

PT698 – INTEGRATIVE MINISTRY PAPER

A culminating assignment (Integrated Ministry Paper, Capstone Project, Thesis or Comprehensive examination) is required for successful completion of a master's degree (M.Div., MA-PPL, MATS, MA-IIS) at VST.

PREREQUISITES

All designated denominational courses should be completed prior to or concurrently with a student's registration for this cumulative assignment.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Integrative Paper on Public and Pastoral Ministry is to assist VST in assessing the ability of Master of Divinity students to integrate their academic and experiential learning and to demonstrate competency in the disciplines under-girding a vocation in ministry. The paper might also be used by some denominational bodies in their assessment of candidates for ordered ministry. The paper should reflect the learning outcomes and competencies articulated by the school for the M.Div. degree. [Variations in the Guidelines for Unitarian Universalist students are placed in brackets.]

Successful completion of the Integrative Ministry paper will indicate the student's proven capacity as a reflective practitioner capable of allowing theory and action to mutually inform one another in the exercise of faithful and effective leadership in ministry.

PAPER GUIDELINES

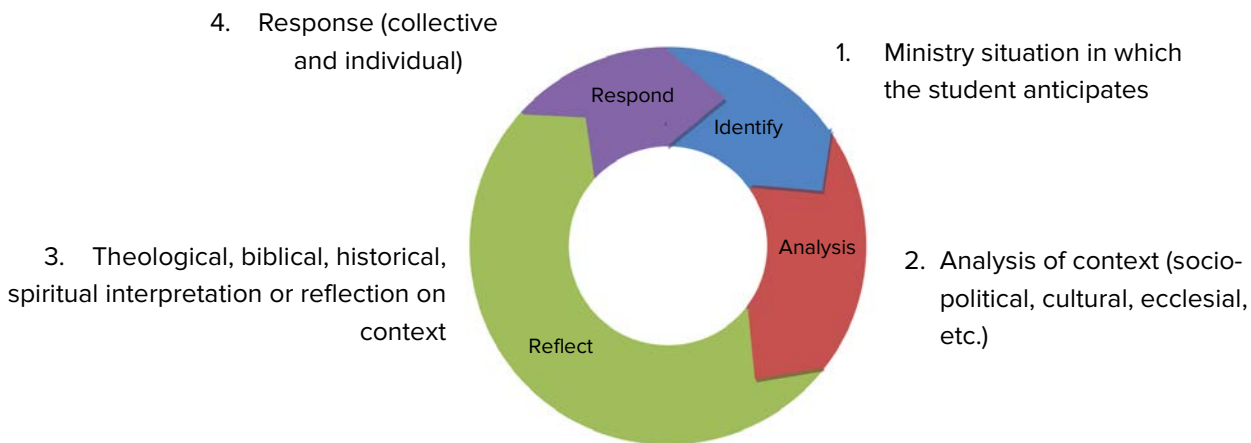
The Paper on Public and Pastoral Ministry is an integrative paper of 5,000 words (exclusive of notes and bibliography), normally completed in the penultimate term of the student's MDiv program. In writing the paper, students may want to make some use of case studies, art, poetry or other forms of expression that might assist them in articulating theologically, biblically and practically the integration of their academic, spiritual, and practiced-based experience of a VST education. The paper must include a bibliography of sources and follow the guidelines for academic papers (MLA, Turabian, Chicago). Papers must be carefully edited and will not be approved until all copy-edit errors and omissions are corrected.

It is anticipated that the approach to the paper will follow the method of the "pastoral cycle" wherein the student will integrate the following steps in demonstrating their capacity as practical theologians to reflect critically and constructively on ministry in a specific context with reference to wider issues currently influencing the church in the world. Note that all sections are required, and that the majority of the paper should be dedicated to point 3:

1. **An identification** or description of the ministry situation which the student is preparing to enter (denominational affiliation, order of ministry, geographic location [if known], specialization in ministry – children/youth/family, innovation/planting, congregational, community-based, etc.)
2. **An analysis** of the context (historic, demographic, etc.) drawn from various bodies of knowledge— theological, cultural, political, economic, and social theory, including naming one's own hermeneutic principles, recognizing one's location *vis à vis* that of others.
3. **A reflection** on the context and opportunity for ministry as presented above based on knowledge, understanding, and critical interpretation of theologies, Scriptures, traditions and experiences,

demonstrating a capacity for illumination, guidance and critique. This section will include discussion of the nature or agency of God, Christology, and ecclesiology, particularly as or if these pertain to the theological and practical norms [statements of faith, creeds, confessions, principles, doctrines] within the student’s denomination or tradition. This section will demonstrate the student’s capacity as a practical theologian to draw on the academic, practical and spiritual disciplines of the field in which they have been engaged throughout their program of study, to interpret divine agency (*missio Dei*, what God is up to, the spirit at work, etc.) in a particular context.

4. **A response** [to 1-3] in which the student situates or identifies their own contribution to the ministry of the church (or faith community) of our time. This section will demonstrate the student’s realistic self-knowledge as well as their ability to name faithful and effective personal and corporate responses to identified challenges and opportunities. The student will give evidence of their ability to place themselves with modesty and particularly within a historical and global movement.



Student’s paper is expected to demonstrate the following competencies:

1. knowledge of central themes of theology such as Christology, sacraments, worship, prayer, ecclesiology, ministry, missiology, “subordinate standards,” [7 principles] of student’s faith critical to the history and ethos of the student’s denomination or tradition
2. knowledge of biblical themes and their contexts, the ability to articulate one’s interpretive principles, and the willingness and ability to integrate biblical themes and theology with contemporary contexts
3. the ability to reflect theologically on challenges and opportunities facing contemporary society and the practice of ministry, including insights from Indigenous and interreligious studies
4. self-awareness and discernment of one’s readiness to offer effective leadership in public and pastoral ministry, including one’s spiritual practice and pastoral presence
5. the ability to name and critically engage issues/topics related to religious and public life, including the impact of global realities in a particular context

PROCESS

1. Students registered in their penultimate semester of their program register for PT698 (Culminating Project – 0.0 credits) and choose a date for presentation on the culminating project calendar. All students registered in PT698 should inform their DDF.
2. Students are required to invite a ministry practitioner to the presentation of their Integrative Ministry Paper. The evaluative panel will include the student's DDF, 1 additional VST faculty member assigned by the Faculty Association, and the practitioner chosen by the student and approved by the DDF. This practitioner should have experience of the student's practice of ministry during the student's degree program and should not be a staff member or other faculty member at VST. The ministry practitioner will not normally be a spouse of a faculty member, unless that person has been a TFE supervisor. All three members sit equally as evaluators on the panel. Students will have opportunity to invite one additional sessional or core faculty member to attend panel WITHOUT an evaluative role, if desired.
3. The Integrative Ministry paper is submitted ONE WEEK PRIOR to the presentation date to each of the three members of the panel. A copy of the evaluation form must be sent with the paper.
4. On the assigned date, the student meets the panel for a 1.5 hr discussion of the paper led by the panel members. At a certain point, the student will be invited to leave while the panel makes their assessment. When the student returns, the results will be shared with the student. Papers are either APPROVED, INCOMPLETE, or NOT APPROVED based on the competencies listed above.