

## Practical Skills

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### **PURPOSE**

Practical skills assessment offers you an opportunity to practice and receive feedback on your delivery of a specific practical skill, technique or competency. In the context of the practices of Christian ministry and discipleship, practical skills often test students' effectiveness in communicating how their knowledge and understanding relate to Christian faith and discipleship, the life of the church and the world.

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### **CONTENT**

#### **The delivery of a practical skill**

This involves performing a particular task (for example, preaching a sermon, having a pastoral conversation, leading worship). Both the content and the skill with which you perform the task will be assessed.

The context of the task will depend on the module: for placement-based modules you will know the context and will need to adapt appropriately to it. In other modules, the tutor may indicate the nature of the context and/or audience of your task.

The content of a presentation will be determined by the nature of the task, but some general pointers to good practice include:

1. Reflect carefully on the audience and context of the task and how this will affect your preparation and delivery.
2. Refer to the learning outcomes of the module in preparing your task.
3. Where appropriate, draw on the knowledge, understanding and skills that you have learned from other modules in preparing and delivering your task. For example, if you are preaching a sermon as part of a preaching module, make sure you draw on your biblical studies and / or doctrine modules to prepare its content.
4. Rehearse the task before you deliver it for assessment. If at all possible, rehearse it with peers to receive feedback that enables you to improve it before the 'final' performance.

#### **The commentary / reflection**

The commentary / reflection on the performance is a written piece of work that you hand in: your tutor will indicate whether its focus is to comment on the choices you made about the content and delivery of your task, or whether it also includes a reflection on your own performance, in which case at least some of it is written and handed in after you have performed your task.

In either case, the commentary enables you to set your task in the wider context of the subject of the module and to show the sources with which you engaged to prepare it.

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## WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

First and foremost, we are looking to see how well you performed the skill as indicated in the relevant learning outcomes of the Module Outline. In addition, we will be looking for your ability to reflect on your own practice and to receive and build on feedback. In particular we will be looking to answer the following questions (these may be adapted, depending on the nature of the skill being assessed):

### 1. Do you know your subject thoroughly?

The content should show appropriate depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding and an ability to relate it to the context of the performance.

### 2. Have you tailored your delivery effectively to the context and audience?

Make sure you adapt the vocabulary, level and style with which you perform your skill appropriately, including how the subject matter is relevant and interesting to the audience.

### 3. Are all aspects of your delivery thought through and prepared ahead of time?

Make sure that you have thought about the physical aspects of performing your skill. For example, the worship space in which you are leading a service, the availability of sound equipment, musical instruments and so on.

### 4. Is your delivery clear, natural and fluent?

Reflect ahead of time on who will be there and how your delivery will be received. Rehearse the performance mentally until you are very familiar with it and can deliver it fluently, focusing on the content and your audience rather than on your own delivery.

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## TECHNICAL MATTERS

### For the tutor:

- This form of assessment is particularly relevant for more practice-based modules, but is also effective as an assessment component of other modules when the learning outcomes include application of knowledge and understanding to a particular competency. It is always accompanied by a **written reflection / commentary on practice**.
- It may be necessary to record the delivery for assessment purposes. If this is not possible, or if it is being marked *in situ*, copies of the student's notes / plans or, at a minimum, notes from the markers, the mark proforma and feedback to students should be retained.
- This form of assessment is particularly suitable for introducing elements of self and peer feedback, which can be effective learning tools. However, students need to be equipped for this – with simple assessment criteria, for example.

### For the student:

- Be prepared to provide your plans or notes for the delivery (where appropriate).
  - The reflection / commentary should follow the guidelines for written assessments (for example, written theological reflections), including references and a bibliography whenever appropriate.
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## MARKING CRITERIA

The questions that your marker will be considering when assessing your work are as follows:

1. How did your delivery demonstrate that you had acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills of the relevant learning outcomes of the module?
2. To what standard have you fulfilled these? These standards – by which your work will be graded – are described in the **Assessment Criteria for Practical Skills** at the level of your module. The criteria against which your work will be marked fall into four categories:

Delivery of practical skills

For example:

- Were you well organised and prepared?
- Did you relate well to your audience?
- Were you audible and natural in your delivery?
- Did you respond appropriately to your audience (as in a verbatim conversation, for example)?
- Was your body language appropriate and helpful?

Was the performance appropriately tailored to the context, audience and situation?

Applying knowledge and understanding to practical skills:

Did your performance demonstrate a thorough understanding of the relevant subject matter?

Were you able to integrate different areas of knowledge and understanding when necessary and appropriate?

Applying thinking to practical skills:

For example:

- Did your performance demonstrate a logical flow that reflected your ability to argue a position?
- Did you demonstrate strong analytical and reasoning skills when appropriate?
- Were you able to synthesise information when required?
- Were you able to think “on your feet” effectively when necessary?

Reflective practice and reflexivity:

Are you able to reflect critically on your own performance?

Are you aware of your own inner responses during and after performing your practical skill?

Are you able to reflect productively on your own responses?