

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY, ETHICS, and ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Note that this document applies to the Montreal School of Theology and its academic programming and activities, and that McGill University has its own policies that apply to students completing programs or courses within the University. Students enrolled in McGill programs should familiarize themselves with the University's policies.

The present document includes two main sections. The first section describes the ethics of preparation for ministry, and the second section is the formal policy of MST on Academic Integrity.

ETHICS IN PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

Introduction

The Montreal School of Theology values and expects academic integrity in all written work submitted by students. It is expected that all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offenses (see Policy on Academic Integrity, below).

Class Preparation

Your class instructor can be expected to exercise integrity by

- Coming to class well-prepared, having done those things necessary to make that class a worthwhile educational experience.

As a student you will be expected to exercise integrity by coming prepared for class, having

- Read the required reading and clarified those things you did not understand
- Formulated questions and preparing yourself to make a fruitful contribution to class discussion.

In Class

Your class instructor will exercise integrity by treating you with respect. That means

- Addressing questions that arise, and honestly admitting when an answer is unknown
- Setting out clearly in the course syllabus the balance of the course between lecture and discussion
- Encouraging and allowing all to participate in class discussion, while containing those whose enthusiasm makes it difficult for others to participate
- Assuming that you have come to class prepared and therefore ready to be called on to participate without embarrassment
- Respecting the views you express
- Not allowing others to ridicule you or your ideas, or you to do the same to them
- Being careful, when expressing a personal opinion, not to impose one's views on others.

As a student you will exercise integrity in class by

- Taking your instructor and fellow students seriously and treating all with respect

- Showing up for all classes, unless you are simply unable to do so
- Coming to class on time and not leaving early
- Having the appropriate books and texts with you in class
- Making good use of class time by being engaged throughout
- Asking questions for clarification
- Participating in class discussion so that learning is a communal enterprise
- Monitoring your own participation so as to allow others to participate equally
- Respecting other students and their ideas, and not holding side conversations that distract other students or the instructor.

When an instructor fails to live up to these guidelines for integrity, students have the right to challenge him/her. Likewise, the instructor expects academic integrity from all students. In the event that the instructor finds a breach of the MST Policy on Academic Integrity in your work, they will communicate this to you within a reasonable time frame, and will provide you with an opportunity to respond and offer an explanation. If the instructor is not satisfied with the explanation, the breach will be communicated to the MST Academic Committee, which will prescribe a sanction in keeping with the Policy. You should familiarize yourself with the MST Appeal Process (found on the MST website) since this is the general process that will be followed in any appeal made by a student in relation to a sanction prescribed by the Academic Committee.

Learning Covenant in M.Div. 3/Diploma in Ministry

The following expectations, approved by the Academic Committee of the Montreal School of Theology, are ones to which we hold ourselves mutually accountable.

The Montreal School of Theology is an ecumenical theological consortium which affirms that women and men are suited for Christian ministry and leadership by their personal character as well as their spiritual commitment and giftedness, academic competence, and ministry skills. This means that personal qualities are as important as knowledge and the mastery of specific ministerial skills. The process of moving toward effective Christian leadership, therefore, requires an intentional focus on the building of Christian character.

As an ecumenical community of faith and learning, The Montreal School of Theology functions with the belief that Christian character is developed through the experience and practice of community, and is developed by self-discipline rather than externally enforced discipline. Students are responsible for following the community standards and expectations set by their own theological colleges. At the same time, each student is expected to participate in the life of the consortium in a manner that befits those preparing for Christian ministry.

It is expected that students will demonstrate an attitude of respect and Christian maturity by refraining from any written or verbal communications that may be construed as being demeaning to an individual or group in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, or denominational distinctiveness.

As an ecumenical Christian consortium of schools serving the United Church of Canada, The Anglican Church of Canada, and The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Montreal School of Theology stands in the theological tradition of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. We also recognize and affirm the right of each of the participant churches to develop and teach their own confessional standards. We are committed to helping students relate positively to their own tradition and to helping students reflect critically and constructively on their tradition in an ecumenical context. Students are enjoined to deal with

controversial issues through a fair consideration of the various interpretations and due sensitivity to divergent understandings.

Students, by virtue of their application for admission to their respective college and the Montreal School of Theology, upon their registration agree to accept and abide by the standards and expectations of their college and the theological consortium. The Montreal School of Theology, with the agreement of the respective theological colleges, reserves the right to refuse admission, to discipline students, or to dismiss students who, in its assessment, have violated these standards by their actions or attitudes.

Denominational Policies and Expectations

The colleges of the Montreal School of Theology, while committed to shared ecumenical formation for ministry, have a primary commitment to their respective denominational bodies. Each denomination has public policies regarding ethical and professional behaviour of its educators, ministers, supervisors and students. These policies are clear on matters of sexual harassment, abuse of power and general impropriety. All faculty, staff, supervisors and students related to the colleges of MST are accountable to their denominational standards.

Appropriate Boundaries

Sexual boundaries are in some sense easy to describe. It is more challenging in ministry to describe the boundaries that help one remain on the helpful side of the line of ethical and professional behaviour. The power imbalance inherent in ministry relationships makes this all the more challenging. In considering an action or in reviewing the appropriateness of the boundaries of the relationship, these questions may be helpful as touchstones. “How does this relate to the mandate of supervision/learning /ministry to which I have committed myself?” “Would I be comfortable if other colleagues or the college knew about this intended action?” Each college has its own Sexual Abuse and Harassment Policy, located on their respective websites, and you should familiarize yourself with these policies.

Power and Power Imbalance

In any relationship there will be fluctuation in the balance of power, but in a supervisory relationship the balance of power consistently rests with the one in the position of supervisor holding power over the one being supervised. Supervisors and students are not colleagues or co-workers who simply have different responsibilities. One has authority and the responsibilities of instructing, evaluating, and reporting on the work of the other. An imbalance of power is thus inevitable. Simply being conscious of it and prepared to talk about it addresses the vast majority of challenges that can arise. However the supervisor will also want to take intentional care to ensure that power is used for the benefit of the church and of the one seeking supervision and never in a fashion that could be understood as self-serving or abusive.

MST POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY¹

“Plagiarism” means the representation of another’s work, published or unpublished, as one’s own or assisting another in representing another’s work, published or unpublished, as his or her own.

- (a) No student shall represent another person’s work, published or unpublished, as his or her own in any academic writing, such as an essay, thesis, research report, project, sermon or assignment submitted in a course or a program of study, or represent as his or her own the work of another, whether the material so represented constitutes a part or the entirety of the work submitted.
- (b) No student shall contribute any work to another student with the knowledge that the latter may submit the work in part or whole as his or her own.
- (c) No student shall submit in any course or program of study, without both the knowledge and approval of the person to whom it is submitted, all or a substantial portion of any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project, sermon, or assignment for which credit has previously been obtained or which has been or is being submitted in another course or program of study at MST or elsewhere.

Examples

Presenting the work of another person as one’s own: The truth is you may still be found to be plagiarizing even if you have taken the time to put other people’s ideas into your own words, or have used a sequence of ideas that someone else has used without giving credit to the original source. This obviously includes everything from cutting and pasting from a website to re-writing another’s sermon “in your own words”. The key is to document or credit the other’s ideas and work so that others may know the source.

The contribution of one student to another student with the knowledge that the latter may submit the work in part or in whole as his or her own is also a form of academic dishonesty, even if you are not submitting another’s work as your own. You may not participate in a deception in any way.

Multiple submission: The submission of a piece of work for evaluation when that work has previously been submitted for evaluation purposes in any other academic institution.

The falsification of a document, fact or data or a reference to a source in a work.

In the case of sermons, it is standard practice to use stories or examples from others without giving credit in the presentation of the sermon. However, whenever a sermon is presented in written form, (e.g. for credit, in class, or on any website) a footnote should make clear the original source of the story and examples. However, it is never acceptable to borrow word for word even if credit is given. Remember, the vast majority of any sermon should represent your own ideas, and words.

¹ This policy is derived in part from the McGill University policy on plagiarism and cheating, and in part from the Concordia University Academic Code of Conduct and has been modified for the context of the Montreal School of Theology.

Sanctions

One of the following sanctions will be prescribed by the Academic Committee depending on the gravity of the offense:

1. The student may receive a written caution.
2. A piece of work may need to be resubmitted.
3. Additional coursework may be assigned.
4. A grade reduction may be imposed.
5. A failing grade may be entered and a notation on the record will be made regarding the academic misconduct.
6. The student may be dismissed.

Appeals

Any appeal of a sanction should be directed to the Director of MST in writing within ten days of the sanction having been communicated to the student.