Psychological Evaluation for Ministerial Applicants

To: CMLTs and those performing the psychological evaluation for ministerial applicants via Church Order Article 7 and 8
Re: Resources to help in administering the psychological evaluations

When the Synod charged the Candidacy Committee with the task of administering the process of pastoral affiliation via Church Order Articles 7 and 8, one significant aspect of the task was the administration of psychological evaluations. In order to offer guidelines for this task, the Candidacy Committee consulted with Calvin Seminary. The seminary has been performing such evaluations on behalf of the CRC for Article 6 candidates for a number of decades.

The two attached documents (The Process of Student Psychological Evaluation and A Glossary of Ten Terms that relate to Student Psychological Evaluations) give Candidacy Committee staff and CMLTs the information needed to orient psychologists across the country who do psychological assessments for Article 7 and 8 candidates. (These documents are borrowed with permission from Calvin Theological Seminary).

Psychological reports are to be done by psychologists selected in consultation with the Candidacy Committee. The information provided on the following pages is intended to be a resource to the psychologists who serve us in this task.
The Process of Student Psychological Evaluation

1. Incoming students at CTS (in the Master of Arts (M.A.) and Masters of Divinity (M.Div. programs) sit for a clinical interview with a given psychologist in which an initial history is taken, the psychological testing is explained, and the evaluator begins to know the student. [At the student’s choice, his or her mate may attend this meeting.]

2. Students then sit for the following testing instruments:

   **Minnesota Multi-phasic Personality Inventory (MMPI -II)**
   A test designed to measure personality traits that may foster or hinder effective functioning.

   **Rotter Incomplete Sentence- Adult Form**
   This test assesses the person’s perception of the world and seeks to identify positive and negative life adjustment patterns.

   **FIRO-B**
   This questionnaire is designed to measure fundamental interpersonal relationship ability and orientation.

   **Personal History Form**
   This is a questionnaire used to gather information about family, education, work, and health.

   **Millon Index of Personality Styles, Revised (MIPS)**
   This is a test designed to measure personality styles in normal functioning adults, including their motivational styles, thinking styles, and behaving styles.

3. Students then sit for a feedback interview with the given psychologist to review the findings of the testing and discuss the suggestions and recommendations that may be made for remediation and psychological growth of the student.

4. Students then sit with their faculty advisors to review the findings of their written psychological evaluations and discuss the suggestions or recommendations that may have been made. The student’s responses to the evaluation are solicited. Plans for action, if suggested or recommended, are negotiated.

A report of this review is then sent to the office of the Director of Ministry Formation.

If you have further questions about these terms and how they are used, please feel free to contact Dr. Ron Nydam, Professor of Pastoral Care (rjnydam@calvinseminary.edu).
A Glossary of Ten Terms that relate to Student Psychological Evaluations

1. The following are the choices that evaluating psychologists may consider useful resources for the remediation of emotional difficulties that seminary students report:

   GC 1) participation in seminary group counseling (This is a lighter weight response which facilitates emotional vulnerability and learning within the context of group dynamics.)

   CPE 2) Clinical Pastoral Education (This program, available locally and nationally, integrates the skills of pastoral care in a chaplaincy setting with personal and interpersonal development of the student. It offers significant involvement in both self awareness and pastoral skill. It is not pathologically focused.)

   IC 3) individual counseling (This is a very focused, therapeutic review of issues of anxiety or depression that may impede the fuller functioning of the student.)

   AT 4) assertiveness training (This is a specific response to problems of shyness inhibition that may limit a student’s effectiveness in both pastoral and leadership roles.)

   RT 5) relaxation training (This is a behavioral response to problems with anxiety which is of benefit to some students, especially those not psychologically minded.)

   AS 6) academic support (This means finding resources to students in managing the processes of learning)

   DC 7) Dale Carnegie/Toast Masters (These programs train people public speaking skills.)

   M 8) mentoring (This resource asks that the student, with help from the DFE, identify a pastor/mentor for guidance and reflection on ministry.)

   TM 9) time management (This resource asks that students learn skills in organizing their time/ day-timer style.)

   ADHD 10) ADHD Screen (This evaluation checks for the diagnosis of attention deficit [sometimes hyperactive] disorder along recommendations for helpful medications.)

2. The following are the terms to be used by evaluating psychologists in their report to Calvin Seminary with these specific intended meanings:

   a suggestion - this term is used by evaluators to intend a suggestion for further growth and emotional development of the student. It is feedback for the students that requires no action. It is a suggestion. It may be wise to follow up on it, but it is not considered a requirement for candidacy in CRC ministry.

   a recommendation - this term is used by evaluators to intend that students need to follow through on feedback in order to remediate an emotional difficulty of some sort. This is taken to be feedback that needs a cooperative response from the student in order for candidacy in the CRC to be successful. If a student chooses not to follow up on an evaluator’s recommendation, candidacy in the CRC is impeded.
In the course of each year at CTS the Candidacy Committee serves every student interested in ordained ministry in the CRC with a letter of review that makes reference to several different categories:

1. intends that there are no emotional/functional issues are to be addressed.
2. intends that students are encouraged to consider suggestions made.
3. intends that students must respond to recommendations in order for the student’s candidacy to continue toward future ordination in the CRC.
4. intends that a student’s candidacy is not an option at this time.

The judgments made in these letters are based upon the psychological evaluations, the feedback from field experience supervisors, and evaluations made by faculty members.

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