

## **Statement on Educational Effectiveness Student Learning Assessment**

### **Overview of Assessment**

The goal of assessment at the New York Theological Seminary is to develop a sustainable process of improvement of student learning. The assessment focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of our programs, seeking evidence regarding the achievement of program outcomes. The purpose of this process is twofold: to assure our constituents that we are doing what we claim to do in our academic programs and to provide clear evidence for ourselves that we are educating our students effectively, and to make improvements when necessary.

### **NYTS Mission Statement**

The mission of the New York Theological Seminary is to prepare faith and thought leaders to engage in relevant, restorative, and revolutionary ministry.

### **Learning outcomes based on NYTS Mission Statement**

Graduates of NYTS from all programs will be able to demonstrate:

- competence in biblical and theological reflection that is faithful to one's own tradition, dynamic in its articulation, and relevant to contemporary intercultural and multifaith contexts.
- the ability to identify, design, and put into practice diverse and inclusive models of ministry to achieve personal, ecclesial, and social transformation and reconciliation.
- the ability to engage in critical reflection that fosters spiritual formation and renewal of individuals, faith-based communities, cities, and the world.

### **Assessment Plan (See Diagram)**

The Seminary's assessment plan is a simple four-step model (described below) that is applied to each program within the Seminary, and which provides evidence of present learning, and which serves as the basis for future improvement:

*1. Learning Outcomes* – Articulation of the most important knowledge, skills, and attitudes that all students in the program should demonstrate. Every program has clearly identified learning outcomes against which it can be assessed. These outcomes—which work

alongside the six learning outcomes of the academic program—are determined by the faculty, and are indications of what they deem most important within a given program

Learning outcomes are written from the point of view of the student, normally beginning with “the student will be able to...”

### *1. Direct and Indirect Measurement*

- a. Some learning outcomes can be quantified and measured. Those which are not quantifiable undergo a process of discernment which entails open discussions concerning the work of the students and the courses. Hence, we both measure and discern the attainment of learning outcomes.
- b. Direct forms of measurement that provide clear evidence of student learning are self-inventories, content knowledge, exams, reflection papers, research papers, and credos or capstones.
- c. Indirect forms of measurement—that provide information that indicates that students have achieved learning outcomes that cannot stand on their own as proof of student learning—are admissions and exit interviews, and the questionnaires students fill out at the end of each course.

### *2. Data Analysis & Discernment*

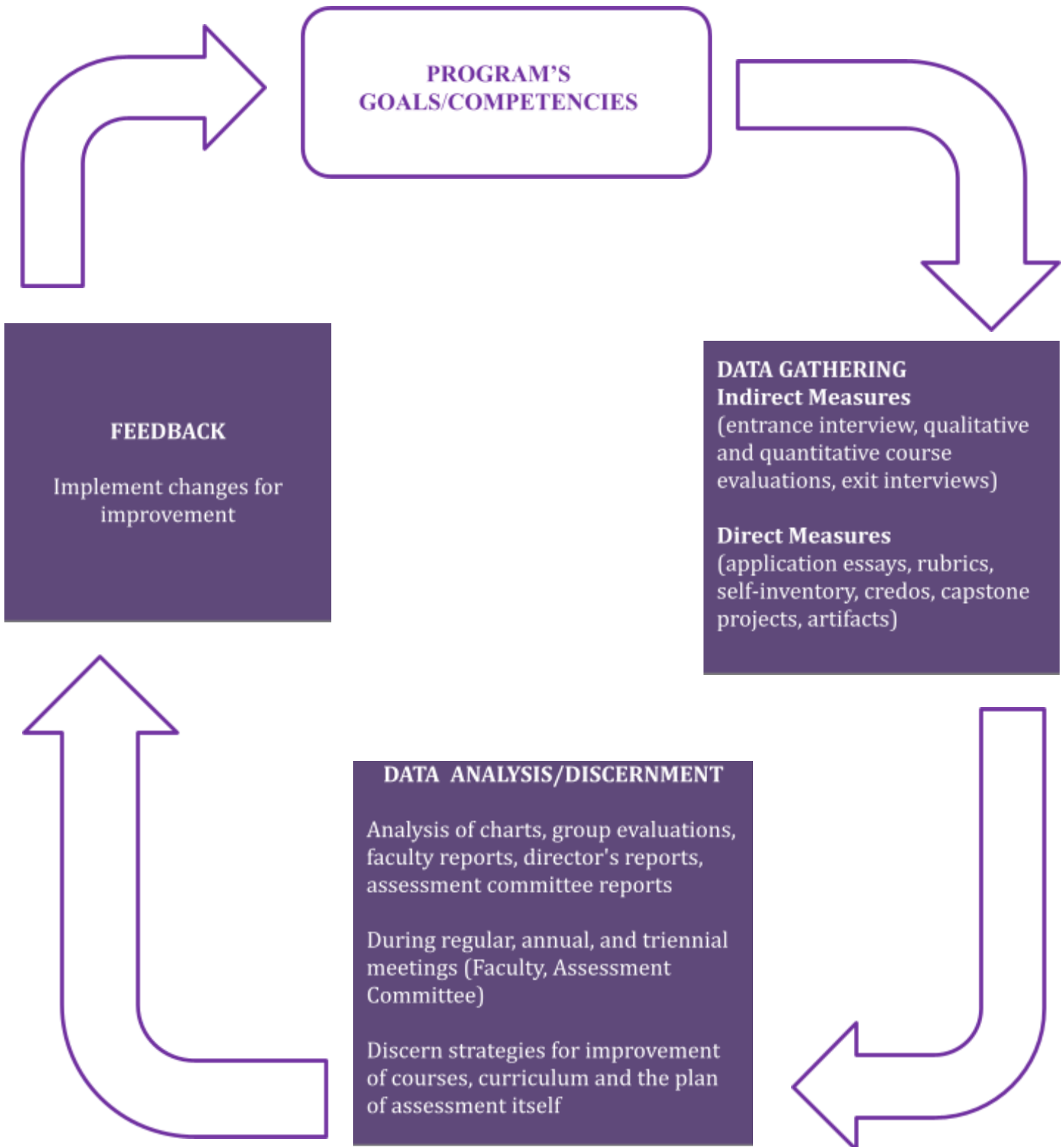
. Carry out measurement and discernment activities to gather evidence of student learning in relation to desired outcomes.

- a. Compile the evidence to show the relationship between program effectiveness and learning outcomes.
- b. Analyze the findings to determine the relative rate of success for achieving program learning outcomes.

### *3. Feedback – Disseminate information about that which is working well in each program and that which requires improvement:*

- . Affirm and strengthen program components which are determined to be fulfilling the desired program learning outcomes.
  - a. Adjust program components that are not fulfilling the desired outcomes.
  - b. Add or drop components according to the evidence of learning outcomes.

# Plans of Assessment Overview



## Discussion

Program outcome statements make it clear to all constituents (students, faculty, administrators, and other interested parties) why a given program exists and how it is related to the Seminary's mission. Such outcome statements help to clarify what we are seeking to accomplish in any given program and will help to eliminate duplication of effort by different programs.

Since this institution is concerned with spiritual outcomes, we do not seek to quantify all outcomes. Therefore, we do not limit ourselves to empirical analysis when we seek evidence of learning outcomes. Some outcomes can be discerned even when they cannot be quantified. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data are valued as evidence of learning.

To accomplish the goal of improvement, findings from the assessment must be analyzed to inform program development and improvement. True assessment is more than program evaluation; it also includes adjusting programs based on the findings. Programmatic elements that are producing effective learning are maintained, and elements that are less effective are strengthened, eliminated, or supplemented. Only after appropriate programmatic adjustments have been made can we say that the assessment loop has been closed.

## Brief Summary of Steps, Roles, and Responsibilities

1. The **Assessment Plan** stipulates that all course syllabi be required to have learning outcomes written in terms of the student; that each academic program be required to have clearly stated outcomes statements and a description of the evidences against which program effectiveness will be assessed; that every program develop an assessment plan which would serve to close the assessment loop through evidence-based data, and that the plan be able to demonstrate progress, level of consistency and inter-reliability.
2. Each **faculty** member (core and adjunct) is expected to develop a syllabus according to the syllabi templates provided by the Director Assessment, which contains the vision and competencies of the seminary, as well as the manner in which each course meets some or all of these competencies; assess his/her course according to the assessment plan; collect and interpret the data of his/her course, including percentages (80% of students in a particular class must meet all the competencies stated in the course syllabus in order for it to be considered a successful course); analyze and discuss the results at the end of each year.

3. The **Program Directors—Doctorate of Ministry, Masters of Divinity, Masters of Professional Studies, Masters of Arts in Pastoral Care and Counseling, Masters of Arts in Religious Education, Master of Arts in Youth Ministry and Online Learning Program—** develop clearly identified outcomes; develop an assessment plan; develop a manual with a detailed description of their program's competencies, their responsibilities before the faculty, the responsibilities of their faculty and/or leaders, the format of their courses, and assessment plan; carry-out program assessment of the program under the supervision of the Director of Assessment and Academic Dean.
  
4. The **Assessment Committee** is composed of all the directors of programs and the Academic Dean; meets as needed during each semester and once during the summer months; and engages in the systematic gathering, analysis and interpretation of data that enables it to make wise decisions.
  
5. The **Director of Assessment** is responsible for developing and implementing an assessment plan for the Academic Department of the Seminary in collaboration with the Academic Dean, directors of programs and the faculty.

## Graduation Rates

Graduation data collected centrally by the Office of the Registrar is analyzed and reported to The Association of Theological Schools. ATS assesses and makes system-wide data for graduation rates available for review by the public. Graduation rate data presented at this level is also compared to other member institutions, which allows New York Theological Seminary the opportunity to evaluate its progress and performance in this area.

**Current Master of Divinity graduation rates after six years: 59.79%**

**Total Completions: 46**

Master of Divinity (MDiv) students have seven years to complete their programs. Rates rise by the end of that limit.

**Current Master of Arts graduation rates after four years: 51.79%**

**Total Completions: 29**

Master of Arts (MA) students have five years to complete their programs. Rates rise by the end of that limit.

**Current Doctor of Ministry graduation rates after six years: 52.83%**

**Total Completions: 28**



Doctor of Ministry (DMin) students have six years to complete their programs.

### **Graduation Rates**

Graduation data collected centrally by the Office of the Registrar is analyzed and reported to The Association of Theological Schools. ATS assesses and makes system-wide data for graduation rates available for review by the public. Graduation rate data presented at this level is also compared to other member institutions, which allows New York Theological Seminary the opportunity to evaluate its progress and performance in this area.

Current Master of Divinity graduation rates after six years: 57%

### **Total Number of Completers: 46**

Master of Divinity (MDiv) students have seven years to complete their programs. Rates rise by the end of that limit.

Current Master of Arts graduation rates after four years: 52%

### **Total Number of Completers: 29**

Master of Arts (MA) students have five years to complete their programs. Rates rise by the end of that limit.

Current Doctor of Ministry graduation rates after six years: 53%

### **Total Number of Completers: 28**

**Doctor of Ministry (DMin) students have six years to complete their programs.**

### **Time to Completion**

One measure of student achievement is the rate at which students complete degrees over time. Using data that reflects graduation/retention for various entering classes, NYTS monitors the last four years in which students would have had the opportunity to graduate at the end of the normal duration of the program.

### **Placement Data**

Placement rates indicate student achievement by signaling that student qualifications, skills, and credentials are recognized by varied employment contexts. Placement data relies on graduates to report on a voluntary survey. This survey is distributed to graduates one year after their graduation. For these particular figures, this survey includes the respondents of 2019-2020 graduating classes. As indicated in the Strategic Information Report chart below, New York Theological Seminary has achieved an overall positive placement rate of 91% in 2020. ATS categorizes placement as “vocational placements” (i.e., congregational ministry, chaplaincy, and other traditional ministry leadership settings), “non-vocational placements” (i.e.,



public school employment, non-profit leadership, employment in public service), and “went on for further study.”