

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



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THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AT PTS

The faculty of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is committed to excellence in teaching and is always striving to better serve students. But how do we know what we need to do better? That is where the work of assessment comes in.

The assessment of student learning outcomes at PTS is the practical expression of two things:

our curiosity about what is happening to our students as a result of our teaching

the desire to keep the educational promises we make to students when they enroll

Assessment is the systematic way the faculty investigates how we are doing *as a team of teachers* by looking closely at how our students are doing *as a group* in relation to the learning outcomes we have for each of our academic programs. We assess some learning outcomes from each program each year, examining a random sample of papers, examinations, projects, theses, sermons, field education reports, and other sorts of assignments, and systematically evaluating what we find.

Once we have come to some conclusions about how students are doing in relation to a particular program learning outcome, we make changes that we think will improve student performance in the future.

Highlights of changes that resulted from 2018-2019 assessment activities include:

The new field education requirement is significantly more robust than the old field education offering. The field experience is now joined with two semesters of course work (six semester-hours total). Field education addresses many issues of integration and interpreting biblical and theological themes in context. The new field education course(s) require students to apply work in required courses to a ministry context in numerous ways: evaluate the context sociologically; assess practices of a Christian community theologically; address biblical and theological issues raised in required courses through interaction with people in a ministry context; lead practices of ministry in a ministry context.

Numerous places in the new curriculum address issues of integration and holistic interpretation. In addition to the field education requirement, students will take a course that requires them to grapple with some subject or issues by considering how the whole biblical narrative speaks to the subject or issue; students will also take a worship course that will bring together various parts of the curriculum and require interaction and integration.

Several courses in the new curriculum aim to help students understand and engage ministry contexts in a more meaningful way. This is particularly true of Contextual Analysis, the Worship Seminar, Ethics and Society, and the Historical Context elective.

These are just a few of the many proposals and changes that resulted from recent assessment work, and there will be many more to come as we continue to be curious about how our students are doing and working to keep the educational promises we make in each of our programs. Have questions about the assessment of student learning outcomes at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary? Contact Angela Hancock, vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, at [Click to view e-mail](#)

Learn more: [Institutional Outcomes](#), [Overall Satisfaction with Preparation and Experience](#), [Program Completion and Placement](#)

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