

Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center

SUMMARY OF ACTS REQUIREMENTS

Detailed information may be found in the
ACTS Student Handbook: <http://www.etown.edu/programs/svmc/resources.aspx>

Application Process

Prospective students wishing to begin the ACTS program should first be in touch with their district executive and/or district ministry team. After receiving affirmation from the district, an application (including a call essay) must be submitted and approved by SVMC before a student can begin the ACTS program. The application may be found on SVMC's website or may be requested from the SVMC office.

Overview of ACTS

ACTS stands for Academy Certified Training System and is one of the approved pathways to ordination in the Church of the Brethren. The ACTS program consists of a mix of academic and non-academic requirements. The academic requirements of ACTS include 12 courses in the areas of Bible, History/Theology, and Ministry Skills. The non-academic requirements of ACTS include five experiences. More information about all ACTS requirements is found in this document and the ACTS Student Handbook.

Coursework

Complete 12 courses in three areas, as follows:

3 Biblical Courses

- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Introduction to the New Testament
- Interpreting the Bible

3 Historical/Theological Courses

- History of the Church
- Church of the Brethren History
- Introduction to Theology

6 Ministry Skills Courses (chosen from the following options)

- Church Leadership and Administration* (required)
- Introduction to Pastoral Care
- Teaching and Learning in the Church
- Preaching
- Worship
- Church Vitality and Evangelism
- Communication Skills for Pastoral Ministry (offered every 2-3 years)
- One elective from outside of ACTS (may be a TRIM, college, or seminary course; pre-approval from the Director is required)

Students can enter the program at any point. However, please note that classes are offered in sequence, one at a time, and a student who misses a class may have to wait 4 years for that class to be offered again. The course cycle is found on the SVMC website.

Experiential Requirements

MINISTRY FORMATION: Students are required to participate in a Ministry Formation group with other students from their district for the full duration of ACTS coursework. Ministry Formation is organized by the district and includes a mixture of discussion and presentations about the joys and challenges of ministry. In these regular meetings, students grow in self-awareness, spiritual maturity, and professional skill. Districts will be in touch with SVMC if students are not regularly participating in this requirement.

CONFERENCE EXPERIENCES: Students are required to attend one District Conference and one Annual Conference while in ACTS. After attending these conferences, students submit a 2 to 3-page written reflection to SVMC, one reflection paper for each conference. Please note that a student cannot receive credit for attending a conference until the reflection paper has been received. Here are some possible reflection questions:

- In what activities at Conference did you participate?
- What was particularly moving to you?
- What did you see or hear that you found challenging?
- What does the Conference accomplish for the life of the Church of the Brethren?
- How do you see the Spirit moving in the work done or the fellowship among members at the Conference?

Annual Conference takes place each summer for one week in July in a different city each year. Advanced planning is necessary! A list of conference locations is available on the denomination's website: <http://www.brethren.org/ac/recorded-conferences.html>. Since ACTS Certificates are awarded at District Conference, students should attend a district conference before (or, at the latest, during) the final year of coursework.

ECUMENICAL, INTERFAITH, OR INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCE: A wide variety of experiences can be used for this experience if they meet the main objective: to appreciate and better understand other expressions of Christianity, other faith traditions, or other cultures, while also gaining a greater understanding of and appreciation for your own. Some typical experiences that could be used to fulfill this requirement are:

- an ecumenical gathering, interfaith dialogue, or worship service of a different religion
- a gathering focused on cross-cultural ministry
- a class about another faith tradition (this might also count as an elective)
- a mission or work trip in a different cultural setting

Other options may be allowed. Please contact the SVMC office for approval before proceeding.

After you attend the event, submit a 2 to 3-page reflection on the experience to SVMC. Please note that a student cannot receive credit for attending the event until the reflection paper has been received. Here are some possible suggestions and questions for your reflection paper:

- Start by describing the event through your senses.
- Consider why the event might be meaningful for *this community*.
- Even if—*especially* if—you find much to disagree with, consider what you could appreciate about the people, culture, or form of worship you witnessed.
- How does this experience make you think about something in your own tradition in a new way?
- What have you learned that you could apply to your own ministry?

SUPERVISED MINISTRY: (all forms referenced can be found in the Student Handbook)

Students should initiate contact with the district about one year into coursework. The ACTS Supervised Ministry Coordinator or District Executive arranges a placement for the student. Supervised Ministry consists of about one year (min. 200 hours) of ministry experience, mutually agreed upon by the supervisor and the student. The supervisor should have at least five years of ministry experience, ideally similar to that for which the student is preparing. Before the supervised ministry can begin, the Supervised Ministry Experience Contract must be completed by the supervisor and student, reviewed by the District Supervised Ministry Coordinator, and submitted to SVMC. This form includes learning goals and how the supervisor and student will meet to reflect on the experience. Learning goals should be related to the area of ministry to which the student is being called (i.e., preaching, teaching, or pastoral care).

The supervisor and student should make a plan to evaluate 3-4 events during the course of the supervised ministry experience. After each of these designated moments, the supervisor and student fill out the Supervised Ministry Event form.

In addition, the supervisor and the student should meet regularly to reflect on activities and growth in the learning goal areas.

At the conclusion of supervised ministry, the supervisor and student shall meet to discuss the student's overall experience and complete the Completion of Supervised Ministry form (found in the Student Handbook). During this meeting, they should explore what the student has learned during the supervised ministry experience, the student's strengths and style as a minister, and areas of growth he or she should continue to improve.

Finally, the ACTS Supervised Ministry Coordinator (or District Executive), upon receiving all of the completed forms from the student, fills out a Completion of Supervised Ministry Experience form and offers his or her own perspective on the student's experience of supervised ministry and confirms that the work, the reflection, and the supervision meet expected standards. Once SVMC receives all of the forms listed above (contract, event forms, final evaluation, and Coordinator certification), supervised ministry is considered complete and will be marked as such on the transcript. These forms are kept in the student's permanent file.

Have questions?

Need personalized help?

We're here for you!

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