

## Full Statement on Educational Effectiveness

Virginia Theological Seminary is committed to assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in both our Masters and Doctoral degree programs. Through systematic assessment and evaluation, we equip students for transformative leadership, demonstrate student learning against defined outcomes, ensure program quality, and pursue ongoing enhancement of our educational offerings.

## Masters Degree Programs

At Virginia Theological Seminary, we use the following instruments to assess and evaluate student learning in our Masters programs:

- ATS Questionnaires (ESQ and GSQ): Entering and Graduating Student Questionnaires administered by the Registrar
- Course Evaluations: Electronic evaluation of all courses for student satisfaction and learning outcomes engagement
- Portfolio Review: Annual faculty committee reviews of sample portfolios to assess student learning outcomes attainment
- Field Education Assessment: Evaluation of ministerial capacity development in contextual placements
- General Ordination Exam Results: Performance data on Episcopal Church canonical examinations
- Placement Rate Tracking: Graduate employment in ministry positions

## Student Learning Outcomes

VTS Masters programs organize learning around five domains:

- Religious Heritage: Knowledge and use of Christian tradition
- Understanding Cultural Contexts: Theory-praxis integration and intercultural literacy
- Ministerial and Public Leadership: Articulation of faith, justice, congregational leadership, and interfaith dialogue
- Personal and Spiritual Formation: Faith enactment, rule of life, theology of ministry, self-knowledge, and community membership
- Liturgical Formation and Leadership: Theology of liturgy, liturgical leadership, and liturgical arts

## Placement Rates

VTS maintains consistently strong placement rates. Data collected from the Alumni/ae Office as of October 2025 is pending. Historical data shows MDiv graduates averaging over 90% placement in ministry positions within one year of graduation.

## General Ordination Examination Performance

In January 2026, 167 exams were taken nationwide. Students at VTS comprised 12% of all test-takers (20 candidates). According to the Board of Examining Chaplains, VTS ranked first among Episcopal seminaries in terms of percentage of proficiency.

### Overall Proficiency (2026):

All Proficient: 14 students (70%)

At least 1 Non-Proficient Area: 6 students (30%)

### Subject Area Proficiency (2026):

The Holy Scriptures: 90%

Christian Theology: 90%

History of the Christian Church: 85%

Christian Worship: 90%

Christian Ethics & Moral Theology: 85%

The Practice of Ministry: 95%

## Student Experience and Satisfaction

The Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ) was administered in Spring 2025 with response rates of MDiv (n=8) and MA (n=2). Due to the small MA sample size, only MDiv results are reported. Students rated their educational experience across multiple domains using a 5-point scale (1=Not at all effective, 5=Very effective).

- Highest-Rated Educational Effectiveness Areas (2025):
  - Concern about social justice: 4.4 out of 5.0
  - Respect for my own religious tradition: 4.2 out of 5.0
  - Enthusiasm for learning: 4.1 out of 5.0
- Highest-Rated Skill Development Areas (2025):
  - Ability to conduct worship/liturgy: 4.9 out of 5.0
  - Awareness and appreciation of globalized ministry context: 4.8 out of 5.0
  - Ability to work effectively with both women and men: 4.8 out of 5.0
  - Ability to relate social issues to faith: 4.6 out of 5.0
  - Ability to interact effectively with those from different cultural/racial/ethnic contexts: 4.5 out of 5.0
- Most Important Areas of Study to Intended Work (2025):
  - Biblical studies: 5.0 out of 5.0
  - Preaching: 5.0 out of 5.0
  - Theology: 4.9 out of 5.0

## Field Education Effectiveness

Field Education consistently receives strong ratings for developing ministerial capacities. Students report that Field Education experiences are highly effective in building vocational clarity, pastoral skills, self-confidence, and understanding of people's needs.

## Portfolio Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

### Master of Divinity Strengths (2025 Data)

In Fall 2025, a faculty committee reviewed a representative sample of three MDiv portfolios from the graduating class of 28 students. The sample included portfolios ranked highest, median, and lowest by GPA. The three students consist of 2 men, 1 woman; 2 white students, 1 student of color.

- Rule of Life: 5.00 out of 5.0
- Personal Theology of Ministry: 5.00 out of 5.0
- Use of Tradition: 4.75 out of 5.0
- Faith: 4.75 out of 5.0
- Liturgical Leadership: 4.75 out of 5.0
- Self-Knowledge and Personal Growth: 4.62 out of 5.0
- Articulation of the Faith: 4.50 out of 5.0
- Knowledge of Tradition: 4.38 out of 5.0
- Theology of Liturgy: 4.38 out of 5.0

### Master of Arts Strengths (2025 Data)

In Fall 2025, a faculty committee reviewed a representative sample of two MA portfolios from the graduating class of 5 students. The sample included the highest and lowest ranked portfolios by GPA. The two students consist of 1 male and 1 female; 1 white student and 1 student of color.

- Use of Tradition: 5.00 out of 5.0
- Effective Communication: 5.00 out of 5.0
- Knowledge of Tradition: 4.50 out of 5.0
- Promotion of Justice: 4.50 out of 5.0
- Self-Knowledge and Personal Growth: 4.50 out of 5.0
- Interdisciplinary Integration: 4.50 out of 5.0
- Awareness of Cultural Contexts: 4.00 out of 5.0
- Intercultural Literacy: 4.00 out of 5.0
- Rule of Life: 4.00 out of 5.0
- Theory and Praxis Integration: 4.00 out of 5.0

## Curriculum Coverage of Learning Outcomes

In the 2024-2025 academic year, 70 courses were analyzed for student learning outcomes coverage. Four courses offered during the year (BIBL 657 Paul as Pastor, CHWT 820 ELMC Latina/o Ministry, WRSB 604 Cultivating the Imagination in Preaching, and WRSB 609 Preaching Politics) did not have documented SLO assignments in the course catalog at the time of analysis. The distribution of SLOs across the 70 analyzed courses demonstrates comprehensive coverage of program learning outcomes, with particularly strong attention to foundational knowledge and use of tradition.

- Master of Divinity Curriculum Coverage (2025):
  - Religious Heritage: 67 course assignments (39.4% of total)
    - Knowledge of Tradition (1.1): 34 courses
    - Use of Tradition (1.2): 33 courses
  - Ministerial and Public Leadership: 33 course assignments (19.4%)
    - Articulation of the Faith (3.1): 16 courses
    - Congregational Leadership (3.3): 9 courses
    - Justice (3.2): 7 courses
  - Understanding Cultural Contexts: 32 course assignments (18.8%)
    - Cultural & Intercultural Literacy (2.2): 17 courses
    - Theory-Praxis Integration (2.1): 15 courses
  - Personal and Spiritual Formation: 21 course assignments (12.4%)
    - Faith (4.1): 6 courses
    - Community Membership (4.5): 5 courses
  - Liturgical Formation and Leadership: 17 course assignments (10.0%)
    - Liturgical Arts (5.3): 7 courses
    - Theology of Liturgy (5.1): 5 courses
    - Liturgical Leadership (5.2): 5 courses
- Master of Arts Curriculum Coverage (2025):
  - Religious Heritage: 73 course assignments (49.3% of total)
    - Knowledge of Tradition (1.1): 36 courses
    - Use of Tradition (1.2): 37 courses
  - Cultural Contexts: 24 course assignments (16.2%)
  - Ministerial and Public Leadership: 24 course assignments (16.2%)
  - Theory and Praxis Integration: 18 course assignments (12.2%)
  - Personal and Spiritual Formation: 9 course assignments (6.1%)

## Doctoral Programs

Virginia Theological Seminary offers Doctor of Ministry (DMin) and Doctor of Educational Ministry (DEdMin) degrees designed to strengthen Christian ministry and leadership through original research and innovative ministry projects. The programs assess student learning through:

Portfolio Review: A comprehensive four-year assessment cycle including case studies, contextual studies, and project thesis proposals

Program Learning Objectives Assessment: Systematic evaluation against six program-wide learning objectives

Post-Defense Survey: Recently adopted to gather comprehensive feedback from graduates on their doctoral experience and program effectiveness

## Program Learning Objectives

VTS doctoral programs are organized around six learning objectives:

Theological Foundations: Sharpen expertise in historical, biblical, and theological foundations of Christian discipleship

Transformational Vision: Identify and articulate aims of Christian ministry for the common good

Contextual Interpretation: Use theological and social scientific disciplines to shape communities of faith in diverse contexts

Personal Growth: Develop enduring habits for effective leadership as a reflective practitioner

Analysis of Ministry Practice: Develop advanced capacities for assessing ministry experience through interdisciplinary tools

Leadership Development: Develop professional skills that foster leadership and committed discipleship in others

## Four-Year Assessment Cycle

The doctoral programs employ a comprehensive four-year assessment cycle. Years 1-3 of the current cycle have been completed, with a meta-assessment conducted in Academic Year 2025-2026 to evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment process itself.

## Meta-Assessment of the Doctoral Assessment Process (Years 1-3)

The meta-assessment was conducted through a structured survey administered to doctoral committee members. Three committee members completed the survey. Overall, respondents affirm that the VTS doctoral assessment process is functioning well, with reports from Years 1-3 regarded as well-crafted, thorough, and clearly presented.

## Key Findings

- Quality and Usefulness of Assessment Reports:

- Respondents consistently affirm the quality of the reports produced in Years 1-3, particularly highlighting the structure and the balanced presentation of strengths and areas for growth.
- Effectiveness of the Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):
  - All three respondents call for revision of the PLOs. Current PLOs (particularly PLOs 2-6) are described as "too general," "vague," or "difficult to assess." PLO 1 (Theological Foundations) is identified as the most tractable for assessment. Two respondents also raised the question of developing track-specific PLOs for the DMin and DEdMin programs.
- Assessment Process Design:
  - Respondents are generally satisfied with the current artifact set (First Case Study, Strongest Case Study, Contextual Study, and Project Thesis Proposal). Rubrics and survey tools are rated as consistently effective. The process is rated as "consistently" accounting for student diversity, though equity concerns were raised for international and non-native English-speaking students.
- Sustainability and Program Improvement:
  - Two respondents rate the process as "consistently" sustainable; one rates it as only "moderately" sustainable. The area of greatest divergence concerns whether the process informs concrete programmatic improvements, with two respondents rating this as only "moderately" successful. There is a desire to hear from broader faculty about the assessment process.

#### Suggestions for Program Improvement

- Revise the PLOs before the next assessment cycle begins, focusing on clarity and concision
- Expand the artifact pool to include residency coursework from morning courses taught during summer residencies
- Develop mechanisms for assessing non-curricular formation (spiritual practices, community life, formational experiences)
- Strengthen longitudinal tracking of programmatic changes with a systematic method for documenting which assessment recommendations have been implemented
- Address equity concerns for international and non-native English-speaking students
- Document the time cost of the assessment process before expanding requirements

#### Questions for Year 4 and Beyond

- What process should be used to revise the PLOs, and who should be involved? Should revision precede or follow the Year 4 assessment?
- Should the program develop track-specific PLOs for the DMin and DEdMin programs, and if so, what would the assessment implications be?

- What artifacts from residency coursework would be most informative, and what would be required administratively to collect and review them?
- Is there a feasible way to gather evidence of non-curricular formation without placing undue burden on students or faculty?
- How should the program assess and support international and non-native English-speaking students more equitably?
- How might the annual assessment process be structured to encourage broader faculty ownership and participation?
- What would a rigorous "changes tracking" mechanism look like, and who would be responsible for maintaining it?

## Conclusion

The VTS doctoral programs demonstrate a commitment to rigorous, ongoing assessment of student learning and program effectiveness. The meta-assessment of Years 1-3 confirms that the assessment process is producing high-quality reports and valuable insights. Moving forward, the program will focus on revising the Program Learning Outcomes to enhance clarity and assessability, expanding the evidence base to include residency coursework and non-curricular formation, and strengthening mechanisms for tracking programmatic improvements arising from assessment findings.