



**TRINITY
LUTHERAN
SEMINARY**
at CapitalUniversity



Learning in Context Manual

Updated January 2026

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LIC Summary

LIC takes place during a student's years of study prior to internship. The goal of the program is to afford students opportunity to **observe and gain experience in ministry leadership** and to promote **critical reflection on these observations and experiences**. The connection of contextual activity with academic **practical ministry coursework** infuses ministry practice with intellectual rigor and focuses intellectual pursuits on the needs of real people.

- For full-time students, this placement *typically* begins in the spring semester of their first year and continues during fall and spring semesters of their second year.

The contextual part of the LIC involves a time commitment of **six to eight hours per week** in a ministry setting (e.g., often a congregation, but it may also be a non-profit organization). Not all of those hours will be face-to-face every week.

- For example, if a student is asked to lead a class or a Bible study, they will need to spend time in preparation, which counts toward their average time. There might be a week that a special event is occurring at the site that the student and supervisor agree is a good use of the student's engagement. If the student spends 8 hours on a Saturday involved in a special event and then all of Sunday morning engaging in weekly worship, they may adjust their hours of engagement during the following week so that they can adequately balance all their responsibilities.

All contextual education courses are built on an action-reflection-action model. **REFLECTION** is at the heart of formation.

COMPONENTS of LIC

- New students: use the fall semester to explore ministries in the area. Make an appointment to meet with the Contextual Ed director sometime in October to begin thinking of an LIC plan.

- Returning students: meet with the Contextual Ed director to confirm previous semester's placement and/or identify a new placement.
- Be proactive – with supervisor, learning goals, and engagement
- Be organized – watch deadlines and use requirements for your learning and formation; set up functional activity log system early.
- Basic touchpoints in a semester include:
 - Commitment to LIC site (both student and supervisor)
 - Learning / Serving Covenant (including learning goals and a time budget) – renew / update each semester. Meet with supervisor to reflect on goals.
 - Mid-semester check-in
 - End of semester submissions: evaluations (both student and supervisor) and activity log.

LIC Student Expectations

- The contextual part of the LIC involves a time commitment of **six to eight hours per week** in a ministry setting (e.g., often a congregation, but it may also be a non-profit organization). Not all of those hours will be face-to-face every week.
 - For example, if a student is asked to lead a class or a Bible study, they will need to spend time in preparation, which counts toward their average time. There might be a week that a special event is occurring at the site that the student and supervisor agree is a good use of the student's engagement. If the student spends 8 hours on a Saturday involved in a special event and then all of Sunday morning engaging in weekly worship, they may adjust their hours of engagement during the following week so that they can adequately balance all their responsibilities.
- Students will take the lead scheduling supervision sessions with their supervisor.
- Students will take the initiative to seek out learning opportunities.
- Submit a learning and serving covenant (which includes learning goals and a time budget) at the beginning of each semester. Discuss your learning plan with your supervisor to make sure they agree with what you are planning. When you submit a final draft of your learning and serving covenant, cc' your supervisor on the email so they can email a reply to sign off on it.
- Complete the mid-semester check-in survey. See Appendix D for Links to all Evaluations.
- At the end of each semester, you will turn in an activity log that describes how you actually ended up serving in your LIC site. It is ok if it does not directly match with how you proposed you would use your time in your time budget.
- Complete the self-evaluation at the end of each semester and discuss your self-evaluation and supervisor's evaluation in a supervision session. See Appendix D for Links to all Evaluations.
- While this is not an academic course with credits assigned to it, the ability to fulfill responsibilities in your LIC placement is one way you show readiness for internship and professional ministry.
- Failure to turn in your learning and serving covenant, mid-point check-in, completion evaluation, or activity log, or to engage a sufficient amount of hours

in your LIC placement will result in a marginal or fail for that semester's LIC placement.

Note: The Office of Contextual Education will be tracking submission of your required documentation. Unless something on an evaluation raises a flag that further conversation is needed, or you request a check-in from the Contextual Education office, you may not receive feedback on your submitted items.

Additional Information for Supervisors

Because Learning in Context is built on an action-reflection-new action model, reflective time with the supervisor is a key component of the experience. Past supervisors have found the following guidelines helpful:

- Meet with your student at least one hour twice a month for a supervision session.
- Provide mentoring and feedback to the student throughout the placement period.
- Help the student know what events and experiences might provide good opportunities for engagement. It will be helpful for the student to be given suggestions and dates at the beginning of each semester so that they can appropriately plan their time budget.
- Sign-off on student's learning and serving covenant. After the student has had a conversation with you about their proposed learning goals and time budget, **the student should cc' you when they submit it to the seminary. You can sign-off by replying to that email letting the seminary know you have seen their learning plan and agreed to what they are proposing.**
- Fill out the mid-semester check-in survey.
- Complete an evaluation of the student at the end of each semester and share your feedback with the student in a supervision session.
- Sign-off on the student's final activity log at the end of the semester. The student should cc' you when they submit their activity log to the seminary at the end of each semester. You can sign-off by replying to that email telling the seminary you have seen it and it accurately describes the student's involvement at the placement site that semester.

Elements of a Good LIC Experience

Interaction with the Pastor/Supervisor

Most students come to the LIC site desirous of interaction with (and attention from) their supervisor. Supervision and mentoring can become some of the most formative hours that a student spends with their LIC site. When students engage deeply in supervision, the rest of their contact hours become more meaningful as well.

Students may too quickly assume that they are ready to do all types of ministry and want to be seen as a colleague. They may also go to the other extreme and be afraid of being a colleague or hesitant to begin taking on a ministry leader role. In either case conversation between student and supervisor is appropriate.

It is expected that the student and LIC supervisor will have twice-monthly meetings to process the LIC experiences.

Involvement in the Site

It is always helpful to formally introduce the LIC students to the congregation or community in some way – in the newsletter, verbally on Sunday morning, or in some other appropriate manner. Additionally, the student is to be afforded the opportunity to introduce themselves at each worship service at the beginning of the LIC placement.

There should be participation in both lay and public ministry roles with a good balance of public visibility and behind-the-scenes service. Preaching, teaching, committee work, worship leadership (as a lector or assisting minister), calling/caregiving, and areas of ministry to which they have been little exposed can all be arenas of worthwhile involvement. LIC is a great opportunity for students to observe and begin to understand behind-the-scenes administrative work such as preparation for Council or committee meetings, budget, and finance processes, etc. Because of student class schedules, a student may not have the opportunity to experience some areas of ministry during LIC. Supervision sessions can be great opportunities for a student to think through concrete examples of those ministries even if they can't be there in person. For instance, it may not work in a student's schedule to meet with a family alongside the pastor to see how a funeral is planned. The student and supervisor can still discuss how to carry out

funeral planning during a supervision session. Students will be asked to connect their experience in their LIC site with their learning during the seminary's curriculum. A student should not be assigned a role for which adequate support is lacking. It will be helpful for supervisors to remember that for some students, it might be the first time they are being asked to do a particular task. Giving clear instructions and plenty of time for preparation will enable the student to serve most successfully in their placement.

Diversity of Experiences

The intention of the LIC placement is not so that the student can fulfill a program need at the site, but so the student can see and begin to experience the breadth of roles, tasks, and skills that are involved in being in public ministry. On occasion, a student may be hired by the congregation/organization to lead in a program area. The Director of Contextual Education must agree to the student also fulfilling their Learning in Context placement within the same organization, it will be important for the student and supervisor to both work to ensure that the student is getting the same breadth of experience as their classmates who are not fulfilling a program role. In these situations, it may mean that the student needs to add unpaid hours at the site in order to have experiences outside of their program role. If either the student or supervisor has any questions or concerns about how to manage combining the objectives of the program position and the Leadership in Context program, please speak to the Director of Contextual and Experiential Formation.

Conscious Design of Involvement

The process of creating a learning and serving covenant has been a way of bringing focus to the student's engagement at their LIC site. It is helpful for the supervisor to make suggestions about particular opportunities that might be good ways of getting to know the site. A student may or may not intuitively know which events or experiences are the most important to a community. By helping the student consider the calendar of events at the site as well as understanding the student's hopes and desires, the student will be able to appropriately plan their contact hours for the highest learning impact.

Acknowledgment of Significant Others/Family

Seminary focuses on helping students develop their public ministry identity. This identity also impacts their significant others. Helping a student think about what their shift in identity might mean to their family or significant others can be a helpful conversation for supervision. Students may want guidance about how to share about their significant others and how their significant others can appropriately be involved in a ministry site at the level that they desire. It will be helpful for students and supervisors to keep in mind that each ministry professional ultimately must determine how they will navigate their public ministry role with their connections to family. We encourage supervisors to find out early on if the student has significant others the student would like to have introduced to the congregation or connected to specific ministries. The presence or involvement of family members is a decision that ultimately belongs to the student and their family members.

Supervisor Qualities

We've asked students what type of supervision has been most helpful to them. Out of our surveys and questionnaires, the following qualities were identified. They found most helpful a supervisor who is:

- Authentic
- Willing to share self
- Approachable
- Trusting of the student's abilities
- Supportive
- Helpful to the student in defining the opportunities and limits for their work
- Willing to give the student the freedom to fail within any designated responsibilities
- Affirming of the student's successes
- Able to help the student realize their growth potential
- Willing to deal with the student's weaknesses
- Able to recognize the student's anxieties
- Willing to confront the student emotionally, theologically, and spiritually
- An active listener
- Insightful

Student Self-Assessment

As a part of the initial meeting between student and supervisor, and the creation of the Learning/Serving covenant, students are encouraged to spend some time in self-assessment. This worksheet is a helpful tool for a student to consider specific skills necessary for ministry and how they might develop those skills during their LIC placement. It may also be a helpful point of engagement between the supervisor and student and they start to get to know each other.

There are three sections to this self-assessment: 1) personal characteristics, 2) relationship to others, and 3) personal spiritual practices. All of us are continuing to grow in these (and other) areas throughout our ministries and throughout our lives.

Using the following scale, indicate where you would place yourself as you begin this semester of LIC.

Personal Characteristics

Un-developed								Well-developed	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ability to Take Suggestions/Criticism								_____	
Motivation and Sense of Responsibility								_____	
Openness to Learning/Change								_____	
Level of Self-Confidence								_____	
Level of Self-Awareness								_____	
Ability to Take Risks								_____	

Relationship to Others

Un-developed										Well-developed	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Peers								_____			
Older than Myself								_____			
Younger than Myself								_____			
Teenagers								_____			
Children								_____			
Seniors								_____			
Sensitivity to Others' Relational Needs								_____			
Ability to Initiate Relationships								_____			

Personal Spiritual Practices

Un-developed										Well-developed	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Regularity in Prayer								_____			
Regularity in Reading Scripture								_____			
Making Use of Pastoral Resource Persons								_____			
Self-Understanding of my Denominational Identity								_____			

Learning/Serving Covenant Instructions

The Learning and Serving covenant consists of learning goals and a time budget. Each semester, a learning and serving covenant should be created to guide a student's involvement and learning at their LIC site. Final versions of your learning goals and time budget should be emailed to TLS Contextual Education at tlscontextualed@capital.edu and your supervisor. Please refer to the important dates and deadlines to see when it is due each semester. We will then ask your supervisor to reply to the email letting us know that they have reviewed your proposed learning plan and are in agreement with what you have outlined. If you are not able to discuss your learning covenant with your supervisor before the deadline, please submit a draft copy so we know that you have done your work towards completing this assignment. When you turn in your draft copy, let us know when you plan to discuss your learning covenant with your supervisor and when we might expect to receive a final version of your learning goals.

Part One: Learning Goals

Create one to two learning goals for yourself in consultation with your LIC supervisor. Think about your current level of experience as a ministry leader and what would be most meaningful to focus on as you continue to develop. Use the goals to help focus your contact hours at your Learning in Context site as well as your supervision time. Make sure to consult with your supervisor before finalizing your learning goals to ensure your goals are attainable in your specific LIC setting.

Learning goals should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time Bound

	<u>Example Goal 1</u>	<u>Example Goal 2</u>
<u>Specific:</u> What exactly will you accomplish?	Become proficient in pastoral care visits in a congregational setting.	Understand how change is successfully introduced in my LIC congregation.
<u>Measurable:</u> How will you know when you reach it?	I will have gone on at least 5 pastoral care visits. My confidence will improve. I will no longer feel nervous about going on a pastoral care visit. I will have ideas about how my style might differ from my	At the end of the semester, I will be able to describe to my supervisor a change that occurred and what factors led to its successful implementation. My supervisor will give me feedback as to whether my insights are accurate or not.

	supervisor's style in providing pastoral care.	
Attainable (Resources): Is achieving the goal realistic with effort & commitment? What resources do you need to achieve this goal?	Help from my supervisor in selecting a congregation member to visit. Advice from my supervisor about how they approach pastoral care. Opportunities to visit.	Regular supervision meetings with my supervisor where I bring my observations and questions to better understand what I am seeing and experiencing. Interaction with congregation members to understand their perspectives. Conversations in LIC class and frames that are presented in class.
Relevant: Why is this goal significant to your ministry leadership formation?	Pastoral care is a key aspect of ministry. In addition to providing spiritual care to those in need, it helps the pastor develop relationships with the congregation.	In order to be a successful ministry leader in the 21 st century, it is important to know how to lead change.
Time Bound: When will this goal be achieved?	By the end of the semester.	By the end of the semester.

Part Two: Time Budget

In addition to your learning goals, please map out how you plan to use your LIC contact hours. Please discuss your time budget with your LIC supervisor to make sure you are both on the same page about how you will be involved in your LIC site this semester. You may need to make some substitutions during the semester, but starting out with a time budget will help you think through how to best use your time during LIC.

A Sample Time Budget can be found in Appendix A.

The Time Budget is your start-of-the-semester estimate. You will also submit an Activity Log at the end of the semester. This will represent your actual involvement in your LIC site. Don't worry if the Time Budget and the Activity Log are different. You will adjust your plans, in consultation with your supervisor, throughout the semester.

You will submit this as part of your final evaluation. Submit to TLSContextualEd@capital.edu and cc your supervisor. You should average 6 – 8 hours/week. With a couple of weeks required

for the placement process (and breaks in the academic calendar), assume 10 active LIC weeks. Thus, you should have a total of 60 – 80 hours for the semester. Most students find it helpful to treat this like a weekly timesheet and write out your daily and weekly times each week.

Feel free to use any format that works for you as long as it is clear. Two Sample can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix A: Sample Time Budget

Activity or Experience	Frequency	Prep Time	Public Service Time/Time at Site	Total
Attend worship as a participant observer to better understand the rhythms of worship life and build relationships with the congregation	Every other week (six times)		1 (if only one worship service. Could be more if you are liturgist at multiple services)	6
Liturgist during worship	Every other week (6 times total)	1 hour	1 (if only one worship service. Could be more if you are liturgist at multiple services)	12
Preach October 29	1 time	10 hours	1 hour	11

Teach Sunday School	3 weeks (two weeks with adults October 1 and October 8), one week with elementary aged children November 12)	2 hours	1 hour	9
Observe/participate in confirmation class	4 weeks (give dates this will occur)		1 hour	4
Serve as teacher's helper in pre-school class	2 weeks (give dates this will occur)	30 minutes to talk with the teacher, find out what they are doing and how you can be most helpful	2 hours	2.5
Supervision	Every other week (6 times)	½ hour	1.5 hours	12
Interviewing stakeholders/engaging course materials in the context of	Before or after most classes (4 remaining classes)	Prep time is budgeted into LIC class/home work time	4-6 hours	5

your LIC congregation				
Attend council meetings to see how council deliberates over proposed changes	October and November Council meetings		2 hours per council meeting	4
Talk to council president and other key leaders to understand their leadership style and insight into how changes have been successfully introduced in the past	3 conversations	1 hour to prepare questions for conversations	1 hour per conversation (1 X 3)	4

Visit congregation members in nursing homes	5 visits (if possible list weeks these will occur based on churches needs and balancing other LIC commitments)		5	5
Attend congregation's big mission dinner	1 time November 12)	3 hours (helping cook and talking to volunteers about the prep work that goes into pulling off the mission dinner as well as what they see as the purpose of the event and their purpose na		4
Lead youth group	2 times (give dates)	2 hours per event. Devotion, games, activities and snacks	2 hours per sessions	8

Visit an organization that the congregation is involved with or would like to explore becoming involved with. Learn about organization, it's mission and how it relates to congregations.	(give date or target week this will occur)		2 hours	2
Interview stakeholders for congregational interview paper	Week of December 4	Preparation time is counted as part of LIC II academic class coursework hours	3 hours	3
Total				91.5 hours

Appendix B: Sample Activity Logs

Table Format

Date	Activity	Hours
Feb 3rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed learning and serving covenant with pastor We discussed how the first communion class that i was going helping to reach Pastor walked me through contacts in the church and who can assist with different aspects of the church Greeted the congregation after the services and began to see what it is like for the minister to say hello and have short discussions with congregations members Met with coffee and set up team to assist and see how set up before service happens 	6
Feb 10th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talked about me leading a small lenten bible study that would take place on sunday Pastor and I spoke about being a pastoral presence for a congregation member Arrived early to help set up 5pm service and for book signing event afterwards Went to 5pm service, greeted the congregation afterward and stayed for social gathering. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still figuring out how to join all parts of the community without excluding anyone. Easy to talk with everyone Met with church secretary to learn how to set up church bulletins and discuss other administrative duties 	7.5
Feb 17th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastor and I checked in on how our supervisor and student relationship has progressed Assigned a congregation member to assist with being a pastoral presence for Met with Youth group that was preparing for the event and assisted in set. Also go the opportunity to ask them questions about their youth group and gathered insight on them. Helped with setting up the first communion classroom and with the baking as a surprise for the class Met with contemporary worship leader, to get ideas as to how they pick songs, get ideas and discover his resource information Had the chance to pour water into the baptismal font while doing 	6.5

	the opening greeting	
Feb 24th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted with communion by giving bread to a class of third graders; I was a part of a class, and I got to help teach them. Prepared for weekly service Attended staff meeting and learned how this meeting is essential to church function Met with congregation members as pastoral presence. I got to know him and learn more about what was happening in his life. During weekly check in with pastor, we discussed how the finances of the church work for this congregation, and the policies of financial record keeping. 	8
Total Hours:		28
Total Hours for Semester:		58/80

List Format

Feb 3rd

- Total Hours for the Week: 6
 - Discussed learning and serving covenant with pastor
 - We discussed how the first communion class that I was going helping to teach
 - Pastor walked me through contacts in the church and who can assist with different aspects of the church
 - Greeted the congregation after the services and began to see what it is like for the minister to say hello and have short discussions with congregations members
 - Met with coffee and set up team to assist and see how set up before service happens

Feb 10th

- Total Hours for the Week: 7.5
 - Talked about me leading a small Lenten bible study that would take place on Sunday
 - Arrived early to help set up 5pm service and for book signing event afterwards
 - Went to 5pm service, greeted the congregation afterward and stayed for

social gathering.

- Still figuring out how to join all parts of the community without excluding anyone. Easy to talk with everyone
- Met with church secretary to learn how to set up church bulletins and discuss other administrative duties

Feb 17th

- Total Hours for the Week: 6.5
 - Pastor and I checked in on how our supervisor and student relationship has progressed
 - Assigned a congregation member to assist with being a pastoral presence for
 - Met with Youth group that was preparing for the event and assisted in set. Also got the opportunity to ask them questions about their youth group and gathered insight on them.
 - Helped with setting up the first communion classroom and with the baking as a surprise for the class
 - Met with contemporary worship leader, to get ideas as to how they pick songs, get ideas and discover his resource information
 - Had the chance to pour water into the baptismal font while doing the opening greeting

Feb 24th

- Total Hours for the Week: 8
 - Assisted with communion by giving bread to a class of third graders; I was a part of a class and helped teach it.
 - Prepared for weekly service
 - Attended staff meeting and learned how this meeting is essential to church function
 - Met with congregation members as pastoral presence. I got to know him and learn more about what was happening in this life.
 - During weekly check in with pastor, we discussed how the finances of the church work for this congregation, and the policies of financial record keeping.

Total Hours: 28

Total Hours for the Semester: 58/80

Appendix C:

Procedures for a Troubled Placement

1. Notify the Contextual Education Office of a Potential Problem

Students and/or Supervisors should feel free to call or make an appointment with the Director of Contextual and Experiential Formation at any time to discuss the LIC experience, and particularly if they feel that the seminary should be made aware of potential problems that may be arising. The following are some suggestions as to when it is advisable to call:

- There is evidence of poor or conflicted communication on repeated occasions.
- Either the supervisor or the student experiences a constant tension in their relationship.
- The student and/or supervisor are experiencing sexism, ageism, racism, or another form of bias on the part of the other.
- The supervisor or student may need an extended leave (e.g., for an illness).
- The supervisor becomes aware that he or she might leave the congregation through retirement or resignation of call.
- There is evidence of sexual harassment or misconduct on the part of the student or the supervisor.
- The student or supervisor feels unsafe in the context.
- (The basic notion here is that if either party wonders if the seminary should be contacted, the call should be made.)

2. Contextual Education's Response

The Director of Contextual and Experiential Formation will engage the caller in a caring and confidential manner. Suggestions will be offered. Follow-up will be assured. If, after a reasonable time in the opinion of those in the context, the problems appear to persist, the following responses may be offered:

- A face-to-face meeting of the supervisor, the student, and the Director of Contextual and Experiential Formation.

- The student's faculty advisor, and/or the Academic Dean may be notified of the difficulties and may be invited to be part of face-to-face conversations. In some cases it may also be appropriate to consult with members of the Synod staff or the student's Candidacy Committee.

NOTE: No LIC experience may be terminated unilaterally by the supervisor or by the student. If the termination question arises, it should be dealt with in consultation with the Director of Contextual and Experiential Formation.

3. If an LIC Experience is terminated

In rare instances an LIC experience may be terminated prior to the completion of the academic year. In such cases the LIC supervisor, in consultation with the Contextual Education Committee, will determine what (if any) additional LIC experience is needed for the student to fulfill the seminary's LIC requirement.

NOTE: This document follows closely the procedures used to address problems that may arise during internship.

Appendix D: Links to Evaluation Forms

Mid-Semester Check-Ins

Link for Students:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1R-ngAxkVgcxEHvHtMOYMrnn12N3uCUhgVL_j6amRLk/edit

Link for Supervisors:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1lppuELR7Xqj7_O3Pl7XZywA1ZF9m6tlisWlxcM6Pmbo/edit

Final Evaluations

Link for Students:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11lGLOTuV6o4aNnMlsqScrP63Zil4ceJ51foC2cvcpRo/edit>

Link for Supervisors:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1w_IsYlfqOUU7AbalyEytIwvH5C-gSaTFQOOtUJ_hTqE/edit

