**Guidelines for Writing Case Briefs**

A Case Brief is a student’s written response to deal with the critical issues of the case study in depth and detail. Student’s first year brief should be 8–10 pages. Revised briefs and final year cases should be 12-15 pages. Style and content should adhere instructions prescribed by the GST, using Turabian form. M.Div. and MACM students will revise and re-submit briefs for First Review and their Final Review (held each spring).

Your written case brief should accomplish the following functions:

1. **Analysis**—provide brief analysis of the case. Indicate and justify your interpretation of the *key* issues. Strive to identify a few large-scale matters under which you can group the smaller things.
2. **Theological proposal**—argue for and construct the *theological framework* within which to address the key issues and out of which to advance your prescription. Utilize scripture, theological categories, and historical resources; strive to advance a single, coherent proposal.
3. **Prescription**—on the basis of your theological proposal, make *concrete* *recommendations* for the main character to implement. Show how your theological proposal norms and inspires your prescriptions. Use appropriate pastoral resources and skills.

**Case Questions**

Your brief should answer prescribed questions and address any other issues you believe to be important. Do not answer the prescribed questions one after the other, as if taking an essay test!  Instead, organize your brief as seems most appropriate to you, but be sure that it addresses these questions. These guidelines can help you stay on track.

1. Discuss the most significant factors. How would you address those factors?
2. List the questions raised by this case. How would you address these questions biblically, theologically, and pastorally? (or from your experience and training)
3. What are the explicit intercultural dimensions? What implicit dimensions may be present?
4. How have the participants attempted to deal with the issue (with success or failure)? What other alternative actions might be theologically appropriate?
5. What theological concepts support or challenge the actions, statements, or presented problems in the case?
6. Put yourself in the position of the main character, how could s/he offer mature and effective leadership within this specific context? Prescribe concrete and pastorally sensitive strategies. How do your prescribed strategies flow from the biblical and theological vision that you propose?

**Important Tips for Writing Case Brief**

1. Raise questions and provide answers
2. Keep consulting these guidelines as an aid to focus your work
3. Wrestle with issues and critically weigh alternative perspectives
4. Remember you must ultimately offer solutions, answers, and courses of action
5. Discuss your thoughts about the case with peers and other good conversation partners
6. It is normal to feel more capable in some areas that others; many of the larger issues you will find yourself grappling with throughout the program and well beyond
7. You cannot go into great detail on everything; but explain, argue, and provide evidence for your crucial points and key moves

The “theological proposal” section may be the longest, yet be sure to treat analysis and prescriptions adequately.

**Be as comprehensive and integrative as possible**

1. Address issues & use resources across the disciplines—biblical text, history, theology, and ministry—to the best of your ability
2. Use secondary sources appropriately (check Murphy’s *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* for tips)
3. In the Library, you may set aside commonly used sources (rather than checking them out); consult the Theological Librarian or his Assistant in order to determine the correct way to do this
4. Exhibit a grasp of the complexities of the case, but consolidate the issues as much as possible
5. Look for theological loci crucial to the case, develop their biblical and theological content, try to interrelate them so that they provide foundations for making decisions
	1. For example: the nature of God and his mission in the world; the nature and purpose of the church; the significance and role of Christ; salvation; the character of discipleship and Christian living; ministry and the minister; the interrelationship of scripture, tradition, and experience in Christian discernment
	2. Be wary of pragmatism without grounding; discipline your instincts to fit the norms of a theological vision and its principles

**Prescriptions should be as concrete as possible**

1. Be wary of idealism without implementation and embodiment; you must propose practicable steps, not just ideas and abstract constructs or sentiments; yet your prescriptions should be clearly grounded in your theological proposal
2. Your prescriptions should exhibit leadership (i.e. the sort of leadership presumed by the circumstances of the case)
3. Make concrete prescriptions, keeping in mind the major areas for which the minister in this case would be responsible: teaching, preaching, counseling, conflict resolution, equipping leaders and others for ministry, vision-casting, etc.
4. Be wary of general and broad sweeping prescriptions
5. Identify short-term and long-term prescriptions (e.g. what to do in the immediate crisis & how to build healthier church over time)

**Writing & style**

1. Write well (consult *Reasoning and Rhetoric*, *Craft of Research* and *Elements of Style*)
2. Clear thesis statement, good paragraph topic sentences
3. Employ summaries and transitions at section breaks
4. Be concise, use language economically and accurately, make sure each sentence accomplishes something important
5. Use headings and subheadings to aid the reader
6. Remember: the best writing is rewriting
7. Use Turabian style
8. Use secondary sources appropriately
9. Try to use sources from across the “quadrilateral” (text, theology, history, experience) or other theological reflection models
10. Include concise footnotes
11. Conclude with a Bibliography of works cited (in addition to the required page count)
12. You will regularly bump into your own limitations; do not gloss them, but own them, clarify them, and do not hesitate to admit gaps in your knowledge