Master of Arts in Theology
Master of Arts in Ministry and Theology
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 Goals

2.1 Portfolio for M.A. Program

The Portfolio demonstrates the student’s ability to

Goal 1: Analyze faith/culture relationship(s).
Objective A: Identify faith/culture relationship(s), with attention to the experiences of diversity/inclusion, power, privilege, and marginalization.
Objective B: Use scholarly methods to interpret diverse religious/theological texts and related media.

Goal 2: Evaluate the Christian Theological Tradition.
Objective A: Appraise the vocabulary, sources, beliefs, historical developments & diversity within the Christian tradition, with attention to experiences of power, privilege, and marginalization.
Objective B: Assess the reciprocal interaction of practices and beliefs arising from the Catholic and Augustinian traditions with diverse cultural, ecumenical/interfaith, and/or local/global contexts.

Goal 3: Apply Knowledge.
Objective: Communicate effectively the relevance of theological/religious practices, concepts, and beliefs for personal, communal, societal, and global living, in service of transformative action.

2.2 Portfolio for M.T.S. Program

The Portfolio demonstrates the student’s ability to

Goal 1: Analyze faith/culture relationship(s).
Objective A: Identify faith/culture relationship(s), with attention to the experiences of diversity/inclusion, power, privilege, and marginalization.
Objective B: Use scholarly methods to interpret diverse religious/theological texts and related media.

Goal 2: Evaluate the Christian Theological Tradition.
Objective A: Appraise the vocabulary, sources, beliefs, historical developments & diversity within the Christian tradition, with attention to experiences of power, privilege, and marginalization.

Objective B: Assess the reciprocal interaction of practices and beliefs arising from the Catholic and Augustinian traditions with diverse cultural, ecumenical/interfaith, and/or local/global contexts.

Goal 3: Apply Knowledge.

Objective: Communicate effectively the relevance of theological/religious practices, concepts, and beliefs for personal, communal, societal, and global living, in service of transformative action.

Goal 4 (Research/Creative Project Track): Synthesize Knowledge.

Objective A: Design & complete a feasible project that thematizes faith/culture relationship(s), with attention to the experiences of diversity/inclusion, power, privilege, and marginalization.

Objective B: Present effectively the project at an appropriate venue (academic conference, colloquium, etc.).

Goal 4 (Education Track): Teach Effectively.

Objective A: Describe contemporary cultural challenges and trends in theological education and articulate an integrative, Augustinian philosophy of education.

Objective B: Design educational events that are attuned to issues of diversity and dynamics of power, incorporate contemplative teaching practices, and use appropriate assessment tools.

Objective C: Demonstrate qualities of a self-reflective, intellectually curious educator sensitive to diverse educational contexts and hospitable toward spiritual experience as a theological source.

2.3 Portfolio for M.M.T. Program

The Portfolio demonstrates the student’s ability to

Goal 1: Analyze Faith/Culture Relationship(s).

Objective A: Identify faith/ministry/culture relationship(s), with attention to the experiences of diversity/inclusion, power, privilege, and marginalization.

Objective B: Use scholarly methods to interpret religious/theological/ministerial experiences, texts, and related media.

Goal 2: Evaluate the Christian Theological Tradition.

Objective A: Appraise the vocabulary, sources, beliefs, historical developments & diversity within the Christian tradition, with attention to experiences of power, privilege, and marginalization.
Objective B: Assess the reciprocal interaction of practices and beliefs arising from the Catholic and Augustinian traditions with diverse cultural, ministerial, ecumenical/interfaith, and/or local/global contexts.

Goal 3: Apply Knowledge.

Objective: Communicate effectively the relevance of theological/religious and ministerial practices, concepts, & beliefs for personal, communal, societal, & global living, in service of transformative action.

Goal 4: Serve in Ministry.

Objective A: Articulate a theory of ministry informed by the concepts of universal call to holiness and of baptismal vocation that fosters unity in diversity in faith communities.

Objective B: Demonstrate capacity for ministerial leadership with professional, spiritual, intellectual, and moral integrity.

Goal 5: Grow as Minister.

Objective A: Conceptualize principles of discernment and demonstrate effective practices of accompanying others in their life and faith journeys – across ethnicities, races, genders, sexual orientations, and physical abilities.

Objective B: Develop practices of lifelong personal spiritual growth and growth of the self – aware of, and responsive to, diverse cultural contexts, expressions, and experiences.

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. The Reflective and Integrative Essays are focal points of the included materials. These essays invite personal reflection and evidence the student’s integration of their educational experiences in service of their post-graduation vocation as informed by Villanova’s Augustinian character. 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 two members of the TRS faculty. With the approval of the Program Director, one Board member may be from outside the department. The Doctoral Program Committee appoints a Facilitator who moderates the Review Meeting.

TRS Graduate Studies faculty may limit their service on Portfolio Review Boards to a maximum of three during any given semester (including service in both the Master’s and the PhD programs).
Any faculty who are serving on zero or one Portfolio Review Board will be considered eligible to serve as Facilitators and, as needed, may be asked to function in that capacity for up to three Review Meetings.

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 December 1 of their third semester in residence. Part-time students register no later than the first week of classes in the semester in which they are completing requirements for their degrees. Along with the registration form, students submit the names of two Board members 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. If students do not comply with this schedule, they may be excluded from the Portfolio Review.

3.3 Review Meeting

A Review Meeting serves as the platform for students to explicate the material included in their portfolios. The Review Meeting is not a comprehensive examination or a summative assessment activity but a formative assessment activity. Thus, the ethos of the conversation intends reflection, synthesis, and further learning that enriches the student’s understanding of their chief theological and pastoral concerns. The student uses the stated Learning Goals of the Review as the guide for preparing for the Meeting.

Students meet with their Review Boards for no longer than 50 minutes. The Review begins with a Portfolio Presentation by the student (10 minutes in length). The Presentation focuses on the student’s Integrative Essay. It provides context and explicates the choices a student has made in writing the essay, briefly summarizes the main points, illustrates its implication(s) and concludes with the questions the student has for their Review Board Members.

The following constructive conversation probes the extent to which students meet the Learning Goals of the Review and serves as an occasion for the further development of the thoughts a student has formulated in their Reflective Vocational and Integrative Essays. The conversation is structured in the following way: It begins with Board Members formulating positive feedback by stating what they found meaningful and thought-provoking in a student’s materials (5 minutes); then students ask their questions (10 minutes). During the final portion (25 minutes), Board Members ask the students questions that help them to further develop their ideas and provide constructive critique.

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, the board evaluates the student’s performance during the Portfolio Review Process. The evaluation is based on the two essays submitted for the Portfolio Review and the student’s performance during the Portfolio Review Meeting (presentation and conversation). Each student is then assigned one of three grades: pass with distinction; pass; or fail. If Board Members do not arrive at consensus, the Facilitator will cast the deciding vote. For graduation from the program, a passing grade is required. The Facilitator submits the evaluation to the Administrative Assistant. The Administrative Assistant informs the Program Director and 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 and Facilitator. 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; or submit incomplete Portfolios. 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 according to the University’s disciplinary procedures.

3.5 Portfolio Materials

3.5.1 Section 1: Student Information
   a) Current Curriculum Vita or Resume.
   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 Vocational Essay**, 1000 words in length. A critical examination of the student’s role and place in their coursework and profession, taking into consideration their 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 (for M.M.T. students, theology and ministry). How has this purpose developed in this program, and what courses, readings, assignments, or experiences prompted that development? How does your education in this program inform your anticipated vocation in a manner of faith engaging culture?

e) **Integrative Essay**, 3000 words in length. Thematizes faith engaging culture and education in the Augustinian tradition. In the essay, the student evaluates the ways in which the various pieces of their educational program (courses, readings, papers, colloquia, practica, internships, service experiences, etc.) fit together with the program’s emphases on 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 essay has two parts.

Part I: Faith Engaging Culture (About 1500 words)

Essay Prompt: Discuss how your program has helped you think about both faith and culture (for M.M.T. students, ministry, faith, and culture). Explain your understanding of the way faith and culture interact (for M.M.T. students, ministry, faith, and culture), as well as what you believe should guide or structure this interaction. Include resources from the Christian tradition which inform your understanding. In addition, describe how one or more artifacts in your portfolio demonstrates the integration of faith and culture as you understand it (for M.M.T. students, ministry, faith, and culture). Comment on how you might revise or expand those artifacts to better demonstrate their integration.

Part II: Education in the Augustinian Tradition (About 1500 words)

*Respond to either Option A or B*

Option A: Integration of Heart and Mind

Essay Prompt: Discuss how this program has helped you cultivate the life of both the heart and the mind. Drawing on resources from your educational experience (coursework and extracurricular), write about how you understand the relationship between heart and mind. In addition, describe
how one or more artifacts in your portfolio demonstrates the integration of mind and heart. Comment on how you might revise or expand those artifacts to better demonstrate the integration of mind and heart.

Option B: Integration of Practice and Theory
Essay Prompt: Discuss how this program has been an education in both practice and theory. Drawing on resources from your educational experience (coursework and extracurricular), write about how you understand the way practice and theory interact with one another in theological work or ministry. In addition, describe how one or more artifacts in your portfolio demonstrates this interaction. Comment on how you might revise or expand those artifacts to better demonstrate the integration of theory and practice.

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/Education Documentation
(Required for M.T.S. students enrolled in Research/Creative Project or Education Track, optional for others.)
g) Project(s) completed for track.
h) Paper proposed for, or presented at, a professional conference.
i) Artifacts from teaching experience.

3.5.5 Section 5: Service/Praxis Documentation
(Required for M.M.T. students, optional for others.)
j) Artifact(s) from Practica, Internships, Service Experiences