understands the historical and contemporary mission of the church in the context of justice.

- Understands social analysis, is able to use different models of social analysis, and can facilitate others in doing social analysis.
- Understands structures and their impact on people's lives.
- Functions in a variety of institutional structures.
- Understands how socialization and ideological perspectives influence worldviews, theology, and perceptions of injustice/justice.
- Has an analysis of, and can make connections amongst sexism, heterosexism, racism, ageism, ableism, classism, militarism, and environmental degradation,
- Understands globalization, its impact, and the implications for ministry.
- Understands the similarities and differences between social service and social change.
- Understands the complexities of, and is committed to, solidarity.
- Demonstrates skills in developing strategies for transformation using community and church networks.
- Understands advocacy and is able to advocate for self and others, individually and systemically.
- Understands spirituality as an integral element of social ministry and spiritual health as a source of hope.
- Encourages others to offer their gifts and skills in social ministry.
- Is committed to social ministry as an essential part of the ministry of the faith community.

4. Ministry Leadership

4.1 Learning

- Understands learning as a life-long process and commitment.
- Approaches learning as an educator/co-learner.
- Knows and understands one's own preferred learning style.
- Understands a variety of learning styles and their implications for ministry.
- Values self-directed learning and is able to learn as a self-directed learner.
- Sets and articulates intentional goals for learning.
- Demonstrates skills in, and appreciates the value of, effective research.
- Integrates theory and experience for effective ministry.
- Assesses and evaluates one's growth and performance.
- Seeks and utilizes support for learning.
- Learns from positive and critical feedback.

4.2 Group Process

- Understands self as leader/facilitator.
- Demonstrates awareness of how one's needs and behaviour affect group dynamics.
- Analyzes context, process, and dynamics in order to help groups function more effectively.
- Utilizes a variety of leadership styles.
- Envisions, initiates, designs, plans, implements, and evaluates in a variety of group contexts.
- Nurtures spiritual health in group life in a variety of ways.
- Facilitates the participation and leadership of others.

4.3 Leadership

- Demonstrates ability to provide leadership that is visionary, prophetic, spiritually grounded and compassionate.
- Discerns what kind of leadership is necessary in various contexts, to take appropriate initiative, and to encourage and support others in taking leadership.
- Understands transition in the context of ministry and is able to offer effective leadership.

4.4 Communication

- Demonstrates ability to listen attentively and with comprehension.
- Gives and receives feedback appropriately.
- Deals with conflict effectively and engages others appropriately in conflict situations.
- Speaks with confidence in small and large groups.
- Communicates clearly orally and in written form.
- Understands the importance of context in communication.
- Demonstrates an ability to use oral and written communication that is appropriate.

4.5 Organizational and Administrative Skills

- Understands and values administration as an aspect of ministry.
- Plans, organizes, sets priorities and manages time effectively.
- Demonstrates a consistent ability to meet deadlines.
- Demonstrates administrative skills such as budgeting, organizing meetings, and supervision.

4.6 Pastoral Care

- Has an awareness and acceptance of one's roles and responsibilities in pastoral care.
- Is a non-anxious, compassionate presence.
- Understands the theory and theology of pastoral care.
- Offers effective and appropriate pastoral care in a variety of situations.
- Works effectively in pastoral situations that may be stressful and uncomfortable.
- Demonstrates analysis and understanding of diversity and its implications for pastoral care.
- Demonstrates understanding of, and commitment to, responsible pastoral ethics.
- Understands how pastoral care can be offered and experienced through worship and advocacy.
- Understands the differences and connections amongst pastoral care, pastoral counselling, and spiritual direction.
- Understands one's own expertise/limitations in pastoral counselling, when to refer, and how to set up a network of qualified people for referrals.
- Understands how dynamics of power and vulnerability affect pastoral care.

- Understands an appropriate attention to one's own and others' spiritual needs as essential in pastoral care.
- Encourages others to offer their gifts and skills in pastoral care.
- Is committed to pastoral care as an essential part of the ministry of the faith community.

4.7 Education in the Faith Community

- Understands educational theory and has educational skills grounded in theology and ministry.
- Determines and applies educational theories appropriate to various situations.
- Plans learning experiences relevant to life issues and the global context.
- Finds, creates, adapts resources and curriculum.
- Nurtures the faith of others and facilitates their learning.
- Enables others to deal with differences within a faith community.
- Encourages others to offer their gifts and skills in educational ministry.
- Is committed to educational ministry as an essential part of the ministry of the faith community.

4.8 Liturgical Ministry

- Provides liturgical leadership, being aware of one's own gifts, strengths/weaknesses, and preferred leadership styles.
- Understands the connections in liturgy with education, pastoral care, and social ministry.
- Demonstrates understanding and appropriate sensitivity of diversity and its implications for liturgical ministry.
- Demonstrates an appreciation for ritual in relation to life experiences.
- Designs and leads liturgy that is responsive to a diversity of spiritual needs and expressions.
- Supports others in identifying their liturgical and ritual needs.
- Develops, finds, and adapts liturgies and rituals to meet different needs.
- Prepares sermons that are appropriate to a variety of contexts.
- Supports and empowers others to create and lead in liturgy.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the theology of sacraments and is able to offer leadership in the sacramental ministry of the church.

4.9 Learning in Community

- Interacts effectively with others to form and sustain an intentional learning community
- demonstrates commitment over time to one's own and others' learning in community
- accepts and appreciates one's own and others' discomfort and vulnerability as part of learning in community
- shows awareness of and takes responsibility for how one's emotions impact on group process
- creates and contributes to an environment conducive to risk-taking and openness to learning in community

- develops and shares meaningful goals for learning in community
- demonstrates skills of analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual awareness while leading in team and learning in community
- is receptive, through reading and study, to voices beyond the immediate learning community
- facilitates learning with others (listens actively, encourages and supports emerging ideas, probes beneath the surface, seeks more information, clears up confusion, shares solutions, includes others, makes links, holds silence when appropriate)
- integrates discoveries and insights arising from an action-reflection model of learning
- respects the unique strengths, gifts, styles and learning edges of others when leading in team
- respects and attends to the lived experiences of marginalization in oneself and others
- makes connections in community between one's own and others' spiritual practice and faith experience

[\[1\]](#) a perspective/assumption that human beings are more important than the rest of Creation