Master of Arts in Theology
Joint Master of Arts with Certificate in Pastoral Ministry
Master of Theological Studies

Portfolio Manual
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Villanova University
Department of Theology and Religious Studies

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1 The Portfolio

The Portfolio is an academic archive, a comprehensive, organized and cumulative electronic record of the breadth and depth of a student’s accomplishments over time in coursework, research and other academic and professional experiences in the program. The student’s graduation from the program is based on a review of the materials included in the Portfolio.

2 Learning Outcomes

2.1 Portfolio for M.A. and M.T.S. Programs

The Portfolio demonstrates the student’s ability to

a) identify and contextualize core aspects of the relationships between faith and culture;
b) bring theological perspectives (biblical, historical and Augustinian, fundamental/systematic theological, cultural, ethical, spiritual, and ministerial) in dialogue with each other;
c) evaluate theological knowing in the Augustinian tradition as both speculative and practical, and distinctive in its emphasis on the union of mind and heart; and
d) express him/herself clearly, coherently, and persuasively in writing and speaking.

2.2 Portfolio for Joint M.A./Certificate in Pastoral Ministry Program

The Portfolio demonstrates the student’s ability to

a) analyze the resources of the Christian ecclesiological and ministerial traditions in light of the questions raised by contemporary culture;
b) evaluate theological and ministerial knowing in the Augustinian tradition as both speculative and practical, and distinctive in its emphasis on the union of mind and heart;
c) explain the Church’s teachings on the universal call to holiness and discern their pastoral application and relationship to the role of ministers as leaders in faith communities;
d) systematically and critically reflect on his/her pastoral presence, skills, and gifts in ministerial service;
e) express him/herself clearly, coherently, and persuasively in writing and speaking.

3 Portfolio Review

The Portfolio Review serves as an assessment of the materials the student places in the Portfolio. The materials document the student’s general, broad knowledge in theological studies through course work and other academic and non-academic experiences in the program. Before taking the Portfolio Review, full-time students must have completed three semesters of residence; part-time students must have completed, or be in the process of completing, all M.A. or M.T.S. degree requirements. In addition, students who register for the Review must be in good academic standing.
3.1 Review Board

In the semester preceding the Review, the student establishes a Board consisting of three members of the TRS faculty. With the approval of the Program Director, one Board member may be from outside the department. One of the Board members serves as chairperson. The Board must be constituted by the Friday preceding the fall semester recess.

3.2 Registration and Scheduling

The Review is administered during the week following the spring semester recess. Any variation in this schedule must be approved by the Graduate Program Director. Students submit their Portfolio electronically on the penultimate Friday preceding the official spring semester recess.

Full-time students register for the Review no later than the second week of their fourth semester in residence. Part-time students register no later than the second week of classes in their last semester in which they are completing requirements for the M.A. or M.T.S. degrees. Along with the registration form, students submit the names of three Board members, the name of the chair of the Board, and the date and time of the Review. It is the students’ responsibility to contact Board members to identify a date and time for the Review. Once a date and time have been identified, students contact the Administrative Assistant to secure a location.

3.3 Review Meeting

A Review Meeting serves as the platform for students to explicate the material included in their portfolios. The student uses the stated Learning Outcomes of the Review as the guide for preparing for the Meeting. Students meet with their Review Boards for no longer than 60 minutes. The Review begins with a Portfolio Presentation by the student (20 minutes in length). The following conversation probes the extent to which students meet the Learning Outcomes of the Review.

An appointed Facilitator initiates each step of the Review Meeting, keeps the process on track, and facilitates the dialogue between student and board members.

At the end of the Portfolio Review Meeting, each Board member completes an evaluation of the student’s performance with respect to the Learning Outcomes of the Review. The evaluation is based on a common rubric and is graded pass/fail solely on the merits of the submitted materials and the performance in the Meeting. For graduation from the program, a passing grade is required. The Facilitator submits the evaluations by individual Board members, together with the Portfolio Review Feedback Form, to the Program Director for a signature. The Administrative Assistant sends the result of the Review to the Office of Graduate Studies, which officially notifies the student.

3.4 Failure of the Review

In the event of a failing grade, the student may request from the Program Director to retake the Review. In such a case, the Program Director appoints a new Review Board. The final decision will be based upon the verdict of the newly constituted Board. The following conditions apply:
Students may not retake the Review a second time if they fail to submit their Portfolios by the deadline without prior notification of a serious situation that prevents them from submitting the Portfolio; submit incomplete Portfolios; or fail the Portfolio Review Meeting by unanimous decision of the Board. In such a case, the student will be terminated from the program (see the relevant Office of Graduate Studies Policy). The Program Director will recommend whether a Certificate may be awarded.

A student who is permitted to re-take the Review Meeting must do so during the same semester by arrangement with the Board members. The re-take will be scheduled no earlier than one week after receiving the grade and no later than during the penultimate week of regular classes. A second failure to pass the Portfolio Review results in the termination from the program (see the relevant Office of Graduate Studies Policy). The Program Director will recommend whether a Certificate may be awarded.

Students who violate the University’s code of Academic Integrity in any part of their Portfolio fail the whole Portfolio Review and will be handled by the University’s disciplinary procedures.

3.4.1 Failing Both the Integrative Essay and the Assessment Meeting by Minority Decisions

f) If a student has received all but one passing grade on both the Integrative Essay and the Assessment Meeting, the student may request both a re-examination of the essay and a second Meeting, in that order.

A second failure to pass the Portfolio Review results in the termination from the degree program (see the relevant Office of Graduate Studies Policy). The Program Director will recommend whether a Certificate may be awarded.

Students who violate the University’s code of Academic Integrity in any part of their Portfolio fail the whole Portfolio Review and will be handled by the University’s disciplinary procedures.

3.5 Portfolio Materials

3.5.1 Section 1: Student Information

a) Current Curriculum Vita.

b) Current unofficial Villanova transcript.

3.5.2 Section 2: Essays

c) A copy of the original Application Essay from the admission file.

d) Reflective Essay, 1000 words in length. A critical examination of the student’s role and place in his or her coursework and profession, taking into consideration his or her original responses to the Application Essay prompts formulated at the time of applying for admission to the program.

Essay Prompt: Looking back at your Application Essay, reflect upon your originating purpose for pursuing graduate studies in theology (or, if applicable, theology and ministry). How has this concern developed in light of your education in theological (and, if applicable, ministerial) studies?
e)  Integrative Essay. A scholarly essay, 3000 words in length that thematizes faith engaging culture. In the essay, the student evaluates the ways in which the various pieces of her or his educational program (courses, readings, papers, colloquia, practica, internships, service experiences, etc.) fit together with the program’s emphases on sound methods; cultural contexts; the relevance of theology (and, if applicable, ministry) in today’s world; and theological (and, if applicable, ministerial) knowing in the Augustinian tradition as both speculative and practical, and distinctive in its emphasis on the union of mind and heart. The student may write the essay with a special focus on two or more areas of interest or concentration.

Essay Prompt: Critically evaluate the various aspects of your educational program in light of the learning outcomes of the Portfolio Review. Explain how the materials included in your portfolio are indicative of your professional growth and development in your area(s) of study; your professional goals; and your intended contributions to the Augustinian vision of faith engaging culture.

3.5.3  Section 3: Course Documentation

f) One artifact (textual form or another medium) from each course taken in the student’s program of study.

3.5.4  Section 4: Research Documentation (Optional)

g) Paper proposed for, or presented at, a professional conference.

3.5.5  Section 5: Service/Praxis Documentation (Optional)

h) Artifact(s) from Practica, Internships, Service Experiences