



Guidelines for Evaluating Courses for Basic Graduate Theological Studies Requirements

The United Methodist Church requires those pursuing ordination as elder or deacon to complete the following Basic Graduate Theological Studies (BGTS) courses (§ 324.4a) as a part of the education requirements:

- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Theology
- Church history
- Mission of the church in the world
- Evangelism
- Worship/liturgy
- United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity

These shall constitute a minimum of 27 semester hours and must be completed at a seminary listed by the University Senate (§ 324.4b, 4c3) or through a program of study approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), per § 335. (For local pastors seeking ordination, refer to § 324.6d.)

The first seven courses listed above are to be taken as separate courses, typically for three semester hours of credit each, totaling 21 hours. United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity courses should collectively add up to six semester hours of credit (e.g., three courses at two hours each or two courses at three hours each, depending on the institution).

It is the Board of Ordained Ministry's responsibility to determine the education and training standards for the student's projected ministry (elder, chaplain/extension ministry, deacon, local pastor, etc.), while heeding the denominational standards in §§ 324, 330, and 335.

It is the Board of Ordained Ministry's responsibility to determine whether courses on a student's transcript fulfill the conference's standards for the BGTS. GBHEM is available to consult with Boards of Ordained Ministry on such assessments (§ 324.7).

GBHEM is also available to advise Boards of Ordained Ministry on whether a student's educational history meets the deacons' educational requirements (§ 324.4c).

GBHEM determines whether courses qualify for the United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity requirement (§ 1421.3b).

Boards of Ordained Ministry in the United States should consult with GBHEM when evaluating student transcripts from schools outside of the United States, as education systems vary from nation to nation.

GBHEM assesses student transcripts for master of divinity equivalence (§ 324.7) or for applying credit toward Course of Study or Advanced Course of Study (§§ 324.6c, d).

Guiding Questions

When evaluating courses for BGTS fulfillment, Boards of Ordained Ministry should review the seminary's course descriptions. Often these can be found on the seminary's web site. The following questions may assist with evaluation.

1. Does the course address the conference-established requirements for the area of study?

2. Does the course provide an overview of the area of study?
3. Has the student taken an undergraduate course (or course at a seminary not on the University Senate list, or a Course of Study class) in the area of study? If so, consider allowing the student to take an advanced graduate-level course in the area of study at a seminary recognized by the University Senate. Undergraduate courses are not qualified to meet graduate requirements.
4. Has the student taken courses that the conference considers necessary for the student's projected area of ministry (for example, pastoral care or preaching)?
5. Suggested considerations for the **worship/liturgy** requirement:
 - a. Does the course teach the United Methodist theology of sacraments?
 - b. Does the course familiarize students with United Methodist worship resources, such as *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, *Mil Voces Para Celebrar*, *This Holy Mystery*, *By Water and the Spirit*?
 - c. Does the course familiarize students with the United Methodist theology of worship (*UMBW*, *This Holy Mystery*, *By Water and the Spirit*)?
6. Suggested considerations for the **evangelism** requirement:
 - a. Does the course help students articulate a definition of, biblical basis for, and theology of evangelism? Does it familiarize students with a variety of theological understandings of evangelism (e.g., Wesleyan, liberationist, narrative, revivalist, etc.)?
 - b. Does the course teach students how to lead faith communities to practice evangelism?
7. Suggested considerations for the **mission of the church in the world** requirement:
 - a. Does the course help students articulate a definition of, biblical basis for, and theology of mission?
 - b. Does the course provide an overview of the history of Christian mission practices?
 - c. Does the course familiarize students with mission practice and mission ethics?
 - d. Does the course teach students critical skills in the challenges of cross-cultural engagement and the attending religious, economic, political, and other dimensions of culture?
 - e. Does the course help students lead faith communities in the practice of mission?
8. Suggested considerations for the **Old Testament, New Testament, theology, and church history** requirements:
 - a. Has the student taken an introductory survey course that provides a foundation in the subject area?
 - b. If the student has completed an introductory course in one of these areas at a seminary that is not on the University Senate list, the Board of Ordained Ministry might ask the student to take an advanced course at a seminary on the University Senate list. For example, if the student took Introduction to New Testament at a school not on the University Senate list, the Board of Ordained Ministry might apply toward the requirement an Epistles course completed at a seminary on the University Senate list.