

# Learning & Teaching Update

## Assessment in Theological Education



### Introduction

This issue of *Learning and Teaching Update* is an annotated bibliography on issues in assessment in theological education.

On Monday 25 October the SCD Professional Development Day will look at assessment in theological education. We will be led by Professor Royce Sadler, BSc, BEd, PhD (Qld), MLitt (UNE), Professor of Higher



Royce's academic profile and research expertise encompasses

- Assessing student achievement; especially in higher education
- Academic achievement standards; grading policy and practices
- Formative assessment; feedback and alternatives to feedback
- Assessment theory, methodology, policy and ethics
- Educational testing and measurement
- Improving university teaching and learning.

His current projects focus on academic achievement standards in higher education and making assessment work more effectively for improving student learning.

The issues we have asked Royce to focus on include

- Constructive alignment between unit outcomes and assessment tasks and feedback.
- Formative feedback on assignments
- Types of questions to be set at various levels to achieve desired learning outcomes;
- Sample questions for the future guidance of faculty members, including assessment in online and distance education.
- Essay questions that move from being content-based to critique and analysis.
- Weighting of 'Portfolio' assessment tasks and the like.

#### A few of Royce's papers:

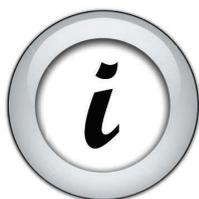
Fidelity as a precondition for integrity in grading academic achievement.

Grade integrity and the representation of academic achievement.

Transforming holistic assessment and grading into a vehicle for complex learning.

Perils in the meticulous specification of goals and assessment criteria.

Program details are still being worked out.



Curriculum Consolidation: check out progress on curriculum consolidation:

<http://courseworksandpit.wetpaint.com/page/Curriculum+Consolidation>

Date for the diary:

A First Step towards Reaccreditation: Redesigning the SCD Curriculum:

Tues 1 Feb or Wednesday 2 February.

Have your say on the new curriculum.

Keep watching the curriculum consolidation page for the latest proposals. Fresh material to go up soon.

# Theological Education

*Theological Education* is a journal published semiannually by The Association of Theological Schools

IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15275-1103.

Index of all issues since 1964.

Two issues in particular address assessment. There is a link to each issue below as well as details of its contents and the abstract of each article.

## [2003 Vol. 39, No. 1 The Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation](#)

The Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation: M.Div. Education and Numbering the Levites

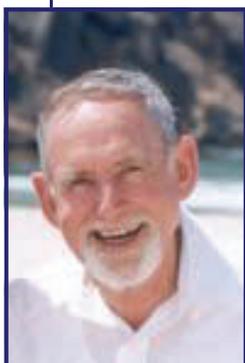
Daniel O. Aleshire

*ABSTRACT: The educational assessment movement has both external and internal aspects. This article provides an overview of educational assessment and the challenges it presents to theological education, the problems that the assessment of theological learning present to theological schools, and the current project of ATS on the Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation. The author outlines both the internal and external factors influencing this movement, principles for assessing the goals of the theological curriculum (with particular attention to the Master of Divinity degree program), and the Association's efforts to assist member schools in developing and refining their educational assessment practices.*

Learning Goals and the Assessment of Learning in Theological Schools: A Preliminary Survey

Gordon T. Smith and Charles M. Wood

*ABSTRACT: In this article, Charles Wood and Gordon Smith provide an overview of the state of assessment of learning for religious vocation. They review the background of this issue, especially as it has emerged out of the redeveloped ATS Standards of Accreditation and the momentum for assessment and evaluation now widespread throughout higher education for the professions. A survey instrument consisting of four questions was sent to the ATS member schools, with reliable rates of return, and the authors summarize the findings. The essay contains many intriguing insights and offers provisional conclusions. It also provides an excellent orientation to the overarching purposes of the Lilly Endowment-funded grant to assist ATS member schools in the development of tools to accomplish the complex task of assessing the multifaceted competencies expected of the graduates of the Master of Divinity program.*



**At the Professional Development Day on 25 October, I am hoping that faculty from SCD Member Institutions will be willing to be interlocutors with Royce Sadler. On the basis of their experience in theological education and from their professional reading I hope that they will help us to ground the issues that Royce develops in the broader theological context.**

Knowing and Caring

Charles M. Wood

*ABSTRACT: In this article, Charles Wood and Gordon Smith provide an overview of the state of assessment of learning for religious vocation. They review the background of this issue, especially as it has emerged out of the redeveloped ATS Standards of Accreditation and the momentum for assessment and evaluation now widespread throughout higher education for the professions. A survey instrument consisting of four questions was sent to the ATS member schools, with reliable rates of return, and the authors summarize the findings. The essay contains many intriguing insights and offers provisional conclusions. It also provides an excellent orientation to the overarching purposes of the Lilly Endowment-funded grant to assist ATS member schools in the development of tools to accomplish the complex task of assessing the multi-faceted competencies expected of the graduates of the Master of Divinity program.*

Getting to the Question: Assessment and the Professional Character of Ministry

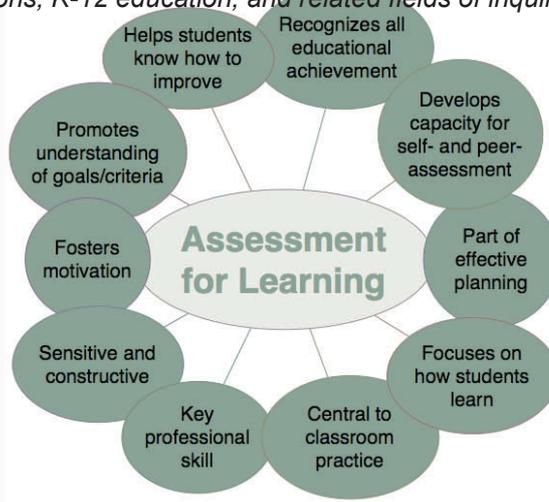
Victor J. Klimoski

*ABSTRACT: Drawing on site visits to three professional schools, the author identifies three key practices that account for their successful use of assessment: working from well-defined criteria, developing a structure that integrates data into the decision-making processes of the faculty, and building capacity with the faculty to tailor assessment to the character and focus of the school. Included are two discussion “maps” using dimensions of professional training to assist faculties as they determine how assessment can best serve ongoing improvement of teaching and learning.*

What is the Literature Saying about Learning and Assessment in Higher Education?

Carolyn M. Jurkowitz

*ABSTRACT: Improved student learning depends upon systems and structures that integrate the school’s mission; connect processes of learning, assessment, planning and development; acknowledge the roles of tacit knowing and professional judgment; and promote a community of learning—that is the most consistent message in the literature on learning and assessment in higher education. The writings reflect a wide spectrum of beliefs, values, and emphases. They address some of the goals important to theological education, but not all of them. Among the most enlightening and potentially useful insights are those offered by the literature in parallel professions, K-12 education, and related fields of inquiry.*



## Theological Education

### 2006, Vol. 41, No. 2 Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation

#### Vocation in a New Key: Spiritual Formation and the Assessment of Learning

Mary Kay Oosdyke

*ABSTRACT: Assessment at Aquinas Institute of Theology has been a strong internal value and focus for us over the past ten years. When exploring educational assessment as a faculty, we found that faculty members were assessing performance on several levels and using various means of assessment; however, few of these means were data informed or data driven. Thus, we identified four assessment issues we wanted to address in the course of our various planning projects:*

- 1. Learning how to assess mature, healthy, spiritual development for church ministry in our Lay Spiritual Formation program; this is, as we will point out, an enormous and rapidly evolving challenge that involves acquisition of new skills observation and reporting*
- 2. Making our institutional, programmatic, and course goals more coherent and the objectives more measurable*
- 3. Creating efficient and accurate means of measurement*
- 4. Becoming more intentional about the amending procedures or “closing the assessment loop”*

*A number of factors contributed to our faculty’s readiness to work on reasonable and helpful assessment practices. Among these were*

- ϕ the 1990s move into high quality distributed learning degree programs (Master of Arts in Health Care Mission, Master of Arts in Ministry, and the Doctor of Ministry in Preaching) that called for an in-depth exploration of new pedagogical initiatives;*
- ϕ the revision of our Master of Divinity degree;*
- ϕ a previous assessment plan that is yet to be fully implemented;*
- ϕ the preparation of a self-study for the 2006 reaccreditation visits;*
- ϕ the creation of a new mission statement and strategic plan, the year-long development of a business plan, and computerized financial modelling software that will feature “dashboard indicators” to enable rapid assessment of performance by the board and administration;*
- ϕ the coming evaluation for our ten-year-old Lay Spiritual Formation program; and*
- ϕ the Apostolic Visitation of American Seminaries by the United States Bishops in 2005*

#### Speaking Assessment in the Local Vernacular

Linda Lee Clader

*ABSTRACT: The faculty members at Church Divinity School of the Pacific have felt confident about the thoroughness and appropriateness of our processes for assessing students preparing for ministry in the Episcopal Church. Our experience with the Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation project has challenged us to find congruent ways to assess our overall program. In addition, we recognize that a major part of that program is grounded in the Episcopal Church’s peculiar way of communicating our tradition through worship, and we are beginning to undertake an intentional program to claim that culture, to conduct assessment on our own terms, and to discover the language to communicate what we do to people unfamiliar with our tradition and ethos.*

Leclercq among the Blue Devils: Assessing Theological Learning in the Modern University

Willie James Jennings

*ABSTRACT: Assessing theological learning in the modern university is a complicated endeavor. The fundamental challenge we face at Duke University Divinity School is to bring together two different ecologies of assessment, those of the research university and those of the church. Through our curriculum review, self-study, ATS consultants' visit, and ATS comprehensive visit, we were able to clarify the two central sites where we need to connect the ecologies of assessment: (1) the divinity school's multiple forms of student assessment and the research practices of the faculty and (2) the relation between doctoral student formation and master student formation.*

Progressing Toward Ministry: Student Perceptions of the Dispositional Evaluation Process  
at Emmanuel School of Religion

Jack Holland

*ABSTRACT: In the 1996 response to Emmanuel School of Religion's self study, the ATS Commission on Accrediting imposed Notation N7.1, "The evaluation procedures are insufficiently developed or implemented in this institution." Evaluative procedures were implemented according to the required schedule, and in June of 1998 the notation was removed. This article summarizes the assessment strategies that were initiated by the institution to bring the school into compliance with these expectations and follows the continued development of the school's efforts to effectively use the tools of assessment to better prepare students for ministry. Particular focus is given to the practice of an annual progressive evaluation by the faculty of each student's overall progress toward ministry. Qualitative interviews of a sample of students and faculty were conducted to learn their perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of this practice. Dominant themes that emerged from a content analysis of these interviews are summarized.*

Preparing Leaders for Mission: The Experience of Assessment at Luther Seminary

James L. Boyce and Richard W. Nysse

*ABSTRACT: Luther Seminary has worked at designing a curriculum faithful to its mission statement and strategic plan to "educate leaders for Christian communities." Though we have engaged in many diverse assessment activities, for the most part, these have been episodic and the results underutilized. There is need to continue to work for an assessment climate and system that is ongoing and sustainable, in which the interconnectedness of individual courses with the outcomes of the curriculum as a whole can be clearly demonstrated.*

Practicing Assessment/Resisting Assessment

Robert A. Cathey

*ABSTRACT: Some institutions evolve in ways that practice and resist assessment. McCormick Theological Seminary is a middle-sized, urban, multicultural, ecumenical institution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We already practice assessment out of our sense of accountability to standards of excellence. But assessment diverts us from our first love, teaching, and urgent issues facing our times. For theological educators,*

*assessment needs new rationales and revised practices. We put our McCormick “spin” on assessment due to the differences we bring to theological education.*

### Preaching, Proclamation, and Pedagogy: An Experiment in Integrated Assessment

Elaine Park

*ABSTRACT: Preaching, particularly preaching in a liturgical context, provides a window into how well students are achieving the key educational goals of the MDiv degree at Mount Angel Seminary as well as how well they are integrating the various components of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. Using liturgical preaching as the focus, Mount Angel’s project has two interlocking goals: (1) developing and refining on an ongoing basis teaching and learning strategies for effective preaching and (2) assessing student attainment of MDiv outcomes and integration of all areas of formation. Thus, our aim is not only to provide the seminary with information on how well individual students are attaining our goals and how effective our program is but also to assist our students in deepening their biblical and theological understanding, in developing an aptitude for theological reflection, and in exercising ministerial skills—all manifest through liturgical preaching.*

### Moving the Mission Statement into the Classroom

Jo-Ann Badley

*ABSTRACT: The faculty of Newman Theological College used the opportunity of participating in the Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation project to rearticulate its vision of ministry preparation and to develop its skills to better implement that vision in classroom teaching. The project’s focus was an intentional response to the particular situation of the college and the size of its faculty. We built on existing strengths in the ethos of the college and used existing structures to accomplish our goals. The success of the project is demonstrated by the increased coherence of mission statement, educational objectives, and course objectives.*

### Evaluation Rubrics: Weaving a Coherent Fabric of Assessment

Stephen Graham, Kimberly Sangster, and Yasuyuki Kamata

*ABSTRACT: One of the learning goals for North Park’s Master of Divinity degree is “living and working under Scripture’s authority by knowing the Bible in its original languages and engaging responsibly in the interpretation and application of its teaching.” The Master of Divinity core requirements include twenty-seven semester hours of biblical courses, including Greek and Hebrew languages. In developing a culture of assessment that will be able to demonstrate whether this learning goal is being met, North Park plans to create evaluation rubrics on the basis of which we will be able to make explicit our expectations of the competencies expected from students upon completion of the various courses in the curriculum and to develop consistent standards of evaluation based on the rubrics. This project involved the development of a rubric that would serve as a tool to help determine to what extent the Introduction to Greek Exegesis course served to meet the learning goal. Our expectation is that growing out of this process, we will develop rubrics for most, if not all, core courses in the curriculum.*

## Toward an Integrated Model of Assessment

Dennis H. Dirks

*ABSTRACT: Talbot School of Theology has intentionally endeavored through the years to realize its commitment to an educational process that prepares students for integrated, holistic ministry. In the project described below, the school sought to refine further its commitment and to develop a comprehensive plan for assessment of the degree to which this goal is achieved in students. Included are an overview of the plan development process, principles of assessment that guided and shaped the plan, and ways in which the process contributed to institutional learning.*

## Teaching Theology and Religion

Teaching Theology and Religion is an international peer-reviewed journal on teaching, published by Wiley-Blackwell in cooperation with the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion at Wabash College.

Good teaching and learning are essential for the vitality and effectiveness of departments and institutions of higher education engaged in the study of religion and theology. Teaching Theology and Religion sustains a crucial international discourse among faculty members about teaching and learning in the several sub-disciplines in the study of religion. As the body of scholarly writing on teaching and learning increases across academic disciplines, this peer-reviewed scholarly publication has become an essential forum for generative discourse about pedagogical issues specific to the field while contributing substantive, often unique insights into teaching and learning across curriculum.

**2005, vol. 8 no. 2, pp 69–77.**

### Assessment and Good Teaching

Victor Klimoski

*St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota Abstract. This article has three purposes. First, it makes the case for assessment as an educational practice that flows from the core concerns of a school, in this piece particularly seminaries and theological schools. Second, it describes practices that enable assessment to be a resource for achieving the quality everyone wants from an educational and formational program. Finally, it concludes with comments about building a "culture for assessment" so that it becomes a normative practice in how a school goes about the work of education and formation. This article will appear as a chapter in the forthcoming book *Educating Leaders for Ministry*,<sup>1</sup> which is a collection of essays from the work of the 1996–2000 Keystone Conferences of Roman Catholic seminaries, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.*

**2000, vol. 3 no. 3, pp 133-151.**

### After the Facts: Alternative Student Evaluation for Active Learning Pedagogies in the Undergraduate Biblical Studies Classroom

Paul F. Aspan

St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia

Faith Kirkham Hawkins

Gustavus Adolphus College

*Abstract. After laying a theoretical basis for an active learning orientation in the classroom, the co-authors describe methods they developed to evaluate active learning in two different settings of introductory courses in biblical studies. They argue that honouring diverse learning and communication styles among students does not need to compromise academic rigor. The authors show how portfolio-based assessment of student learning allows students a range of ways to demonstrate their mastery of the material. Examples are provided of components of student portfolios from their undergraduate classes.*

**1999, vol. 2 no. 1, pp 14-25.**

### **Assessment for the Right Reason The Ethics of Outcomes Assessment**

Fred Glennon

Le Moyne College

*Abstract. This essay explores and challenges the two primary ethical arguments for assessment, accountability, and professional responsibility, by demonstrating their strengths and exposing their weaknesses, which are rooted in their limited notions of community, contract, and guild respectively. In contrast, I argue for assessment on the basis of an ethic of covenantal obligation which incorporates both accountability and responsibility but grounds them on a broader view of community, a view of the teaching-learning environment as a covenant community replete with mutual obligations and responsibilities, one of which is assessment. While the notion of covenant community has deep roots in American society, its theological underpinnings make the ethic of assessment as covenant obligation most relevant to church-related institutions of higher education, the context in which I teach and learn. I conclude the paper by delineating some principles for ethical assessment practice which follow from a covenantal perspective.*