

## **CURRENT TEC GUIDELINES**

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**HARDIN★SIMMONS**  
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# GRADUATE AND POST-GRADUATE PROGRAM ENDORSEMENT CRITERIA AND PROCESS

Theological Education Council  
Baptist General Convention of Texas

## INTRODUCTION

The Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) recognizes that all Christians are called to ministry. Some minister through their vocation. The BGCT financially supports nine universities that provide quality education in a Christian environment to ministers who will work in many vocations. In addition, the BGCT, through the Theological Education Council (TEC), provides specific ministerial financial assistance (MFA) to ministers in Texas Baptist schools who are preparing for church-related ministry vocations. The Ministerial Financial Assistance Program with guidelines more specifically dedicated to undergraduate students is described in the document, “Ministerial Financial Assistance Program.”

As a means of being accountable to the churches that provide funds for the MFA program, the TEC and Education/Discipleship Committee (EDC) of the Executive Board also establishes guidelines for endorsing graduate and post-graduate level theological education. This endorsement program narrowly focuses on graduate and post-graduate degree programs in Texas Baptist schools that provide theological education for persons preparing for church-related vocational ministry and further theological study.

The purpose of endorsement is neither accreditation nor an evaluation of the quality of a program offered by the university. Each university designs degree programs that help the university accomplish its mission. Curriculum is controlled by the faculties of each institution and is evaluated by peer accrediting agencies and the institution’s publics.

TEC endorsement is simply a process of determining whether a program meets the stated criteria established by the TEC for its purposes. Endorsement entitles certified Baptist ministry students enrolled in the program to receive MFA funds at the level established for the program’s classification.

## CRITERIA

The minimum criteria for consideration of endorsement are as follows:

1. That all programs help accomplish the goals of the TEC:
  - a. Accessible theological education: geographically, financially, and academically
  - b. Biblically sound scholarship that honors historic Baptist distinctives<sup>1</sup>
  - c. A seamless system of theological education: articulation, coordination, and cooperation
  - d. Prepares ministers for the practice of ministry
  - e. Faithful stewardship of funds entrusted by the churches
2. That the stated purpose of graduate (post-baccalaureate) programs is to prepare persons for (a) vocational church-related ministerial leadership or (b) further theological study.
3. That the stated purpose of post-graduate programs is to prepare persons for (a) the practice of ministry in a vocational church-related setting or (b) teaching and research in a theological school, college, or university.
4. That the curriculum of graduate programs preparing persons for
  - a. vocational church-related ministerial leadership include the following:
    - i. structured curricular opportunity<sup>2</sup> to develop an understanding of the Christian traditions by requiring any combination of courses (degree, prerequisite, or leveling) which total a minimum of 12 graduate or upper-level undergraduate credit hours explicitly including at least one course each in scripture, theology, and church history.
    - ii. structured opportunity<sup>3</sup> for developing an understanding of Baptist history, heritage and distinctives
    - iii. structured opportunity<sup>3</sup> for developing an understanding of the culture and social setting of the church and its community
    - iv. structured opportunity<sup>3</sup> for spiritual / faith formation of the student

- v. structured opportunity<sup>3</sup> for gaining experience in the skills and practice of the ministry to which the program is oriented
- b. further theological study include the following:
  - i. structured curricular opportunity<sup>2</sup> for scholarly investigation of scripture, theology, and church history
  - ii. an emphasis on research methods, teaching skills or competence in a specific theological discipline
  - iii. structured opportunity<sup>3</sup> for developing an understanding of Baptist history, heritage, and distinctives
- 5. That the post-graduate programs preparing persons for
  - a. the practice of ministry in a vocational church-related setting require
    - i. the possession of an accredited first professional ministry degree or its equivalent<sup>4</sup> in the discipline
    - ii. structured curricular opportunity for scholarly investigation of a specific area of practical theology
  - b. teaching and research in a theological school, college or university require
    - i. the possession of an accredited first graduate theological degree or its equivalent<sup>4</sup> in the discipline
    - ii. an emphasis on research methods, teaching skills or competence in a specific theological discipline

<sup>1</sup> For representative examples of these distinctives, see: “Beliefs Important to Baptists,” (BaptistWay Press); “Baptists: History, Distinctives, Relationships,” (BaptistWay Press); and materials available through the Baptist History and Heritage Society.

<sup>2</sup> “Structured curricular opportunity” refers specifically to required courses within the curriculum.

<sup>3</sup> “Structured opportunity” may be courses or other required curricular opportunities.

<sup>4</sup> Each school shall be responsible for defining or explaining what “equivalent” means in their program.

## PROCESS

### INITIAL ENDORSEMENT

Schools desiring to request endorsement of a graduate or post-graduate theological education program should submit an *Application for Endorsement* to the TEC. Applications must be submitted to the Theological Education (TE) office no later than one month prior to the scheduled meeting of the Council. Once received, the application will be forwarded to the Council for review. Consideration of the application will be placed on the agenda of the Council and a representative of the degree program will be invited to introduce the program and speak to any questions raised by the Council.

Following deliberation, the Council will determine whether or not to recommend endorsement to the EDC of the Executive Board.

Certified Baptist ministry students enrolled in endorsed degrees will be eligible to receive MFA funds beginning the next academic period. Administrators of the program will be required to follow TEC guidelines in certifying students for MFA funds and provide appropriate documentation to the TE office.

### PERIODIC REVIEW

Endorsed graduate and post-graduate programs of each institution must be reviewed three years after initial endorsement and every five years thereafter. This review involves a campus visit by a team from the TEC. All degree programs which have been endorsed for three years or more will be reviewed during the visit.

Upon notification of upcoming review the director of the graduate program will be asked to provide possible dates for the campus visit and a date will be established that is amenable to the university and to the visiting team members.

The university will prepare an updated *Application for Endorsement* for each endorsed program and send it to the TE office. The application will be distributed to each visiting team member and provided as background material to the TEC.

Following the campus visit, the visiting team will prepare a report and recommendation for the TEC. The Council will determine whether or not to recommend the program for re-endorsement to the EDC.

## APPLICATION FOR ENDORSEMENT GRADUATE OR POST-GRADUATE PROGRAM

The *Application for Endorsement* submitted to the Theological Education Council (TEC) should address the following area as applicable to the specific program and in accordance to the criteria for the specific degree. The request should be submitted in electronic form.

### Purpose

1. Describe the primary purpose and goal of the program.
2. Describe how this graduate program purposes to provide theological education for vocational church-related ministry or further theological study; or how this post-graduate program purposes to prepare persons for the practice of ministry in a church-related setting or teaching and research in a theological school, college, or university.
3. Describe how the purpose and goals are articulated in promotion, advertisements, and student recruitment.
4. Provide print and electronic communication materials which validate this purpose.

### History - Tell the story of the program.

1. Describe the seminal idea for this program and how it moved to implementation.
2. Provide the enrollment history, number of students, graduates, etc.
3. Provide information on where graduates are involved in ministry.
4. Provide accreditation status history and any future accreditation plans.

### TEC Goals - Indicate how this program addresses the goals of the TEC

1. Accessibility.
  - a. Geographic: Describe ways that courses are delivered by other means that make the study more geographically accessible (location, delivery system, scheduling, etc.).
  - b. Financial: Describe the cost of the degree program.
  - c. Academic: Describe how this program offers new or additional academic alternatives to ministers in Texas and how academic resources are made more accessible.
2. Describe how this program provides theological education that is biblically sound and consistent with historic Baptist distinctives.
3. Providing a seamless system of theological education through:
  - a. Articulation: Describe ways that you facilitate ease of credit articulation between this program and programs in other Texas Baptist schools or non-Texas Baptist schools.
  - b. Coordination and cooperation: Describe ways that you have sought to coordinate this program with other schools and developed cooperative agreements with other schools or entities.
4. Preparing ministers for the practice of ministry: Describe elements of the program that specifically provide training, experience, or assistance in the practice of ministry.
5. Faithful stewardship of funds: Describe how this program provides a way for Texas Baptists to be good stewards of funds invested in vocational theological education.

### Curriculum - Describe the curriculum structure of the program.

1. Provide a list of course requirements for the program. Include any special tracks of study, credit hours required, and the schools within the university where the courses are offered.
2. For graduate programs:
  - a. preparing persons for vocational church-related ministry
    - i. Demonstrate that there exist required courses within the degree, prerequisite requirements, or leveling requirements of a minimum of 12 graduate or upper-level undergraduate hours in the traditions, explicitly including at least one course in scripture, theology, and church history.
    - ii. Describe structured opportunities designed for students to develop an understanding of Baptist history, heritage, and distinctives.

- iii. Describe structured opportunities designed for students to develop an understanding of the culture and social setting of the church and its community.
- iv. Describe structured spiritual / faith formation opportunities for students in this degree program.
- v. Describe structured opportunities designed for students to gain experience in the skills and practice of the ministry to which the program is oriented.
- b. preparing persons for further theological study
  - i. Demonstrate that the curriculum presents opportunity for scholarly investigation of scripture, theology, and church history in the tradition.
  - ii. Demonstrate that there is an emphasis on research methods, teaching skills, or competence in a specific theological discipline.
  - iii. Describe structured opportunities designed for students to develop an understanding of Baptist history, heritage, and distinctives.
- 3. For post-graduate programs:
  - a. preparing persons for the practice of ministry in a vocational church-related ministry
    - i. Demonstrate that students possess an accredited first professional ministry degree or its equivalent in the discipline
    - ii. Describe structured opportunities for scholarly investigation of a specific area of practical theology
  - b. preparing persons for teaching and research in a theological school, college, or university
    - i. Demonstrate that students possess an accredited first graduate theological degree or its equivalent in the discipline
    - ii. Describe ways that emphasis is placed on research methods, teaching skills, or competence in a specific theological discipline

#### Faculty

1. Describe faculty resources for this program including number of full-time and number of adjunct.
2. Provide brief summary of faculty credentials including education and experience.

#### Conclusion

Use this opportunity to indicate significant information that has not been sought or given in other parts of this request.

Send application to the TEC by either of the following means:

Email: bill.tillman@texasbaptists.org  
 FAX: 214-828-5280  
 Mail: 333 N. Washington, Dallas TX 75246

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# MINISTERIAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## Theological Education Council

### Baptist General Convention of Texas

#### DESCRIPTION

In recognition of the divine call felt by those who minister, the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) provides financial assistance to students in Texas Baptist schools who are preparing for careers in church-related vocational ministry.

#### PARTICIPANTS

Four participants are recognized in the Ministerial Financial Assistance Program (MFA) – the ministry **student** who, responding to God's call is set aside by a **local church** that pools resources with cooperating churches and entrusts these resources to the **BGCT** and partner **schools**.

1. **The student** is the cause, result, and chief benefactor of the ministerial financial assistance program. Every effort should be put forth to help the student in the process of discerning God's perfect will for his or her life. Every effort should be made by the student to evidence a divine call to church-related vocational ministry. Commitment of the student to the local church, to a sense of call to ministry, to the Cooperative Program and ministries of the BGCT, should be reviewed regularly and systematically to assure the highest and best use of mission funds.
2. **The local church** is the key factor in the efforts of Texas Baptists to fulfill the Great Commission. The local church is the reservoir from which flows the called leadership of the denomination. It is the local church that certifies to the world that it recognizes divine gifts for ministry in individuals. It is the local church that provides funds, through the BGCT Cooperative Program, to assist students preparing for a career in church-related ministry.
3. **The BGCT** is a steward of Cooperative Program gifts received from the local church and is a servant of the churches through its staff and related institutions. The use of BGCT Cooperative Program funds is a sacred application of mission money. The use of these funds places assistance for ministry training and theological education in the highest possible priority level. Acceptance of these Cooperative Program funds calls for the very best and most dedicated efforts from those who receive support.
4. **The school** is the provider of the ministry training, ministry guidance and theological education supported by Cooperative Program receipts. It is the recipient of both funds and ministry students from the local churches. The school establishes a sacred trust when it accepts a student for preparation for church-related vocational ministry.

## ADMINISTRATION

The MFA program is administered primarily by participating **schools** working in cooperation with the **BGCT**, cooperating **local churches**, and **ministry students**. This cooperation is vital in the entry stage as well as each year of the renewal stage throughout the educational career of the student.

### 1. The School

- 1.1. The school is responsible for designing and implementing a program of ministry guidance that insures adequate opportunities for students in the program to define and clarify their call to church-related vocational ministry and to insure opportunities of field education. Each school is expected to maintain a minimum level of ministry guidance for undergraduate MFA students that includes:
  - 1.1.1. At least one required three-semester hour (or equivalent) course beyond what all students in the university must take. The content should relate to one or more of the goals listed below.
  - 1.1.2. Stated goals to be accomplished during the student's participation in the MFA program. Goals may be accomplished in a variety of settings and programs but would address the following areas:
    - 1.1.2.1. awareness of the contribution of BGCT churches to the student's education through MFA funds
    - 1.1.2.2. understanding of historic Baptist distinctives and Texas Baptist identity
    - 1.1.2.3. experience in an intentional program of spiritual formation
    - 1.1.2.4. clarification of his or her call to ministry in a church-related vocation
    - 1.1.2.5. engage vocational interest/aptitude inventories appropriate to ministerial students toward vocational focus
    - 1.1.2.6. experience ministry in a church-related vocational setting by participation in an internship or mentorship in a supervised field experience setting
    - 1.1.2.7. experience meaningful contact each semester/quarter; such as with faculty, ministerial or small group, or mentoring program
  - 1.1.3. An opportunity for an exit experience that probes the student's perception of the ministry guidance experience and its stated goals.
- 1.2. The school is responsible for securing appropriate documentation from the student and determining the student's eligibility for the assistance at both the entry stage and each year of the renewal stage.
- 1.3. The school is responsible for annual certification of the student to the BGCT and for conveying to the Office of Theological Education, BGCT the name,

permanent address, student identification number, classification, major, beginning date in MFA, email address, number of hours completed, and certifying church's name and address for each eligible student.

- 1.4. The school is responsible for providing information to the Theological Education Council describing how the school's program of ministry guidance maintains the minimum level of expectations.

## **2. The BGCT**

- 2.1. The BGCT is responsible for providing for students in programs meeting minimum requirements the designated level of funding provided by churches through the BGCT Cooperative Program budget administered by the Theological Education Council.
- 2.2. The BGCT through the Office of Theological Education and in cooperation with each institution will provide advisement toward vocational interest/aptitude instruments for students in the undergraduate programs.
- 2.3. The BGCT through the Office of Theological Education is responsible for providing development opportunities to the Ministry Guidance director, or equivalent, of cooperating institutions.
- 2.4. Upon notification by the institution that a student has met all admissions standards and has furnished the required application materials, the director of the Office of Theological Education shall correspond with the student reaffirming the commitment of the churches of the BGCT to the student's ministry training.

## **3. The Local Church**

- 3.1. The local churches are responsible, through their BGCT Cooperative Program gifts, to provide adequate funding for the training and guidance of qualifying church-related vocational ministry students.
- 3.2. The churches are responsible for licensing, ordaining, or certifying those called from their fellowship, affirming their call to church-related vocational ministry.
- 3.3. The churches are responsible for certifying a student's commitment to, involvement with, and support of the local church.

## **4. The Ministry Student**

- 4.1. Ministry students are responsible for submitting required application and certification forms to the appropriate office of the institution in a timely manner.
- 4.2. Ministry students are responsible for following the program guidelines established by the BGCT (indicated herein) and by the institution.
- 4.3. Ministry students are responsible for honoring the stewardship of the churches that have affirmed their calling and sacrificially provided funds for their ministry training and theological education.

## ENTRY STAGE

### First Year

## 1. Application

Eligible students may be enrolled in undergraduate, graduate or postgraduate programs at schools affiliated with the BGCT.

### 1.1. University Undergraduate

- 1.1.1. Undergraduate students applying for admission to the MFA program of the BGCT should be participants in the qualifying ministry guidance program of the university.
- 1.1.2. Each university shall establish requirements for participation of students in a ministry guidance program designed to assist in a process of call clarification and to establish a pattern of growth and maturity toward a career in ministry.
- 1.1.3. The Theological Education Council shall determine eligibility of ministry guidance programs for the purpose of participation in the MFA program.

### 1.2. Graduate and Postgraduate

- 1.2.1. Graduate and postgraduate students applying for admission to the MFA program of the BGCT should be enrolled in an endorsed graduate or postgraduate ministry degree program.
- 1.2.2. The Theological Education Council shall determine endorsement of graduate and post-graduate degree programs.
- 1.2.3. The process determining endorsed graduate and postgraduate programs eligible for reception of MFA is explained in the document, "Graduate and Post-Graduate Program Endorsement Criteria and Process." These processes include attention by the respective institutions to this document describing MFA accountabilities.

## 2. Requirements

- 2.1. Requirements for admission to the MFA program at any academic level are as follows:
  - 2.1.1. Each applicant shall demonstrate a life-style of commitment to the principles of the Christian life.
  - 2.1.2. Each applicant shall furnish the institution with evidence of a call to church-related vocational ministry in the form of a letter of certification, a certificate of license to the gospel ministry, or a certificate of ordination to the gospel ministry from a Baptist church.
  - 2.1.3. Each applicant shall furnish evidence of a personal call to church-related vocational ministry by means of written and verbal testimony. This shall be supported by a letter of recommendation and support from the pastor

of a Baptist church (or other church approved leader if the student is the pastor).

2.1.4. Each undergraduate applicant will participate in an assessment and counseling program administered at the school in cooperation with the Office of Theological Education.

2.1.5. Each applicant will attest to acceptance of the rules and regulations that are part of the MFA program.

## RENEWAL STAGE

Year 2 through completion

Continuance in the MFA program beyond the first calendar year of a student's participation must be reviewed and renewed annually. In order to continue, the student will be required to:

1. Demonstrate a life-style of commitment to the principles of the Christian life.
2. Furnish evidence, by way of written testimony of the pastor of a local cooperating BGCT church, of the student's involvement with, support of, and commitment to the local cooperating BGCT church.
3. Provide the school's Ministry Guidance director, or equivalent, with a written reaffirmation of a sense of call to church-related vocational ministry and a desire to continue to receive the BGCT Ministerial Financial Assistance.
4. Be making satisfactory progress toward an eligible degree program at the institution.
5. Be in compliance with any additional requirements or policies of the institution and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

## LONG-TERM ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

**The institutions should make every effort, in cooperation with the Theological Education Council and the Education | Discipleship Committee, to assure that recipients of ministerial financial assistance are aware, prior to entering the program, of the expected goals and, as they continue, of their obligation and responsibility to abide by the MFA program requirements of both the school and Baptist General Convention of Texas.**

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