

Statement of Educational Effectiveness

Academic Year 2019-20

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

McCormick Theological Seminary evaluates its educational effectiveness through an annual review of how well students have met the learning outcomes established for each degree program. The Seminary also compiles student retention, graduation, and placement data. This year, the report includes data pertaining to the seminary's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of a course evaluations summary conducted in Spring 2020. The Seminary's Academic Programs Committee oversees this review, which is then discussed by the Faculty and reported to the Board of Trustees.

In 2017 we were reaccredited by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and by The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) for a period of ten years. ATS noted "our thoughtful and effective educational assessment process that stimulates faculty curiosity and positively impacts curricular and educational practices."

MASTERS LEVEL PROGRAMS

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR MASTERS LEVEL DEGREE PROGRAMS

The faculty established several learning outcomes for the masters level degree programs. These learning outcomes were established as part of the Curriculum Review process conducted in the academic year 2014-15.

Four of the core learning outcomes are shared by all Masters level degree programs:

1. Think critically
2. Construct theological meaning using biblical and Christian traditions
3. Communicate effectively
4. Exhibit growth in cross-cultural engagement

Additional MDiv Learning Outcomes:

5. Exhibit pastoral imagination
6. Lead just and sustainable communities

Additional MAM Learning Outcome:

7. Serve effectively in congregational ministries

Additional MTS Learning Outcome:

8. Engage in theological research and analysis based upon an argument and construct a theological essay or thesis article.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR MASTERS LEVEL DEGREE PROGRAMS

In order to evaluate educational effectiveness in depth, the faculty have generally chosen two or three learning outcomes to be assessed each year with the intention to assess all eight Masters' level learning outcomes over three years. The first cycle began in the academic year 2015-16 and ended in 2017-2018. We began the cycle again in 2018-2019. This academic year, 2019-2020, we took a comprehensive approach by reviewing all eight learning outcomes. In order to do this, faculty were divided into teams of four and each team was assigned the task of reviewing two learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes were assessed based on artifacts submitted in Senior Portfolios as part of the Senior Review process of graduating students. Each graduating student is required to create a Senior Portfolio which consists of artifacts reflecting their work for each of the learning outcomes of their particular degree program. Graduating students submit their portfolios to the Coordinator for the Office of Student Academics, their faculty advisor and another faculty member designated by the Dean for review. Artifacts related to the learning outcomes are then randomly selected from the portfolios. All identifying marks are removed from the selected artifacts and sent to the faculty assessment teams for review.

Members of the faculty and chosen experiential education supervisors read and evaluate these artifacts based on rubrics developed by the faculty and scored on a nine point scale:

- Inadequate (Score 0)
- Beginner (Score 3, 2, 1)
- Competent (Score 6, 5, 4)
- Proficient (Score 9, 8, 7)

Score sheets are collected and compiled to determine student performance. Faculty assessment teams then meet to discuss and evaluate student success in meeting the learning outcomes and ways and means to enhance teaching and educational effectiveness in those areas.

The rubrics for assessment of each learning outcome are available in the Office of Student Academics.

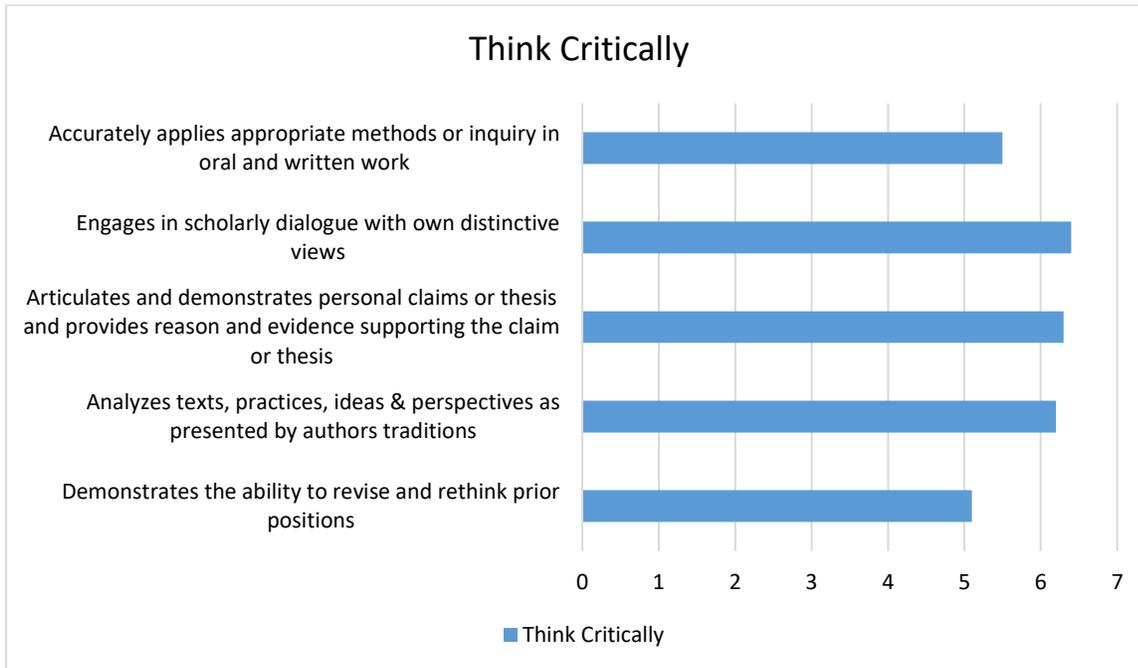
CORE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning Outcome 1: Think Critically

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 1 are: a.) Demonstrates the ability to revise and rethink prior positions, b.) Analyzes texts, practices, ideas & perspectives as presented by authors and traditions, c.) Articulates and demonstrates personal claims or thesis and provides reason and evidence supporting the claim or thesis, d.)

Engages in scholarly dialogue with own distinctive views, e.) Accurately applies appropriate methods of inquiry in oral and written work.

The faculty sampled 4 randomly selected artifacts from the Masters level graduating class of 20 students. Therefore, the sample consisted of 20% of the total number of students. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the standards.

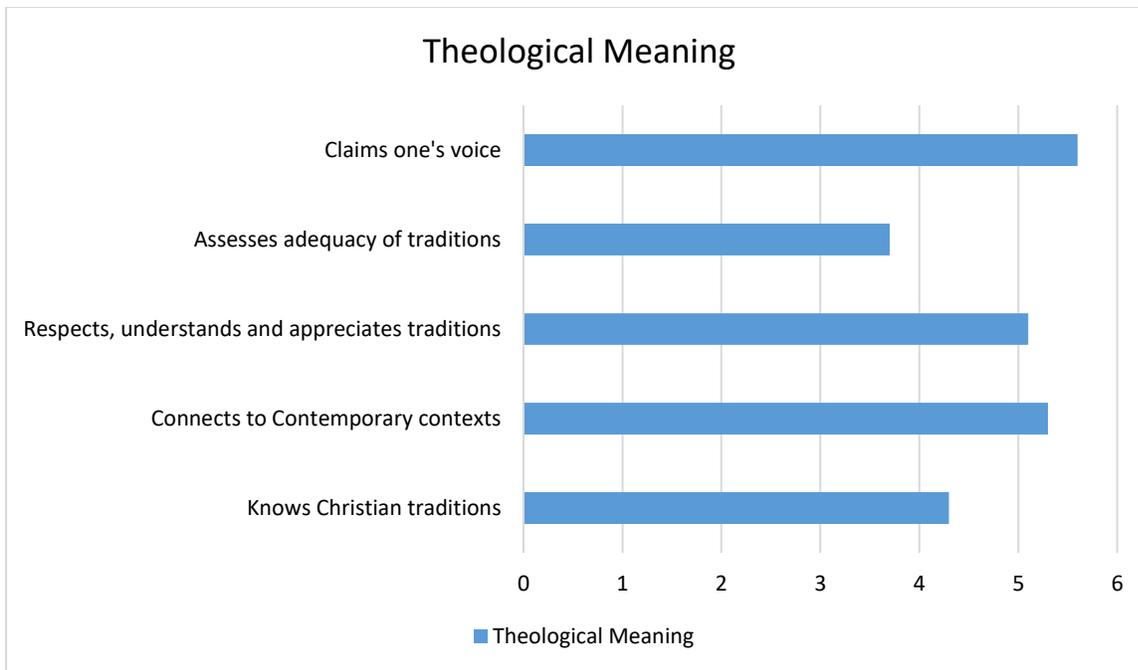


The average performance across the rubric standards for Learning Outcome #1 Think Critically is 5.9 which falls in the competent range.

Learning Outcome 2: Construct Theological Meaning Using Biblical and Christian Traditions

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 2 are: a.) Satisfactorily Demonstrates Knowledge of Biblical and Christian Traditions, b.) Connects Constructively to Contemporary Contexts, c.) Respects Other Traditions, d.) Rethinks, Reforms, Revises, e.) Claims One's Voice Clearly, Persuasively, & Articulately, f.) Uses Biblical and Theological Vocabulary with Fluency.

The faculty sampled 4 randomly selected artifacts from the Masters level graduating class of 20 students. Therefore, the sample consisted of 20% of the total number of students. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the standards.

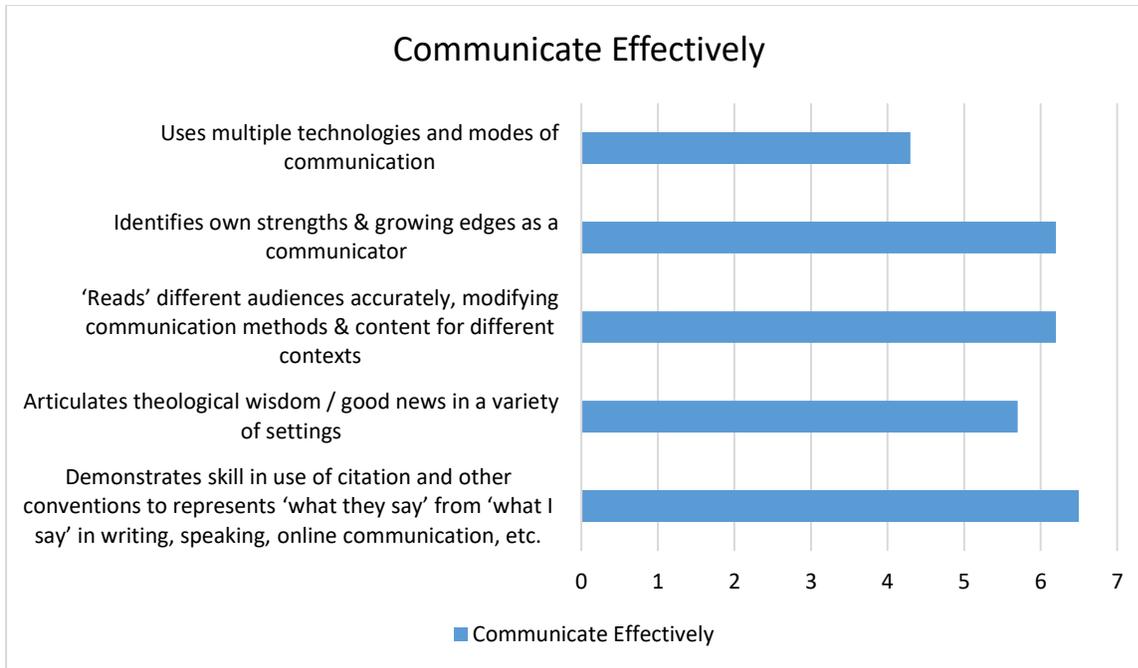


The average performance across the rubric standards for Learning Outcome #2 Construct Theological Meaning using Biblical and Christian Traditions is 4.8 which falls in the competent range.

Learning Outcome 3: Communicate Effectively

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 3 are: a.) Demonstrates skill in use of citation and other conventions to represents ‘what they say’ from ‘what I say’ in writing, speaking, online communication, etc., b.) Articulates theological wisdom / good news in a variety of settings, c.) ‘Reads’ different audiences accurately, modifying communication methods & content for different contexts, d.) Identifies own strengths & growing edges as a communicator, e.) Uses multiple technologies and modes of communication.

The faculty sampled 4 randomly selected artifacts from the Masters level graduating class of 20 students. Therefore, the sample consisted of 20% of the total number of students. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the standards.

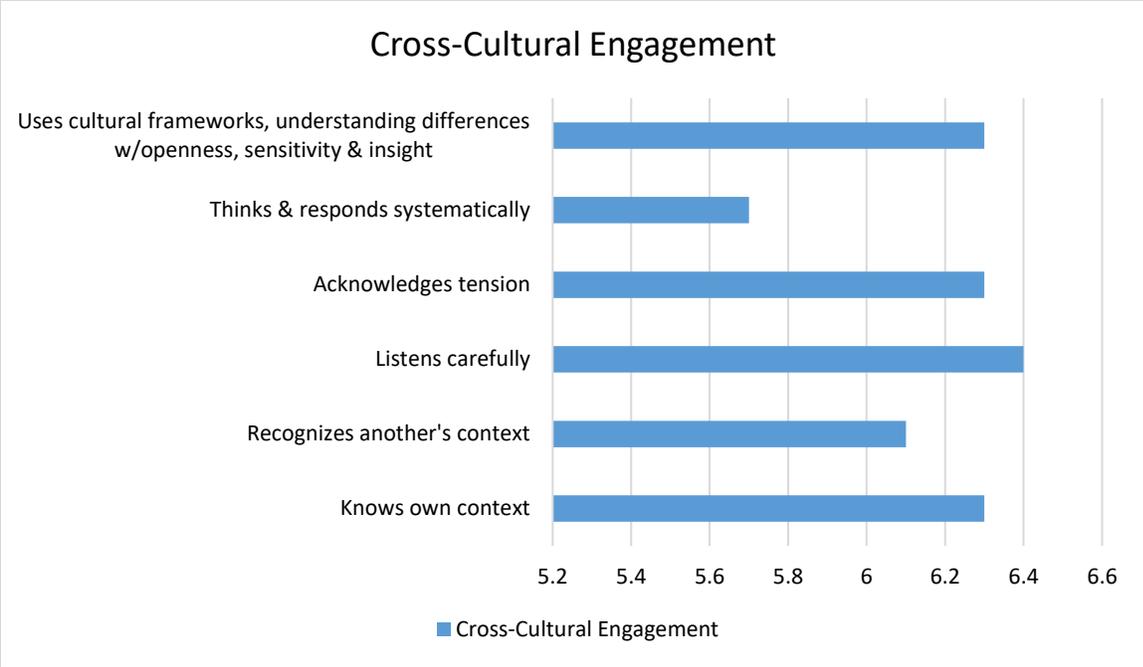


The average performance across the rubric standards for Learning Outcome #3 Communicate Effectively is 5.7 which falls in the competent range.

Learning outcome 4: Exhibit Growth in Cross-Cultural Engagement

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 4, are: a.) Knows Own Context, b.) Recognizes Another's Context, c.) Listens Carefully, d.) Acknowledges Tension, e.) Thinks and Responds Systematically, f.) Uses Cultural frameworks, Understanding Differences w/ Openness, Sensitivity and Insight.

The faculty sampled 4 randomly selected artifacts from the Masters level graduating class of 20 students. Therefore, the sample consisted of 20% of the total number of students. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the standards.



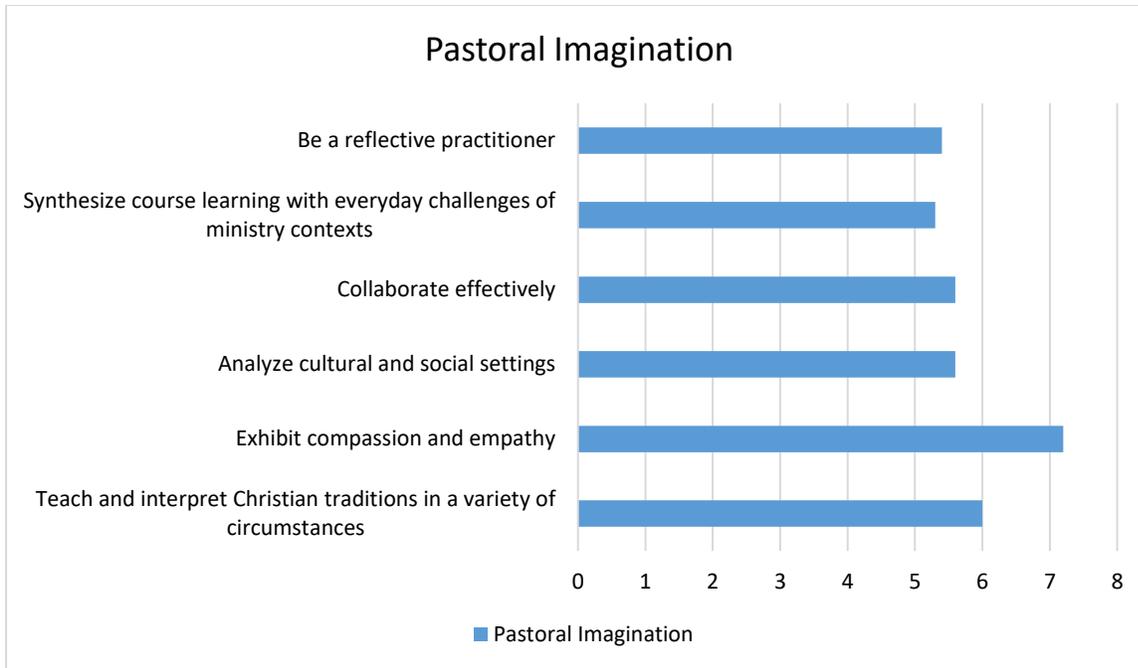
The average performance across the rubric standards for Learning Outcome #4 Cross-Cultural Engagement is 6.1 which falls in the competent range.

ADDITIONAL MDIV LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Learning Outcome 5: Exhibit pastoral imagination

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 5, are: a.) Teach and interpret Christian traditions in a variety of circumstances, b.) Exhibit compassion and empathy, c.) Analyze cultural and social settings, d.) Collaborate effectively, e.) Synthesize course learning with everyday challenges of ministry contexts, f.) Be a reflective practitioner.

The faculty sampled 4 different artifacts from the masters’ level graduating class of 11 MDiv students. Therefore, the randomly selected sample was 36% of the total number of students. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the standards.

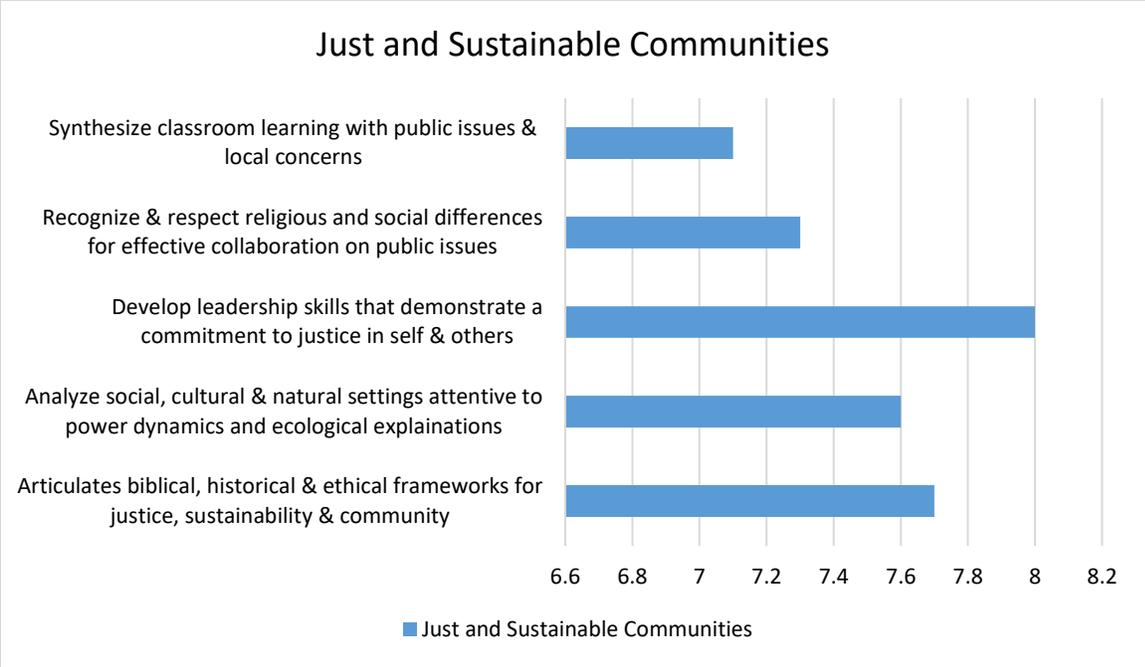


The average performance across the rubric standards for Learning Outcome #5 Pastoral Imagination is 5.8 which falls in the competent range.

Learning Outcome 6: Lead just and sustainable communities

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 6 are: a.) Articulate biblical, historical, & ethical frameworks for justice, sustainability, & community, b.) Analyze social, cultural, & natural settings attentive to power dynamics & ecological explanations, c.) Develop leadership skills that demonstrate a commitment to justice in self & others, d.) Recognize & respect religious & social differences for effective collaboration on public issues, e.) Synthesize classroom learning with public issues & local concerns.

The faculty sampled 4 different artifacts from the masters' level graduating class of 11 MDiv students. Therefore, the randomly selected sample was 36% of the total number of students. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the standards.



The average performance across the rubric standards for Learning Outcome #6 Lead Just and Sustainable Communities is 7.6 which falls in the proficient range.

ADDITIONAL MAM LEARNING OUTCOME:

Learning Outcome 7: Serve Effectively in Congregational Ministries

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 7 are: a.) Works effectively with diverse groups, b.) Shows awareness of personal leadership style & ability to adapt to ministerial setting, c.) Empowers others for discipleship & leadership, d.) Articulates a sense of call & religious/Christian values that support vocation, e.) Engages in spiritual practices that deepen & enhance personal faith, f.) Able to nurture others in the life of faith.

The faculty sampled 2 different artifacts from the masters’ level graduating class of 4 MAM students. Therefore, the randomly selected sample was 50% of the total number of students. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the standards.



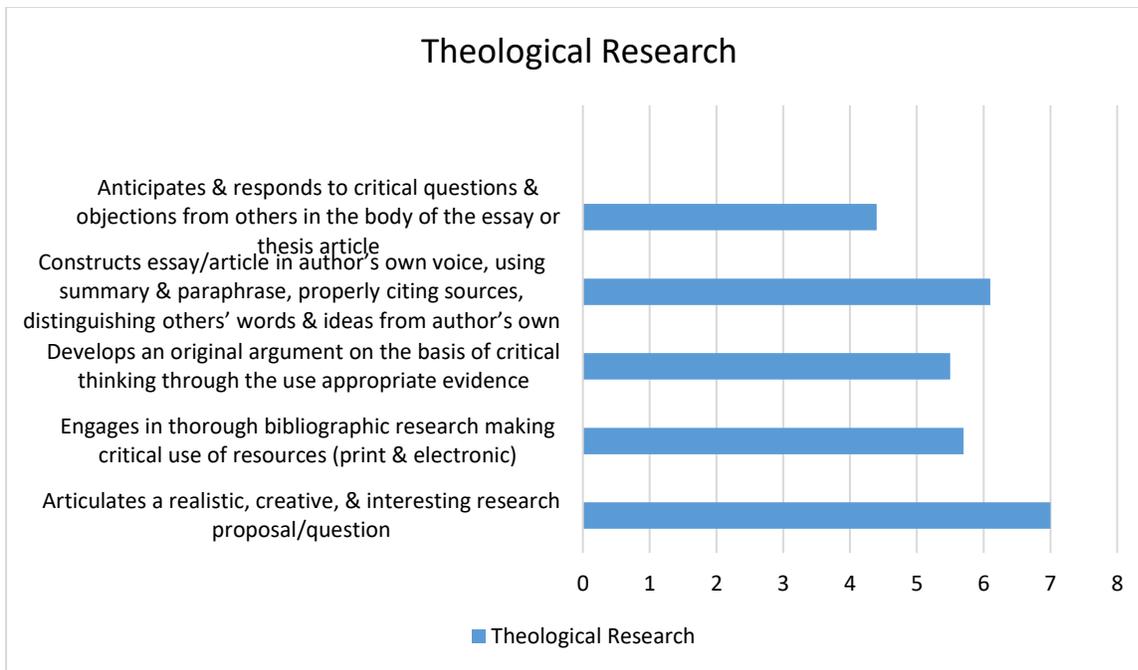
The average performance across the rubric standards for Learning Outcome #7 Serve Effectively in Congregational Ministries is 5.7 which falls in the competent range.

ADDITIONAL MTS LEARNING OUTCOME:

Learning Outcome 8: Engage in theological research and analysis based upon an argument and construct a theological essay or thesis article.

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 8 are: a.) Articulates a realistic, creative, & interesting research proposal/question, b.) Engages in thorough bibliographic research making critical use of resources (print & electronic), c.) Develops an original argument on the basis of critical thinking through the use appropriate evidence, d.) Constructs essay/article in author’s own voice, using summary & paraphrase, properly citing sources, distinguishing others’ words & ideas from author’s own, e.) Anticipates & responds to critical questions & objections from others in the body of the essay or thesis article.

The faculty sampled 2 different artifacts from the masters’ level graduating class of 5 MTS students. Therefore, the randomly selected sample was 40% of the total number of students. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the standards.



The average performance across the rubric standards for Learning Outcome #8 Engage in Theological Research is 5.7 which falls in the competent range.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

- The average performance in seven of the eight learning outcomes is in the competent range.
- The highest average performance is in Learning Outcome 6 – Lead Just and Sustainable Communities with a score of 7.6 and is in the proficient range.
- The lowest average performance was in learning outcome 2 – Construct Theological Meaning Using Biblical and Christian Traditions with an average score of 4.8 but is still in the competent range.

RECOMMENDATIONS

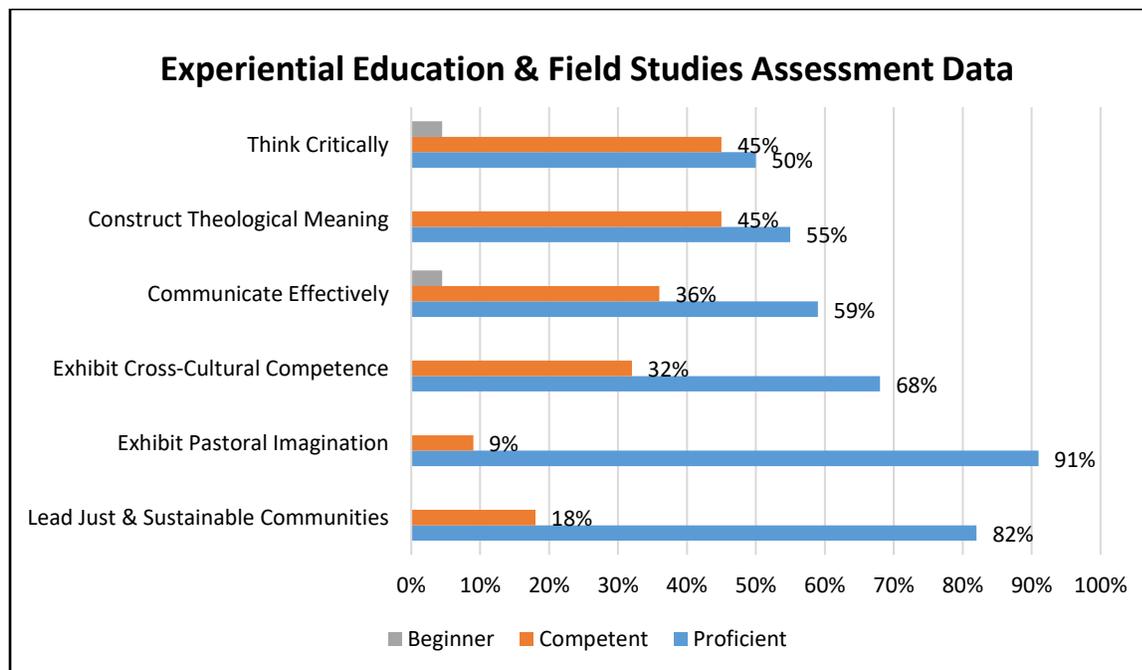
- The faculty is invited to rethink current course assignments. If the standards being applied in the rubrics remain as the intended and desired outcomes for the degrees, then the assignments should nurture and draw out the intended outcomes.
- There is a need for a better mechanism to ensure that there are particular assignments that will evoke demonstrations of reflection and accomplishment in the intended learning outcomes.
- Students should be made aware of which assignments can be used to satisfy particular learning outcomes. Faculty should therefore specify in the syllabus how the course assignments fulfil the course and degree learning outcomes.

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AND FIELD STUDIES ASSESSMENT

Students in the MDiv and MAM degree programs are placed in experiential education sites in congregations and agencies for one academic year. Supervisors evaluate them twice in an academic year, specifically at the end of each semester. Students are assessed based on the MDiv program learning outcomes and the EEFS program goals. The evaluation forms define the six (6) MDiv learning outcomes (four core and two additional) and four to seven standards related to each. MAM students are also assessed based on the six MDiv learning outcomes with the understanding that the two additional MDiv learning outcomes namely, “Exhibit pastoral imagination” and “Lead Just and Sustainable Communities,” essentially cover the one additional MAM learning outcome: “Serve effectively in congregational ministries.” Supervisors score students under each of the standards related to the outcomes on a three-part scale.

- Proficient (Score 9)
- Competent (Score 6)
- Beginner (Score 3)

However, in the 2019-20 academic year, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, assessments were made by the Experiential Education and Field Studies Teaching Team based on their observed level of development. 22 students engaged in experiential education sites were assessed. The following chart is based on student success rates for each of the learning outcomes.



As the chart shows, the majority of students performed at the Competent (Score 6) and Proficient (Score 9) levels, with half or a majority of students performing at the Proficient level in all learning

outcomes. In only two (2) of the outcomes was there a student that performed at the Beginner level.

QUALITATIVE DATA FROM SENIOR REVIEWS

The following data is a compilation of recommendations and suggestions offered by the graduating class of 2020 during the Senior Review process:

Academics

- The availability of more online courses would be helpful to commuter and out-of-state students.
- Students raised the question of whether introductory courses like Introduction to Biblical Studies, Introduction to Theology, and other courses taken in the first or second year of studies are truly introductory. Or are they more like cap-stone courses for more advanced students?
- The course Pilgrimage In Faithfulness (PIF) continues to be a transformational learning site at the beginning of Seminary, providing time to learn about other denominations, traditions, and understandings of sacraments and ministry. More courses like PIF (where learning happens through mutual comparison by students and faculty, recognizing differences in context, and visits to churches and communities other than one's own) would be appreciated.
- Some students enter McCormick with English as a second, third, or fourth language and are new to the US. Making too many assumptions about Christianity, ways of approaching the Bible and Theology, and church life (as if all students share the same common knowledge) increases the learning challenge for new students.

Technology

- A course or longer orientation to using digital resources in Seminary would be appreciated. Navigating Alexandria, JKM Library, online registration, information provided by email with links, and writing and editing online pose a steep learning curve to new students returning to school from other careers. Providing a digital skills course for seminary and ministry rather than a piecemeal approach would be very useful.

Student Life

- Given the transitions of coming to seminary with multiple other responsibilities, anxiety of school life and commuting, and general stress of life 'in our times,' there is a need for more courses that build-in practices of self-care, spiritual growth, and mutual storytelling that equip students better for the demands of ministry today, and that are formational for the practices of ministry with others who also live with transitions, anxiety, and stress. Courses that incorporated prayer and storytelling were particularly appreciated.

Co-Curricular activities

- Seminary programs outside of class like special lectures, panels, and community worship were often inaccessible to commuters in the evenings. How might these special learning and worship events be recorded, edited, and posted in Alexandria (the LMS) for commuters to view, or what might be provided before classes begin in the evenings?
- Some courses and instructors tend to overwhelm students with information and new lines of inquiry. Given the busy lives of commuter students, time for processing learning in courses and going deeper with reading and research is too limited. Consideration given to how much new students can absorb and process in multiple courses over a year would be helpful.

DMIN PROGRAMS

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR DMIN PROGRAMS

McCormick offers three options for its Doctor of Ministry program: the McCormick DMin, Association of Chicago Theological Schools (ACTS) DMin in Preaching (offered in conjunction with five other institutions), and Ecumenical DMin (offered in conjunction with two other schools). McCormick's faculty established five learning outcomes for its DMin degree and for its students in the ACTS DMin in Preaching. The Seminary intends that students who graduate from McCormick with a DMin degree will be able to do the following:

1. Analyze social and cultural factors impacting society in general and her or his own specific setting of ministry.
2. Use and integrate a variety of biblical, theological, and historical resources into her or his own specific practices of ministry.
3. Form clear objectives and strategies to address challenges and opportunities in her or his own specific settings.
4. Implement evaluative methods that encourage ongoing critical reflection on the practice of ministry in her or his own specific settings.
5. Nurture collegial relationships that strengthen her or his own vocational sense of identity and the practice of ministry in her or his own settings.

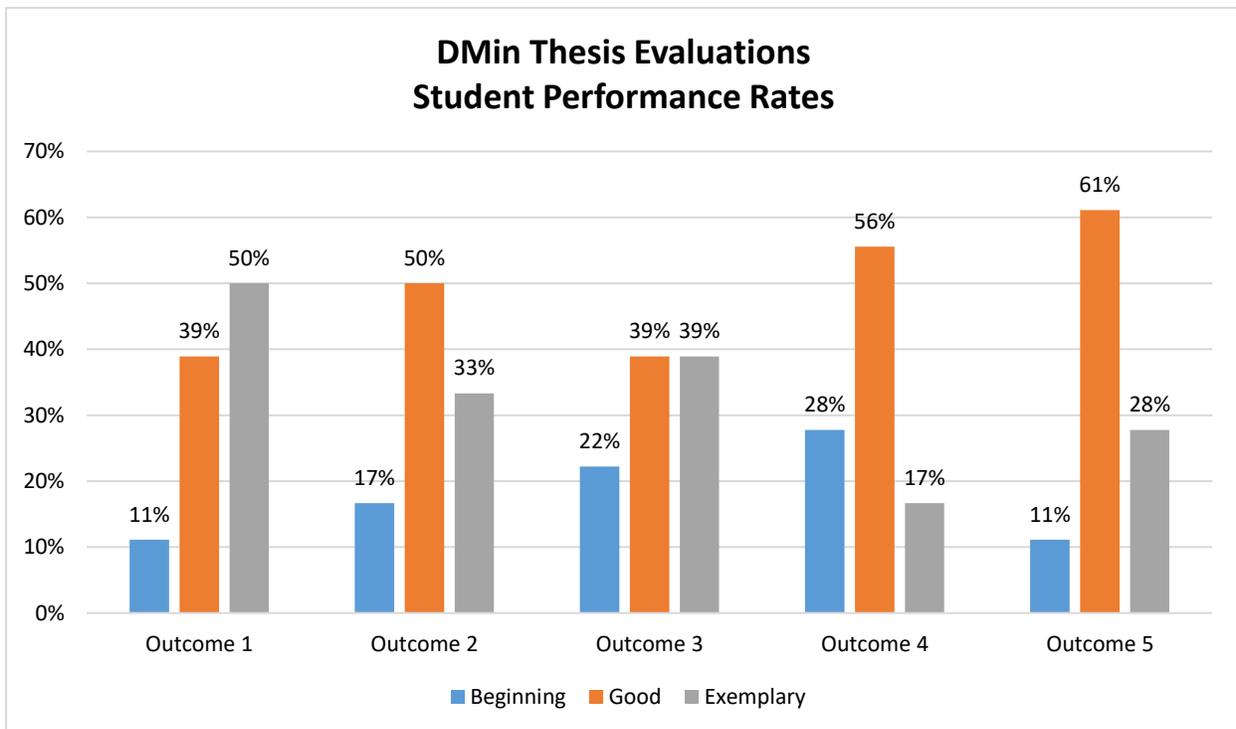
ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR MCCORMICK DMIN AND ACTS DMIN PROGRAMS

The seminary employs direct measures to evaluate its educational effectiveness in the McCormick and ACTS DMin programs. Each graduating student is required to submit her or his own doctoral thesis and defend it before a committee that includes the advisor, a faculty or alumna/us reviewer, and a peer reviewer (another DMin student). Committee members read and evaluate the DMin thesis according to a three-point scale for each learning outcome:

- Beginning – Developing
- Good – Accomplished
- Exemplary – Excellent
- N/A

Thesis Evaluations for DMin programs

Along with the oral presentation approval form, each committee member completes an evaluation form, assessing how well the thesis reflects the McCormick DMin program’s learning objectives. We average the achievement levels (Beginning, Good, or Excellent) each reader assessed for every graduating student (rounding up when the achievement level is evenly divided across readers). These averages per student are then used to calculate how well our student theses reflect our learning objectives. The chart below shows a quantitative measure of this assessment as a percentage of achievement level out of the total graduating students for 2020.



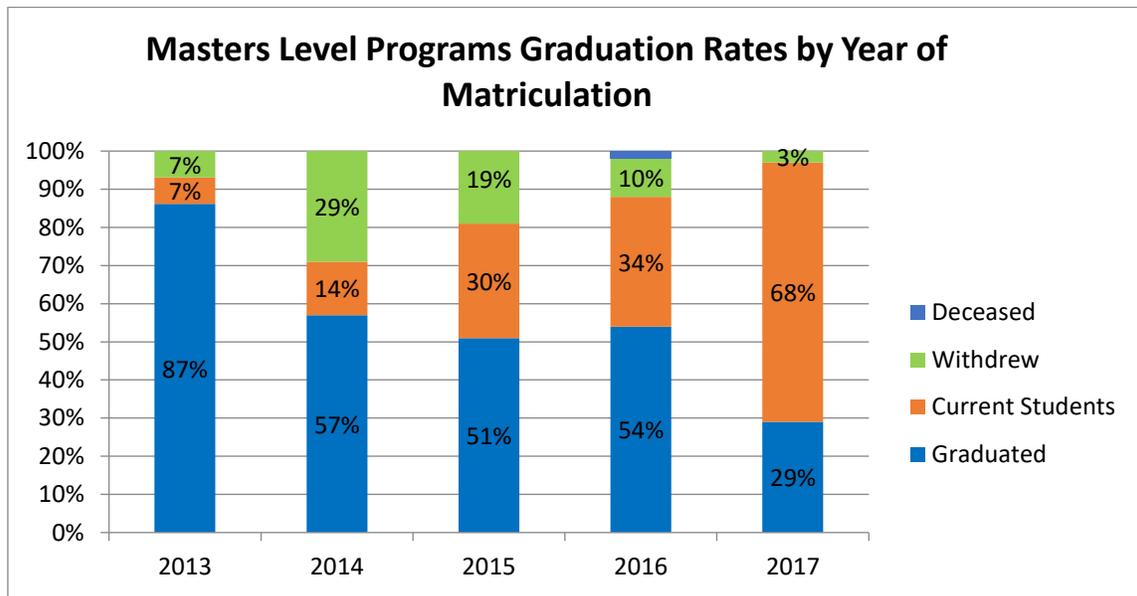
McCormick’s goal is for 90% or more of DMin students to be rated at the level of Good – Accomplished or Exemplary – Excellent. As the chart above indicates, this year 82.4% of DMin students achieved this desired outcome.

The Ecumenical DMin program has a separate set of learning outcomes, which are available from the DMin office at McCormick. There was one Ecumenical DMin graduate from McCormick in 2009, one in 2012, one in 2013 and two in 2017.

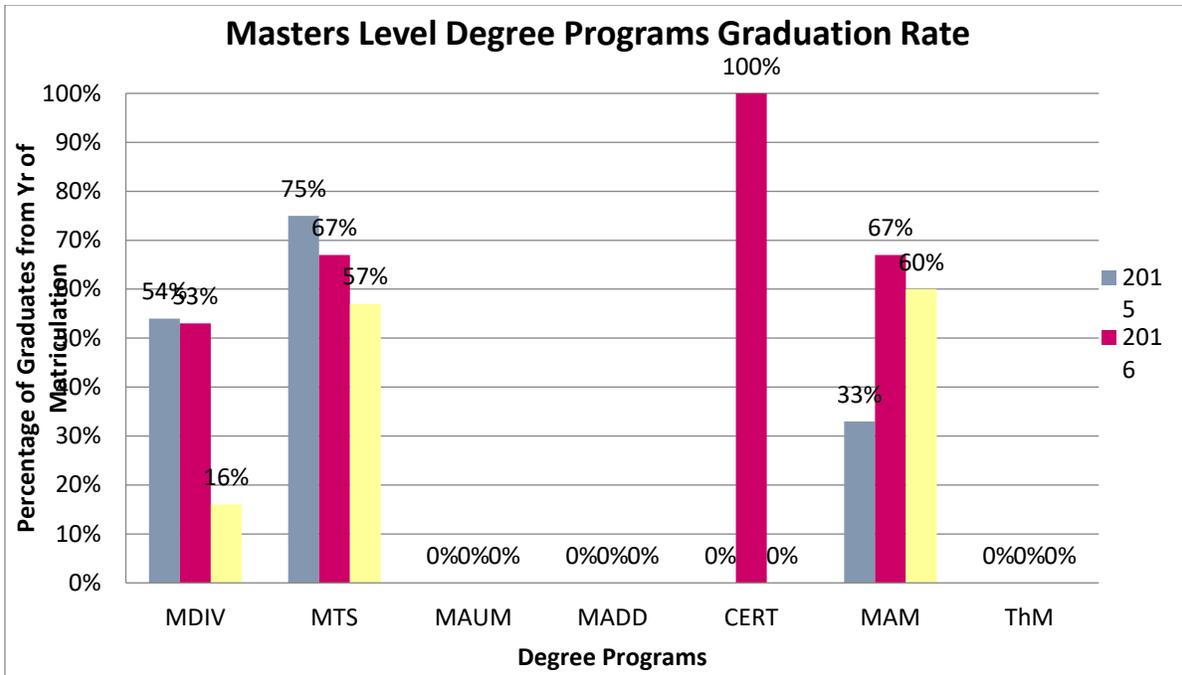
GRADUATION AND RETENTION RATES

Masters Level Programs

McCormick assesses the graduation and retention rates of the student body by assessing the current percentage of Masters level students who have since graduated, continue as students or have withdrawn or deceased. Graduation rates from cohorts who matriculated into any Masters level program at the Seminary from 2012-2016 are found on the chart below:

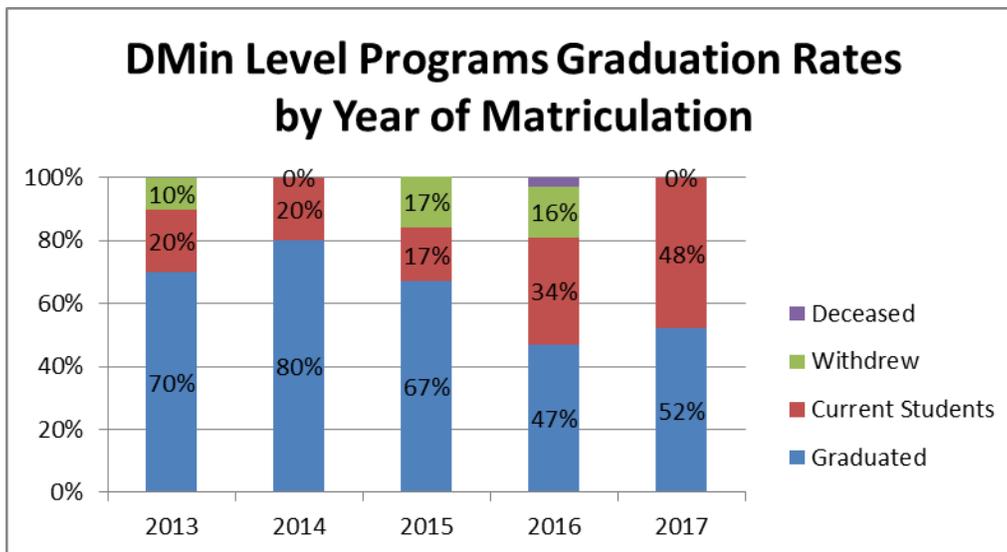


Comparative graduation rates by Masters level degree program (MDiv, MTS, MAM) for cohorts who matriculated from 2014-2016 are indicated in the chart below.

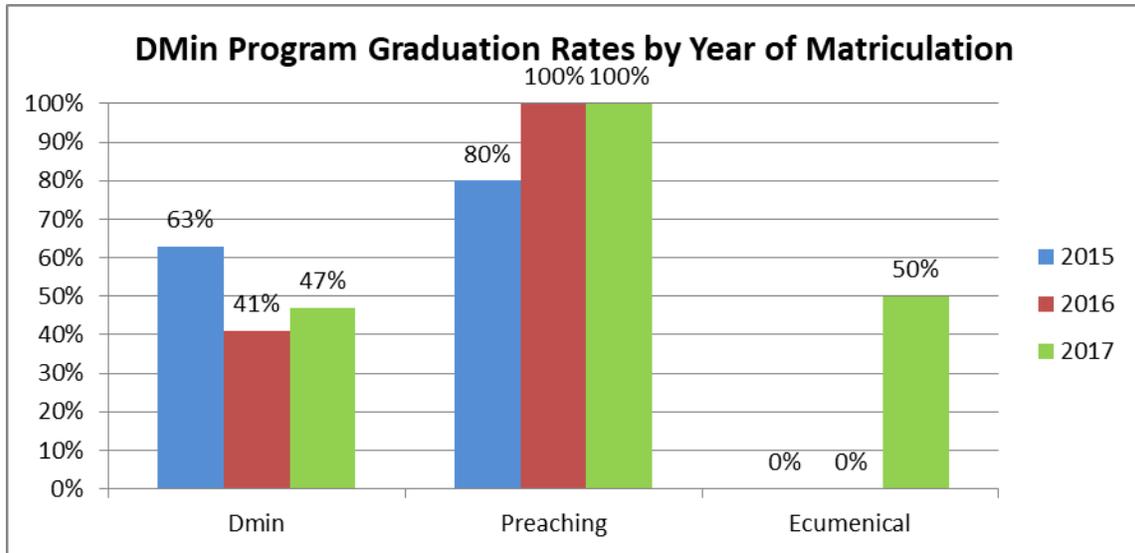


Doctor of Ministry Programs

McCormick assesses the graduation and retention rates of the student body by assessing the current percentage of DMin students who have since graduated, continue as students or have withdrawn. Graduation rates for cohorts who matriculated from 2013-2017 are indicated in the chart below.

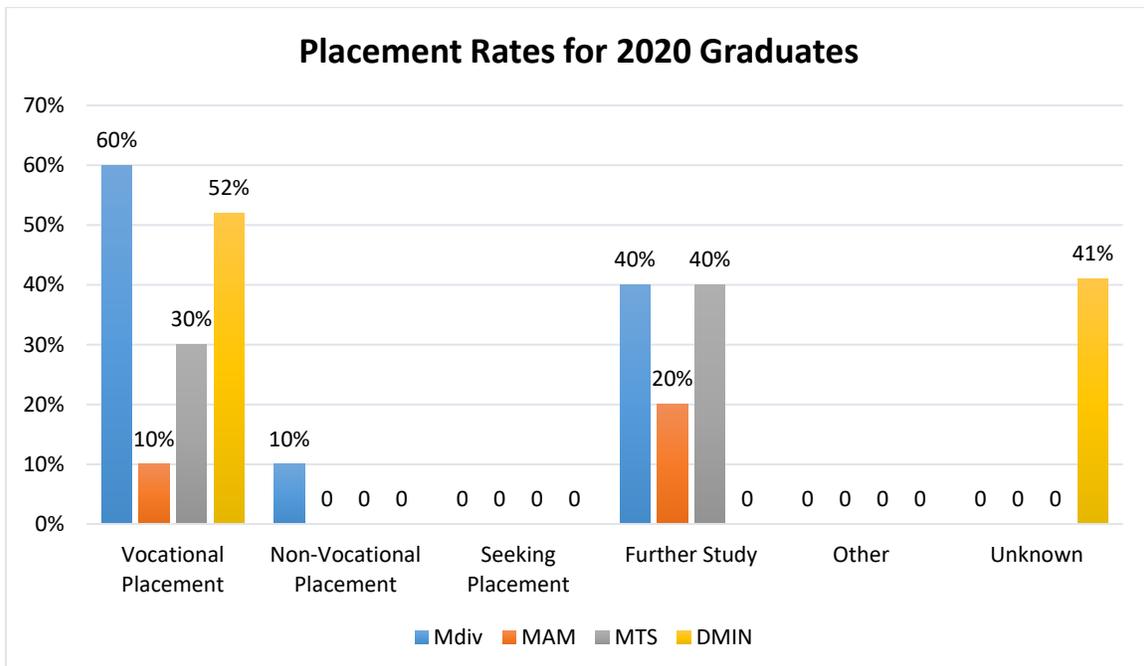


Comparative Graduation rates for McCormick students in the McCormick DMin program, ACTS DMin in Preaching program and Ecumenical DMin program are represented in the chart below. The data represent findings from cohorts who matriculated from 2015-2017.



PLACEMENT RATES

Placement rates for 2020 graduates from all degree programs are displayed in the chart below. The data indicates that high percentages of the MDiv (60% in 2020) and DMin graduates (52% in 2020) are employed vocationally within a year of graduating from McCormick. In the MTS and MAM programs, high percentages of graduates pursue further studies (40% each in 2020).



RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COURSE EVALUATIONS SUMMARY

In Spring 2020, all students were encouraged to participate in a special course evaluation which assessed various aspects of the student learning experience both pre- and post the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This course evaluation assessed the extent to which the following aspects of learning were fulfilled:

1. The purpose and objectives of the course were clearly explained in the syllabus and/or communicated through some other mode
2. Policies of the course on such matters as grading, absence from class, schedule of assignments, rubrics for grading, etc., were clearly stated in the syllabus or communicated through some other mode;
3. Course materials, presentations, and assignments supported the course's stated objectives;
4. The course made effective use of both academic technology (such as Alexandria) and other online resources
5. Feedback on written and oral assignments was timely, helpful, and constructive
6. The student participated fully, attended all class sessions, completed assignments thoroughly and in a timely manner and felt engaged with peers in this course
7. The instructor was well prepared for the course and effective in teaching it
8. The instructor(s) created a hospitable learning environment for all students.

Each student response received a point in accordance with the scale described below:

- Strongly Disagree (Score -2)
- Disagree (Score -1)
- Neutral (Score 0)
- Agree (Score 1)
- Strongly Agree (Score 2)

The chart below depicts an average number of points for each question. On two aspects, namely – feedback and materials & assignments – students were not asked to distinguish between their experience pre- and post-COVID.

Course Evaluations Summary Pre and Post COVID-19 Pandemic

