



MIDDLER REVIEW

Master of Divinity (M.Div.) Program Milestone

Overview

The **Middler Review**, a meeting held at the midpoint in the M.Div. program—Congregational and Chaplaincy tracks—is a comprehensive review of a student’s theological understanding of ministry, field education or CPE experience, academic record, and development of proficiencies in ministry in the light of their personal vocational objectives and, if they are in the process for ordination, the denomination's requirements for ordination.

Middler Review Objectives

This Middler Review meeting is a time of support, assessment, review, and planning. Materials provided by the student to the Middler panelists support assessment of the student’s academic progress and their ability to articulate the ministerial formation they have experienced within the Master of Divinity program. The panelists use these materials to give input to the student about strengths observed during praxis and classes, the “growing edges” in their theological/spiritual clarity and ministerial skills, and recommendations for further education through academic courses, workshops, and other resources.

As the central element of the Middler Review, a student’s **Middler Vocational and Theological Essay** offers an opportunity for the student to

- reflect theologically, critically, and practically on their formation to date in the M.Div. program,
- demonstrate their integration of scholarly theological and social analysis disciplines with a ministerial narrative, spiritual practices, and leadership praxis, and
- articulate a vision of their plans for transformative, spiritually rooted leadership.

Topics covered in this document

- ❖ Middler Review [Panel Members](#): Roles & Responsibilities
- ❖ Middler Review [Materials](#) to expect from student
- ❖ Middler Review [Meeting Structure](#)
- ❖ Middler Review [Response to Student Essay](#)
- ❖ Middler Review [Assessment of Student’s Articulation of Ministry](#)

MIDDLER REVIEW PANEL MEMBERS

The Middler Review Panel is normally comprised of 3 to 5 people selected for their expertise in one or more components of the review and for their experience with the student's formational journey. Based on the Middler materials provided by the student, all panelists should come prepared with input and questions about the student's demonstrated growth and strengths, important growing edges, and their plans for continued development of their growing edge skills. Panelists should also be prepared to complete a final assessment of the student based upon their Middler observations.

Panel Member Roles & Responsibilities

Each member of the panel has a specific responsibility for assessing the materials provided by the student:

- **Faculty Advisor** (required): The faculty advisor
 - reviews the student's current transcript and discusses their Vocational Academic Plan, Spiritual Formation Plan, and degree worksheet with the student;
 - consults with the student to review and revise the Vocational & Theological Essay;
 - chairs the review meeting process.
- **Field Education Mentor or CPE Supervisor** (required)
 - This panel member is a minister, church leader, agency administrator, or certified CPE Supervisor who provided direct engagement with the student's work in a field setting for ministry praxis. The mentor/supervisor reviews all materials distributed to the panel from their observation of the student's practice of ministry.
- **Student Peer** (required)
 - This peer should have engaged with the student in the academic environment and should be able to offer personal assessment of the student's formational journey. If requested, the peer may take notes to assist the student with their post-review reflection.
 - It is not necessary for the peer to be in the MDiv program. However, the peer should have taken several "1st tier" Stackable Curriculum foundational courses with the student (e.g., Rhetorical Use of Text, Transformative Leadership, Empathy/Communication/Ritual Design, Spiritual Formation, Theological Thinking.)

- **Denominational Representative** (required if student is pursuing ordination)
 - This panel member is an ordained church leader who is familiar with the expectations and rules of the student's denomination. The denominational representative examines the student's materials from the perspective of these ordination requirements and the status and needs of the student in meeting them.
- **Second Faculty Member** (optional)
 - In some cases, the Office of Academic Affairs appoints this panel member, in consultation with the faculty advisor and the student. This member's primary role is as a second academic reader of the written essay and to provide additional academic response to the oral presentation.

Middler Review Materials

The student is responsible for scheduling, planning, inviting, and gathering their Middler attendees (panelists.) The student's primary faculty advisor chairs the meeting.

The student must provide all panelists with these materials for review **at least one week before** the scheduled meeting:

MATERIAL
❖ Panelist Middler Review Guidelines (This document)
❖ Copy of current transcript, including grades
❖ Current Stackable Master of Divinity Program Worksheet
❖ CPE Supervisor or Field Education Mentor Final Evaluation
❖ Student Self-Assessment
❖ Vocational and Theological Essay
❖ Ordination Requirements
❖ Confirmation of Middler Review meeting date, time, and location / zoom link

MIDDLER REVIEW MEETING STRUCTURE

1. Each panel member introduces themselves and their role in the Middler Review process.
2. Student speaks for 10-15 minutes about their formational journey, emphasizing aspects of their Vocational and Theological Essay.
3. Student informs panel members of any areas about which they would like specific input.
4. Student leaves meeting or is put into a Zoom breakout room (for about 15 minutes.)
5. Advisor facilitates the panel members in producing discussion points for the student: questions, need for clarification, observed growth over time, strengths, current growing edges, etc. Panel determines how to consolidate and organize the sequence of discussion, particular questioner, and examples of input for the discussion with the student.
6. Student returns to the room. Panelists engage in presenting and discussing their input with the student. This discussion should be warmly interactive; criticisms should be presented within the context of student's strengths and growing edges.
7. Student leaves meeting or enters breakout room again.
8. Advisor provides panel members with final assessment link and their email address ([see end of this document](#).) As each panelist submits their assessment, a pdf copy will be sent to the advisor, the panel member, and the PSR Registrar. Panelist assessments, especially summary statements, will be used by the student and their advisor in a later meeting to create a summary document demonstrating their understanding of their Middler Review experience.
9. Student returns for any final statements from panel members and the meeting closes, acknowledging the work of all participants in this significant milestone. Final statements do not need to be formal; often everything is covered during your discussions.

RESPONSE TO STUDENT ESSAY

The **Middler Vocational and Theological Essay** offers an opportunity for the student to reflect critically and theologically on their formation to date in the M.Div. program, demonstrate integration of scholarly disciplines with community spiritual practices, and articulate a vision of their vocational goals of transformative and spiritually rooted leadership.

This **15-20-page essay** is a statement of deep reflection, integrating the personal and the academic. It is explicitly **not** an autobiography. It should explain how the classes taken by the student thus far, chapel leadership, and co-curricular activities have deepened their vocational call.

Middler Essay Assessment

The Middler Review Panelists are asked to use this online form to provide feedback to the student after reading the Vocational and Theological Essay.

This assessment form is an opportunity for panelists to reflect on their questions and input to the student. While the panelists are asked to consider the clarity of the student's essay, this assessment is not meant to be a grading or critical evaluation of the student's academic skills. Once submitted, the faculty advisor will receive a copy and will incorporate the essay assessment into the Review Meeting discussion. This feedback is not anonymous; the student can always request copies of this feedback.

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7716845/MIDDLER-ESSAY-ASSESSMENT>

Assessment Structure

Students are asked to use these areas of reflection in writing their Theological and Vocational Essay:

1. Awareness of the theological/spiritual perspectives and vocational goals they held at the program's start,
2. Their process of being changed in their understanding and perspectives (with direct references to insights from academic and praxis experiences,) and
3. How these changes are the foundation of their current theological/spiritual perspectives and your vocational plans.

We ask the Middler Review panelist to reflect on the following aspects of the student's essay:

	Excellent	Acceptable	Needs Improvement
<p>Content/Clarity of Vision</p> <p>___ Excellent ___ Acceptable ___ Needs improvement</p> <p>Comments:</p>	<p>Clear flow of a narrative from where the student began upon entering seminary, to what they learned, to how they see themselves leading going forward.</p>	<p>Information provided but no explicit flow of narrative describing the theological and vocational journey the student began at the beginning of their seminary experience, how their experience has been impacted, and where they see themselves going forward.</p>	<p>No clear narrative and/or reads more like a biography rather than a reflection of what the student has learned in their theological education and how that has impacted their vocational journey.</p>
<p>Integration/Clarity of Formation</p> <p>___ Excellent ___ Acceptable ___ Needs improvement</p> <p>Comments:</p>	<p>Uses specific authors, articles/books, lectures, sacred texts, and other class content to showcase what has impacted the student in their theological and vocational formation.</p>	<p>Cites some elements learned from courses at PSR/GTU, but better integration is needed to show the impact on student's theological and vocational formation.</p>	<p>Little to no citing from specific course content is used to show how PSR/GTU classes have impacted the student's theological and vocational formation.</p>
<p>Leadership/Clarity of Vocational Identity</p> <p>___ Excellent ___ Acceptable ___ Needs improvement</p> <p>Comments:</p>	<p>Presents a more nuanced and mature understanding of vocation and deepening of ministerial call in the student's self-description</p>	<p>Is lacking in detail and/or vague about growth and understanding of vocational call and its deepening</p>	<p>Reveals no change or deepening of vocational call and identity</p>

	Excellent	Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Style ___ Excellent ___ Acceptable ___ Needs improvement Comments:	Content flow is well- written and organized in a logical manner. Grammar, spelling , and citations are properly done. Paper was edited and presented to the standard of graduate-level academic writing.	Content flow is confusing, but the ideas are still communicated well enough to understand. Or grammar, spelling, and citations became hindrances to reading the essay easily.	Essay was difficult to read because content flow was not organized enough to make sense. And/or grammar, spelling, and citations were poorly done or not edited enough to the standard of graduate-level academic writing.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ARTICULATION

Panelist Assessment Instructions:

Toward the end of the Middler Review meeting, the meeting chair/faculty advisor will provide each panelist with a link for their final assessment and the chair’s email address. The questions on this assessment will be the same as on the self-assessment provided in the student’s Middler Review materials. The students were asked to answer each statement from the perspective “**I am able to...**” The panelists are asked to now respond to each statement from the perspective “**The student is able to....**,” based on their observations of the student’s articulation of formation and vocation during this Middler meeting. In this way, the student can have insight into their self-perception in relation to how others perceive them.

- Each panelist only needs to assess the main statement. Use the list of qualities to interpret each statement.
- Use the Comments section to expand on your assessment. While not required, it is helpful for the student to receive more detail about your assessment. Still, it is assumed that most of your input was part of the Middler meeting discussion.
- Once this form is submitted, each panelist and the Middler Chair will receive a pdf copy of their assessment. The Chair should confirm that all assessments have been received before closing the meeting.

	1 = no ability to 5 = excellent ability to				
ASSESSMENT OF FORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	1	2	3	4	5
Articulate an understanding of texts and traditions, apply them to particular situations, and critically engage with and communicate those texts and traditions.					
<p>SKILL QUALITIES TO CONSIDER FOR THIS ASSESSMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theologically ground ministerial and vocational arts, including preaching, worship leadership, pastoral care, and community organizing • Communicate the theological, philosophical, or aesthetic traditions of your own religious community or communities. • Engage in creating new theological discourses. • Articulate an understanding of the constructed and contextual nature of the information. <p>COMMENTS</p>					
Recognize all knowledge as contextual; demonstrate understanding of the forces that shape their own context and show awareness of others' context especially across race, sexuality, gender ethnicity, class, culture, nationality, and other differences.					
<p>SKILL QUALITIES TO CONSIDER FOR THIS ASSESSMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate the significance of the various factors that shape my context. • Understand the markers of authority recognized by disciplines, professions, and other communities of knowledge and practice. • Debate the ways privilege influences the perception of authority. • Demonstrate an awareness of the inequities perpetuated by the growing influence of AI and information technology. • Demonstrate an awareness of other contexts, especially across differences with respect to race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, class, culture, nationality, religious affiliation, etc. • Imagine how to translate across and among various contexts. • Avoid inappropriate boundary crossing and misappropriation <p>COMMENTS</p>					

	1 = no ability to 5 = excellent ability to				
ASSESSMENT OF FORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	1	2	3	4	5
Articulate the connection between spiritual practice(s) and their development of a leadership style.					
<p>SKILL QUALITIES TO CONSIDER FOR THIS ASSESSMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate personal integrity and character based on my spiritual values. • Develop a spiritual leadership style to fit with contemporary hybrid models of worship and community gathering. • Practice appropriate spiritual practices that engage the wider society. • Develop a spiritual-rootedness to sustain world-changing work. • Effectively link spirituality and leadership in a community of accountability • Engage in life and work with cultural humility and respect for cross-cultural differences, including the reality of different time zones. <p>COMMENTS</p>					
Form effective partnerships with various organizations and individuals with respect for those with different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences.					
<p>SKILL QUALITIES TO CONSIDER FOR THIS ASSESSMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work effectively with people of different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. • Incorporate insights from non-academic contexts. • Evaluate the information produced by organizations and individuals to create alliances and solidarities in the digital world and to counter the effects of fake news, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia. <p>COMMENTS</p>					

	1 = no ability to 5 = excellent ability to				
ASSESSMENT OF FORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	1	2	3	4	5
Integrate the various intellectual disciplines, fields, topics, and themes of theological education in the practices of ministry and public leadership in a variety of contexts especially with regard to social justice issues.					
SKILL QUALITIES TO CONSIDER FOR THIS ASSESSMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate a theologically grounded position on social justice issues. • Articulate a theologically grounded position on the creation and circulation of information. • Organize community efforts toward achieving social change and use the means at my disposal, including digital means. • Develop a definition of social transformation in critical, constructive, theological, and historical modes relevant to the digital and physical worlds people occupy. COMMENTS					
Understand that information creation, including religious and theological claims, is a process that unfolds in physical and digital worlds:					
SKILL QUALITIES TO CONSIDER FOR THIS ASSESSMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish between format and method of access, understanding that these are separate entities. • Recognize that similar content may be presented in different formats, which may affect the interpretation of the content. • Contribute to scholarly and public conversations by becoming a creator and critic of distributed information. • Describe the way systems of information distribution privilege some perspectives and present barriers to others. COMMENTS					

	1 = no ability to 5 = excellent ability to				
ASSESSMENT OF FORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	1	2	3	4	5
Cultivate best practices for personal growth, service, and financial health:					
<p>QUALITIES OF SKILL TO CONSIDER FOR THIS ASSESSMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of organizations and the limits of resources to serve myself and others. • Develop sustaining habits of resilience and flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. • Be open to being formed for the needs of others. • Acquire knowledge of and learn habits and practices of living within my means while meeting personal financial responsibility. <p>COMMENTS</p>					

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7722061/PANELIST-MIDDLER-STUDENT-ASSESSMENT>