RD 700 EXPERIENTIAL INTEGRATION: MA (THEOLOGICAL STUDIES)

EMPHASES IN: OLD TESTAMENT, NEW TESTAMENT OR THEOLOGY

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIENTIAL INTEGRATION

Experiential Integration (EI) is a non-credit component required for all Master's level programs at Briercrest Seminary. This syllabus outlines the philosophy and specific EI requirements for the MA (Theological Studies) program. Experiential Integration is designed to take the knowledge, attitudes, and skills acquired in curricular studies and to incorporate what students have learned into a practical ministry or work context where biblical and/or theological reflection is required. Although no tuition credit is charged for EI, a one-time $150 processing, registration and supervision fee is billed to the student's account at the time the he or she enrolls in the EI.

EXPERIENTIAL INTEGRATION PREREQUISITES

Students enrolled in an MA (Theological Studies) are encouraged to begin thinking early in their program about opportunities to fulfill the EI component. However, students must have successfully completed 30 credit hours (i.e., 50% of a 60-hour program) before beginning EI, although exceptions may be granted in unusual circumstances. In such instances, it is up to the student to provide a compelling case for why the EI should commence before s/he reaches the 30-credit hour minimum. Also, students must have a completed contract signed by the Program Coordinator *before* embarking on their EI plans. In other words, students should not expect ministry or professional experience that pre-dates the EI contract to count toward their EI requirements.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE EXPERIENTIAL INTEGRATION PROGRAM

Experiential Integration is an important component of the graduate programs at Briercrest Seminary. While we acknowledge that many students come to seminary with significant life and ministry experience, it is also sometimes difficult to know how to use new theological and biblical knowledge, skills and perspectives in a practical ministry setting. Thus, at Briercrest we give focused attention to learning how to "bridge" intensive theological study with the concerns and realities of service within the Church, the people of God.

Beyond the need to bridge formal education with life and ministry experience, we also believe the EI provides opportunities for students to identify their own spiritual, academic and relational strengths and weaknesses, and to give focused attention to these in the remainder of the program and beyond. While we are committed to providing academic training, we also recognize that it is possible to gain academic expertise apart from spiritual and relational development. Thus, the EI provides an

opportunity to integrate relational and spiritual growth with academic development. Our prayer is that EI may foster in you the desire to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Finally, the EI also provides opportunity for students to think carefully about their own development toward the learning outcomes articulated for students of Briercrest Seminary. These outcomes are as follows:

Briercrest Seminary Learning Outcomes for All Seminary Graduates

Students will graduate:

- Describing and demonstrating evangelical faith and values.
- Preparing to serve God's kingdom in its diversity. Describe God, God's kingdom, and your calling (vocational sensitivity) within it, including the types of contexts and people you feel best prepared to serve.
- Participating in the action of our Triune God through formation of the soul (i.e., virtue and spiritual integrity), mind (academic rigour), and strength (vocation).

Degree Specific Outcomes - MA (Theological Studies)

- Demonstrate both depth and breadth of scholarship in their specific concentration.
- Give evidence of their capacity to implement theological scholarship in a teaching and/or ministry context.
- Articulate a spirituality of scholarship that describes their approach to integrating academic learning into personal formation.

As students consider how to fulfill the Experiential Integration requirement for their degree, they should be developing their proposal in ways that anticipate how the above learning outcomes can be strengthened through the activities in which they chose to be involved.

COURSE COMPLETION

As a non-credit component of the MA program at Briercrest, there is no final grade assigned to the Experiential Integration. However, the Program Coordinator must be fully satisfied that the terms of the contract have been fulfilled. Once the Program Coordinator is satisfied that the student has completed the requirements, he or she will send an email or letter that will be submitted to the Registrar and copied to the student, indicating successful completion of the EI component. At that point, the Experiential Integration component will show up on the student's transcript.

EXPERIENTIAL INTEGRATION REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements

1. Students may enroll in the Experiential Integration if they meet the prerequisites outlined above.
2. Students must be actively involved in a significant period of "field experience" over a period of approximately four to eight months, depending on the types of experience involved. More intensive situations (e.g., summer short term mission trip, summer full-time pastoral position) may also be considered with the program coordinator's approval. Although it is difficult to quantify the exact number of hours required for EI, it may be helpful to think in terms of 150 – 250 hours. Alternate arrangements for spreading EI over longer periods of time (i.e., more than a single academic year) may be possible upon request of the Program Coordinator.
3. Where possible, the student should identify a qualified "field supervisor" who can be called upon to report upon the student's involvement. Field supervisors generally should have at least a Master's degree qualification (MA or MDiv). If no qualified field supervisor can be identified, the program coordinator will function as the field supervisor.

Pre-Activity Requirements

1. Experiential Integration Contract

All students are required to prepare, in conjunction with the program coordinator and, where applicable, the appropriate consulting faculty, an Experiential Integration Contract indicating activities envisioned for the EI (according to the guidelines outlined below). Two signed copies of the Contract should be submitted to the Academic Services office[1] at least two weeks prior to commencement of the first month of the defined contract. One copy will be returned to the student, signed by the Program Coordinator.

Preparing to write the Contract

Before writing the contract, take time to reflect on and pray about your own personal growth and development. In so doing, note the following factors:

a) *The Experiential Integration General Objectives*. The goal of this course is to allow you to apply to the concepts that you have learned in the classroom.

[1] Mailing address: Academic Services, Briercrest College and Seminary, 510 College Dr., Caronport, SK S0H 0S0. Email address: seminary@briercrest.ca.

b) *The Theological Studies Program Emphasis*. As you plan your activities for the Experiential Integration course, you should do so in light of the degree program in which you are enrolled. Your activities should provide opportunity to put into practice the skills and knowledge being gained in the particular emphasis of your degree program (i.e., Old Testament, New Testament, Theology). For example, it is not sufficient for a student to lead a Bible study on a New Testament topic if in fact the student is an Old Testament major.

c) *The range of opportunities available in your ministry context*. While you might have some "ideals" of what you would like EI to include, there are also obvious limitations to your own geographical and ministry context. Nevertheless, seek to be creative about what avenues you pursue to gain experience in the area of your major. Talking with your pastor, elders, or ministry leaders might stimulate fresh ideas.

d) *Areas of personal strength and weakness*. The EI contract should outline experiences that play both to your strengths *and* weaknesses. The goal of Briercrest Seminary is to help you to become adequately prepared for ministry. Seek to focus on these areas as you develop your ministry contract.

<u>Writing the Contract</u>

There are no specific restrictions on how a contract should be assembled, but TWO copies of the contract should be made (one for the student, one for the program coordinator) and should include the following items:

a) Name, address and contact information
b) Program emphasis
c) Location of Experiential Integration
d) Field Supervisor's name, position and contact information (if applicable)
e) Anticipated year of graduation
f) A brief (approx. one to two pages) assessment of strengths and weaknesses as it pertains to your past and present ministry experience/context and as it pertains to your area of study (ie., OT, NT or Theology)
g) An identification of significant goals and objectives hoped to accomplish in the EI
h) A delineation (with explanation as necessary) of the anticipated activities and time commitments for fulfilling the EI component. This should also include the relative "weight" given to each activity: What percentage of the overall total do you anticipate the activity will fulfill?
i) A delineation of how each of the activities will be "documented" in the EI portfolio.

j) The "contractual statement" on a separate page attached to the end of the contract (see Appendix for contract page).

2. Pre-EI Reflective Reading Assignment

An important focus of Experiential Integration for Theological Studies students will be on matters of pedagogy and oral communication. It is assumed that communication of academic work to people without the benefit of theological education in "lay" or "non-churched" settings will require practice. To facilitate reflection upon the challenges of teaching and communicating biblical and theological material in "lay" settings, you are required to read ONE of the following books. If there is an alternate book (which you have not read before) that you are interested in and feel may be beneficial, contact the program coordinator for approval.

Suggested Books:

Bain, Ken. *What the Best College Teachers Do.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Brueggeman, Walter. *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.

Conde-Frazier, Elizabeth, et al. *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.

Lowman, Joseph. *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching*. 2d ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

_____. *To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983, 1993.

Jones, L. Gregory and Stephanie Paulsell. *The Scope of our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.

You may also want to consult the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion which has an excellent collection of resources for teaching and learning. See http://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources.

In a four-page reflective paper, 1) identify the book you have read; 2) outline some of the most important things learned about communication or teaching, specifically as you think about teaching biblical or theological content (about two pages); and 3) list four or five concrete things related to oral communication and teaching that you will try (i.e., things you haven't tried up until this point) during your EI. This report should be submitted prior to the beginning of your actual EI activities.

Activity Requirements

1. Experiential Integration Activities

The bulk of the Experiential Integration consists of actual engagement in activities that support the application of knowledge and skills gained through the student's seminary studies. You are encouraged to be creative in developing your own ideas for Experiential Integration, but the following are some examples of the types of activities in which a student might engage:

- Leading a half-year or year-long Bible study or small group;
- Teaching a Sunday School class;
- Study and evaluation of a Sunday School curriculum at your church;
- Leading a discipleship group of students;
- Preaching a series of expositional or topical sermons for your local church;
- Training for a group of leaders (e.g., Sunday teachers, camp counsellors);
- Writing a series of short popular level articles for a local paper, denominational organ, or church newsletter;
- Teaching several college-level classes in biblical or theological areas, and debriefing these experiences with your EI supervisor and/or your program coordinator;
- Designing, in conjunction with a college or seminary instructor, an assignment that is also marked and evaluated;
- Developing one or more syllabi for a course in biblical studies or theology;
- Developing lecture outlines or lecture notes for a course in biblical studies or theology;
- Assisting your supervisor in a research or ministry project that draws on what you have learned in your program;
- Developing an online resource of use to a targeted group of Christian workers.

Again, these are only suggestions and students are encouraged to think outside of the box!

2. Supervisor Discussion, Half-way Report, and Self-evaluation

The student should attend a monthly meeting with the field supervisor for discussion and evaluation of their progress. If the program coordinator is functioning as the field supervisor, and the student is not on campus, it is advisable to set up a monthly phone-call.

At a time agreed upon between the student and the Program Coordinator, a 3-4 page "half-way" report of activities engaged in and a self-evaluation of how things are going should be submitted to the Program Coordinator. The self-evaluation should be brief and honest, indicating both successes and failures. Where possible, the student should aim to include comments from the field supervisor as well. The objective of this assignment is to provide a truly evaluative opportunity that will enhance student growth and learning to ensure that the EI is staying on track.

Post-Activity Requirements

1. EI Documentation Portfolio

From the outset, students should think about how they will document that they have engaged in these activities. Levels of documentation will vary depending on the activity, but **should** include, when applicable, a letter from a field supervisor (e.g., a pastor or church leader outlining the student's involvement). Other items to include are outlines of material presented, a dated "diary or journal" of activities. The student should keep in mind that documentation will vary greatly from activity to activity but the most important thing is that the documentation is verifiable in some way. All documentation must be submitted in an EI Documentation Portfolio (most likely presented in PDF format, if possible, or in hard-copy if necessary) at the end of the contract as evidence that the activities have been completed.

2. Self-Evaluation Report

Once all activities have been completed and documented, the student should write a final 4-6 page self-evaluation which includes the following elements:

a) A brief summary of the high points of the activities;
b) An evaluation of personal strengths and weaknesses discovered in the process of doing the activities;
c) An assessment of how well the goals and objectives set at the outset were met;
d) Any observations of things learned or clarified in reference to the student's own future ministry direction.

BRIERCREST SEMINARY

APPENDIX: CONTRACTUAL STATEMENT

In fulfillment of the requirements of the Briercrest Seminary Experiential Integration component for the MA (Theological Studies) program, for my personal growth, and in preparation for greater usefulness in the cause of Christ in the world, I _____ contract to fulfill the program of Experiential Integration for the period of _____ to _____ hereafter outlined.

STUDENT SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

PROGRAM COORDINATOR SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

CONSULTING FACULTY SIGNATURE (IF APPLICABLE): _____

DATE: _____