

TIPS FOR FACULTY ADVISORSin Advising Presbyterian Students

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For Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) students who hope to move into ordained ministry following graduation there are three tracks/processes that need to be completed simultaneously during their years at LPTS:

1. Completion of the academic and co-curricular requirements of LPTS for an M.Div. degree. Advising toward this end is what you do for all students, including Presbyterians, and is the main focus of the advisory system.
2. Completion of the Preparation for Ministry Process as spelled out in section G-2.06 of the PCUSA Book of Order. Working with the presbytery Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) students must move through the processes of inquiry, candidacy, certification of readiness to receive a call, and ordination. In most cases this will also require that students take certain courses required by their CPM that may not be seminary required courses. This process takes a minimum of two years (and usually closer to three), so if Presbyterian students do not become an Inquirer during their first year in seminary, the will not be able to receive a call to be a pastor when they graduate.
3. Passing five ordination exams. Students must receive a passing grade on standardized ordination exams in Bible Content, Theology, Biblical Exegesis, Polity, and Worship and Sacraments. Except for Bible Content students must get the permission of their presbytery to take these exams and often this is not allowed until the end of the second year in an M.Div. program. Students should keep these exams in mind when selecting classes and take them as soon as possible since they will not be able to even start the process of seeking a call until all have been passed.

How faculty advisors can help Presbyterian students navigate these tracks:

1. Be sure students have a plan and a schedule for navigating all three tracks from the beginning of their seminary career and that they update their plans regularly.
2. Encourage students to begin the preparation for ministry process immediately on entering seminary by becoming an Inquirer (if they have not already done so)

and to move through each of the subsequent phases as soon as possible. The biggest reason that Presbyterian students are not able to receive calls when they graduate is that they waited too late to begin this process.

3. Be sure that Presbyterian students include courses required/strongly suggested by their CPM (but not LPTS) in their academic program. Most presbyteries require students to complete the following courses/co-curricular experiences:
 - Presbyterian Polity course (now taught with Presbyterian Heritage)
 - Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
 - A year's field education in a PCUSA or other Reformed congregation
 - Sexual Harassment training
4. Encourage students to time and take courses in ways that will aid them in doing well on their ordination exams. Among the courses that will be helpful for doing well on the exams (and doing well in Presbyterian ministry) are courses in Biblical Exegesis, Presbyterian Heritage & Polity, Reformed Theology and Confessions), Presbyterian Polity, Leadership in a Connectional Church, Reformed Worship, and To Be Reformed (a one-hour introduction to the positions of major Reformed theologians). Since the "senior exams" are often taken in August prior to their final year in seminary, it would be good if students could complete such courses before their senior year.
5. If students have questions or concerns about tracks 2 and 3 or issues about working with their presbyteries, please refer them to Cliff Kirkpatrick, Emily Miller, or Kilen Gray who are advisors for Presbyterian students, encourage them to participate in the Presbyterian Connection, and/or suggest that they read carefully the two manuals that describe these processes in detail:
 - "Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry in the PCUSA"
<http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/prep4min/pdfs/handbook.pdf>
 - "Handbook on Standard Ordination Exams in the PCUSA"
<http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/prep4min/pdfs/ordination-exams-handbook.pdf>