

RECOMMENDATION OF READINESS FOR MINISTRY

Vancouver School of Theology

Revised May 8, 2014

The granting of a Recommendation, i.e., the certification that in the opinion of the members of the Faculty a graduate of the School is suitable for the exercise of the type ministry for which they are training, is the end of a process that begins early in a student's program of studies. This process is done automatically for all M.Div students, and MA PPL students who are preparing for accountable ministry within their denomination. Other students may request the process if desired.

The criteria stated below shall guide the Faculty and the Directors of Denominational Formation as they discuss a student's readiness for ministry throughout that student's entire program. The primary criteria on which the decision to grant or to withhold the Recommendation are as follows: (A) Personal Characteristics, (B) Understanding and Practice of Ministry, and (C) Disqualifying Patterns of Behaviour. The numbered items under each heading are descriptive rather than prescriptive.

The criteria should be shared with field educators and pastoral care supervisors to guide their assessment of students engaged in these dimensions of the School's program. Students should also receive a copy of the criteria as part of their orientation to the School's program of studies.

Students who are entering the M.Div or MA PPL shall submit an application for the Recommendation to the Director of Field Education at the time of their admission to the School (see below). The application shall include the student's written authorization for the gathering of the required information for the Recommendation.

Programmatically, the criteria shall be explicitly used in the discussion of a student's progress during the **Faculty/Student Review Committee (FSRC)** occurring at the end of each term of study. The key is the identification of patterns of behaviour rather than isolated incidents which of themselves are not necessarily indicative of a student's fundamental character and readiness for ministry. In the event that the Faculty/Student Review Committee identifies any concerns that might affect the granting of a Recommendation at the time of a student's graduation, the student shall be notified and may be referred to the Dean's Advisory Council, in consultation with the student's Director of Denominational Formation, for consideration of appropriate remediation or other action.

The granting of the Recommendation itself can only be made after certain evaluations are before the Faculty and Directors of Denominational formation, e.g., the assessments of field educators, pastoral care supervisors, and the report of the team assessing the student's ministry position paper. Consequently, the granting of the Recommendation will normally be considered in January of the student's final term.

Students have the right to appeal the decision of the FSRC through the Principal's Appeal Committee. The decision of the Appeal Committee is final.

Any information obtained for the purposes of the Recommendation is confidential and is subject to the School's normal procedures regarding access to and discussion of confidential student information.

Recommendation Notation: A notation regarding the granting (or lack thereof) of the Recommendation for Readiness for Ministry will be included on a student's final transcript.

Guidelines For Recommendation Assessment

A) Personal Characteristics

- 1) **Faithfulness to Persons and Tasks:** Respects and cares for others. Values ideas and needs of others. Practices adequate self-care. Communicates honestly. Demonstrates leadership abilities.
- 2) **Personal Integrity:** Demonstrates authenticity, sincerity and congruity in word and deed.
- 3) **Personal Responsibility:** Maintains commitments, schedules, promises, inner convictions. Manages personal finances in a responsible way. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Shows consistency in responses to persons and circumstances.
- 4) **Flexibility:** Adaptive to new situations and contests. Copes well with the unexpected. Able to relate to a wide variety of people, e.g., age, gender, cultures, economic status, etc.
- 5) **Gifts of Caring:** Sensitive to needs and feelings of other people. Encourages others to share their problems and to seek appropriate help/support. Helps others evaluate options and make their own decisions. Speaks the truth in love.
- 6) **Self Awareness:** Aware of how others perceive her or him. Able to solicit honest feedback. Able to be self-critical.

B) Understanding and Practice of Ministry

- 1) **Vocational Clarity:** Has a clear vocational identity and direction. Gives evidence of spiritual growth and development. Has a disciplined life of prayer. Able to articulate a well-grounded personal faith.
- 2) **Mission of the Church:** Demonstrates support for the mission of the church. Committed to public ministry. Concerned about justice issues. Cares for the marginalized, the alienated and the needy.
- 3) **Denominational Collegiality:** Feels at home in her or his denomination and is familiar with the denomination's ethos and history. Can work within denominational structures. Is respectful of other traditions within her or his denomination and of other denominational and faith traditions.
- 4) **Coping with Stress/Conflict/Life Crises:** Understands conflict as an inevitable part of community life. Seeks fairness, openness and good communication in a conflict situation. Deals with stress in a balanced, healthy way. Is constructively supportive when others ask for help.

C) Disqualifying Patterns of Behaviour

- 1) **Pursuit of Personal Advantage:** Inappropriately manipulates institutional structures to meet personal needs. Tries to control situations to an inappropriate degree. Rejects others' needs or desires and aggressively pursues their own.
- 2) **Inappropriate Self-Protective Behaviour:** Under stress becomes guarded and secretive or, alternatively, aggressive and bullying. Excessively self-interested. Inflexible about schedules, appointments, etc. Tends to shift blame to others or to circumstances.
- 3) **Aggressive/Abusive Behaviour:** Attacks persons not issues. In intense situations consistently bursts with anger or withdraws in hostility.

Application for the Recommendation of Readiness for Ministry

Applicant's Name: _____

Program of Study: _____ Denomination: _____

I, _____ (print name) have read and fully understand the guidelines for the Recommendation assessment, and give my full permission for the gathering of the required information for the Recommendation.

I understand that a Recommendation of Readiness for Ministry notation will appear on my VST transcript.

Applicant's Signature: _____

Date signed: _____

Please submit this application to the Director of Field Education