

MIDDLER REVIEW / GUIDELINES

A Middler Review is held after a student has earned 27 credits and before the completion of 54 (usually this is in the second year of full-time study). It is required for students to either have completed or be currently taking their Field Education requirement and Theology requirement before the Middler may be allowed. A student may not register for her/his final 27 credits until the Review has been completed and completion of the MDiv may be delayed if the Middler is not completed in the expected time frame.

I. PURPOSE

The Middler Review has a multi-fold purpose: 1) to assist the student as she/he prepares for the last half of seminary education by a review and assessment of the student's academic and vocational preparation; 2) to clarify the student's vocational direction. In addition to these purposes, the Middler Review is an opportunity for the student to demonstrate their growth and knowledge as well as a time for evaluating one's own intellectual and spiritual formation.

II. PREPARATION

Responsibility for gathering the panel, preparing and circulating review material, and scheduling the review lies with the student. All members should receive the entire packet of review material, but as listed below, each member of the panel has specific responsibility for assessing the materials.

A. THE PANEL. This review is most thoroughly and effectively done in a formal and inclusive process that joins faculty members and students with representatives from local communities of faith.

The panel is normally comprised of 4 to 6 persons selected for their expertise in one or another component of the review and for their experience with the student. The student should invite panel members at least a month in advance of the review, and involve them in the preparation of materials. This consultation may be carried out on the phone, in person, or by written correspondence, but should precede the circulation of materials to committee members.

- Faculty Advisor. (required) This panel member is a regular member of the PSR faculty. The faculty advisor reviews the transcript, vocational/academic plan and update & degree worksheet with the student; and consults with the student regarding the theological statement. The faculty advisor also chairs the review.
- Second Faculty Member. (assigned; optional for Dean's Office to assign) In some cases, this panel member is appointed by the Assistant Dean, in consultation with the faculty advisor. The member's primary role is that of second academic reader of the written essay and to provide additional academic response to the oral presentation. You will be notified if you will be assigned a second faculty member. Otherwise the default policy is to have only one primary faculty advisor (above) serve on your panel.
- A Field Education Supervisor/Mentor. (required) This panel member is a minister, church leader, or agency administrator who is familiar with the student's work in a field setting for ministry. The field education supervisor reviews all materials distributed to the panel which reflect the student's practice of ministry. The Field Supervisor reviews the field report with the student. If the student does not have a current field education supervisor, any other professional who is acquainted with the student's work in a ministry setting should be invited.
- Student Peer(s). (required) One or two students are selected as panel members. These students should know the student personally and should be able to offer personal critique. Student peers ensure that the middler is taped and may also take notes to supplement the taping.
- One of the two categories below is required:
 - A Denominational Representative. This panel member is an ordained church leader who is familiar with the expectations and rules of the student's denomination. The denominational representative reviews ordination requirements and progress with the student.

OR

- A Representative of a Professional Credentialing Body. If a student is not pursuing ordination but is considering a vocation which has a professional credentialing body, a member of that body who knows the requirements and rules for admittance should be included in the panel.

In some cases the Field Education Supervisor/Mentor may also serve as the Denominational Representative/ Professional Credentialing Body Representative if they fulfill both functions.

B. THE MATERIAL. The student will gather or prepare the following material for circulation to all panel members at least 10 days prior to the review. It is recommended that you send your packet as a pdf attachment via email to your panel. If you prefer a hard copy packet, you should provide dividers in your packet for each section described below and on the title page or cover of your packet, list the names of your panel members and the role they fulfill as described above.

- Middler Review Guideline Sheet. A copy of this statement describing the Middler Review, to give panel members an understanding of the goals and procedures of the Middler Review.
- Transcript. An unofficial copy of the student's PSR transcript. Students are encouraged to use their most recent grade report, or a print out their grades from [Student Web Advisor](#). If the student does not have access to a recent/current grade report, an [official copy](#) may be requested.
- Degree Worksheet or "My Progress" printed from Student Planning. A "filled in" [worksheet](#) and/or a degree audit run by clicking on "My Progress" in Student Planning from [WebAdvisor](#)—both of which shows how the student is meeting the MDiv degree expectations outlined in the PSR Catalogue and/or MDiv Program Manual. (Panel members from outside the school should be given copies of the relevant Catalogue and/or [Program Manual](#) pages.)
- Vocational/Theological Statement. A carefully prepared written statement of 15-20 pages. Students should refer to the attached instruction sheet for guidance on preparing the paper. Samples of Vocational/Theological Statements may be downloaded at the PSR website or browsed outside of Holbrook 135.
- Self-Assessment Sheet, completed by the student, which reflects the student's current personal and vocational development.
- Panel Member Student Assessment Guide, blank, which provides panel members with criteria on which to evaluate student's paper and presentation (the panel members will complete an assessment prior to the conclusion of the Middler Review).
- Field Evaluation. An evaluation is requested from the Field Education supervisor. The evaluation required for the field education can be used unless confidentiality concerns require a separate document be substituted.
- Ordination Requirements/Professional Accreditation. The student should meet with a representative of his/her denomination (or professional accrediting agency or intended vocation) for a consultation on the procedures and requirements which apply to the student. The student should include in the packet these procedures/requirements as well as detailed information that details where the student is in that process.

Oral Presentation. This is not to be circulated in advance. The oral presentation is delivered at the beginning of the review itself. In it the student integrates her/his sense of call, theological studies and practice of ministry.

C. THE PROCEDURE. Attention to the Middler Review begins several months before the event itself. Here are the steps that the student needs to take during that time.

- Consult your Faculty Advisor. Your faculty advisor will help you plan for the Middler Review and think about your panel. If you are required to have a second faculty member on your panel, the name of your second faculty member will be given to you from the Assistant Dean.
- Recruit a Panel. Each member of the panel is important in order to insure the comprehensive nature of the review. Invite panel members to participate in the review. Also, invite them to consult with you prior to the review as you collect and prepare material. In certain cases, it may be desirable to invite a distant panel member to participate through conference telephone facilities. This should be discussed with your faculty advisor.
- Set a Time and Reserve a Place. The Middler Review should be scheduled for two hours. The PSR Conference Room (either Holbrook 133 or 134) should normally be used for Middler Reviews because participants can sit comfortably across from one another, see one another, and have a

place to take and review notes. Reserve the Conference Room—as well as conference call equipment if needed for Holbrook 134—by going to <http://roomres.psr.edu/>. First check for room availability through <http://ems.psr.edu/BrowseForSpace.aspx> on the online form. Reserve parking for panelists who are visitors to the PSR campus at the Reception desk (reception@psr.edu).

- Submit Middler Scheduling Sheet. As soon as the date, time, place, and participants for the Middler Review have been set, return the Middler Review Summary Sheet (attached) to the Assistant Dean for Academic Programs so the date of your review can be recorded. The Faculty Advisor and the rest of your panel will receive a copy as well when this form is submitted online.
- Consult with Panel Members. Each panel member can help you prepare yourself for the review, and sharpen your material so all panel members will find it helpful. Use the faculty members to help you complete your degree worksheet and to read a draft of your theological statement. Use your field ed supervisor to help you articulate your experience in the practice of ministry. Use your denominational/vocational representative to help you understand the personal and professional skills you need to be a minister in the denomination of your choice. You should remind your student peers to ensure that the interview is taped or notes are taken. A few days before the review, consult with your faculty advisor to decide details of format and procedure. If a conference telephone call is anticipated, make sure this is confirmed and that the outside caller has the procedure to join the conference.
- Distribute your Material. There is a DEADLINE for the circulation of material to your panel. **Panel members and the Assistant Dean for Academic Programs must receive your completed Middler packet ten (10) working days before the review.** If the deadline is not met the Faculty Advisor may cancel the review. Again, emailing as PDF attachment may be the best method.
- The Panel Member Student Assessment Guide. Panel members will be able to fill this out at the meeting if they have a phone, mobile device, or laptop. But in case they do not bring these, Please bring blank copies of this form (the one with the ratings scale) for each member of your panel. This will be distributed by your advisor at the conclusion of the question and answer period.

III. THE REVIEW

The Middler Review is organized around three steps: getting under way, structured conversation, and summary statements.

A. GETTING UNDER WAY. Most Middler Reviews bring people together who do not know one another. Care needs to be taken to help panel members get acquainted and feel comfortable.

- Gathering. The student needs to arrive about ten minutes ahead of time to see that the place is in order and to greet panel members as they arrive.
- Introductions. When the faculty advisor calls the meeting to order, the student will be asked to introduce members of the panel, giving a word or two about their role and why they were selected. At this time, it will be noted whether a recording device has been set-up, or if a student peer will be taking notes.

B. STRUCTURED CONVERSATION. The bulk of the session is spent in conversation with the student. The faculty advisor is responsible to see that all component areas of the review are addressed and that there is room for the questions and concerns of panel members. The primary task of panel members is to ask questions which will press the student to think about and respond to the areas under consideration. Speeches by panel members usually are reserved for the summary section of the review.

Oral presentation. Before the student is asked to leave the room s/he is invited to give a carefully prepared 5-10 minute oral presentation, integrating his/her sense of call, theological studies and practice of ministry. At this time, the student should lift up concerns about what would be important to talk about from the student's perspective, their hopes for the conversation, and about what areas they need feedback from the panel

Student leaves room. After the brief presentation, the student is then asked to leave the room as the panel remains.

Setting the Agenda. With the student excused from the room, the faculty advisor will invite panel members to state questions and concerns they want to raise during the review. The faculty advisor designs the flow of the review so that each element of the review will receive

the time it needs, and so that the review participant with special competence in an area is given an opportunity to pursue that area with the student. This is a time for panel members to test with one another their perception of the student and of the task of the review. This time is to help all members of the review panel understand the agenda and anticipate the process. Faculty advisors should note the questions below under "Structured Conversation" to assist with framing this conversation.

Panel Questions. Panel members may use this presentation as a beginning point for their questions. Panel members are asked to:

- evaluate the student's theological understanding and ability to articulate her/his faith.
- consider the relationship of the student to the church or agency and its assumptions about ministry.
- assess the adequacy of the completed and planned courses described in the attached worksheet/"My Progress" audit and discuss curricular needs the student should plan for in their last year or as an alum after graduation.
- assess the adequacy of the student's vocational plans and what the student has done at PSR to move toward his/her chosen ministerial/vocational goals.
- evaluate the goals of the student in view of student's self-assessment
- counsel the student as to vocational clarity and fit in both planned vocation and degree program
- discuss strengths/gifts and growing edges

Student returns to the room. Items above are discussed with panel and student, with the faculty advisor leading the conversation.

C. SUMMARY STATEMENTS. After the time for questions has been spent, faculty advisor calls for the preparation and presentation of summary statements by panel members to the student. At this time, the student may be asked to leave the room again as the faculty member will hand out a new copy of the [Panel Member Student Assessment form](#) (or give out the link which includes a ratings scale. Panel members will use this tool to consider their summary statements and will hand in the form to the faculty member at the conclusion of the middler (to be shared at a later time with the student)

Statements should identify both strengths and weaknesses panel members discern in the student from their work with her/him and from the review itself. Summary statements should be as direct, brief and memorable as possible.

If the student has been asked out of the room, they will be welcomed back, panel members will speak their summary statements. The faculty advisor will then make a final remark, thank the participants and draw the review to a close.

D. ADVISOR MEETING FOR MIDDLEL REVIEW REPORT. Before the student and the faculty advisor leave the Review, the faculty advisor should arrange with the student a time to go over and submit online the Middler Review Report. Normally this process should be completed within two weeks of the Middler Review session.

E. MIDDLEL REVIEW REPORT. Following the review, the student meets with their advisor to fill out and submit the Middler Review Report form online, drawing on notes from the middler, feedback, and assessment forms. Middlers are not complete until the [Middler Review Report](#) is submitted

Revised 05/16

The Middler Review Vocational/Theological Statement *Theologically and Spiritually Rooted Leadership for Social Transformation*

The Middler Vocational/Theological Essay offers an opportunity for students to reflect critically and constructively on their progress to date in the M.Div. program, demonstrate their integration of scholarly theological disciplines with communal spiritual practices, and articulate a vision of transformative leadership.

The 15-20 page essay, prepared in consultation with the student's advisor well in advance of the Review, is shared with the Review panelists and provides a foundation for the Review itself. The essay should reflect the student's engagement with the learning outcomes of the M.Div. program in relation to the student's particular vocational goals, giving due attention to each of the following prompts:

1. How do sacred texts, theological traditions, and their varying interpretations shape the practice of ministry (in relation to, for example, preaching, worship, pastoral care, education, and community organizing)? How has your engagement with these texts and traditions shaped your own theological convictions (concerning, for example, God, Christ, sin, salvation, ecclesiology, sacramental practice, the issues involved in theodicy, such as suffering and evil, and other similar matters)? In what ways do you envision constructing and advancing theological work in your own religious/spiritual tradition?
2. Describe and articulate your own social location (with respect to race, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, gender, class, etc.) and how these contextual factors shape the development of theological ideas and spiritual practices. What kind of strategies are the most effective for engaging with contexts that are different from your own and for the sake of social and economic justice?
3. How are the spiritual practices that you have developed and are developing crucial for a leadership style marked by social justice, personal integrity, cultural humility, shared accountability, and a sustainable vision for a world where all can thrive and flourish?
4. Where would you locate the best partnerships (with individuals, groups, and organizations) for informing and enhancing the work you hope to undertake in the world? Indicate why such collaborative efforts are vital for constructive theological work and effective ministry.
5. Identify at least three "growing edges" moving forward in your process of integrating the intellectual disciplines of theological education with the practice of ministry for the sake of organizing and nurturing communities of social transformation.

While students are not expected to address these prompts definitively (much less comprehensively) in an essay of this length, the responses will provide important material to help the Review panelists to: assess with the student particular areas of academic strength and limitation; refine and hone the student's vocational aspirations and professional goals; and discern together how best to utilize the time remaining in the student's program.

Students are strongly encouraged to submit a draft of the Vocational Essay to their advisor at least one month before Review materials are due to the Review panelists. This will provide an opportunity for the student and the advisor to discuss the draft, consider revisions, and anticipate key areas for conversation and mutual discernment during the Review.