Formation Standards

Part Three

Standards of the Formation received by the applicant for Companions as Giver of the Full Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Spiritual Director Member, and Ignatian Spiritual Director Member.

1. Introduction

From an early Directory to the Spiritual Exercises, the first quality and duty for a Giver of the Spiritual Exercises is that they have experienced the Spiritual Exercises themselves. The Giver is able to give an account of the Spiritual Exercises and possess the skill to give them. They are also to undertake supervision with a more experienced Giver.

These qualities continue to be applicable today for women and men who have made the full Spiritual Exercises, and who have the desire and the personal gifts necessary to become competent Givers of the Exercises, or Ignatian Spiritual Directors.

The following Standards of the Formation received by the applicant for Companions as Giver of the Full Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Spiritual Director Member, and Ignatian Spiritual Director Member, outline the minimum standards of formation that a Giver of the Full Spiritual Exercises, or an Ignatian Spiritual Director, who wishes to join Companions must have completed.

2. Admission

(a) Principles

Formation programs for givers of the Spiritual Exercises offer professional qualifications to their graduates, so careful admission procedures are required. Before being accepted applicants should:

(i) Have made the full Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, either as a 30-day experience according to Annotation 20, or in the flow of life according to Annotation 19.

(ii) Have a sense of being called to the ministry of giving the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and being an Ignatian Spiritual Director and show evidence of their giftedness for this vocation; or have a sense of being

called to be an Ignatian Spiritual Director and show evidence of their giftedness for this vocation.

(iii) Demonstrate a capacity to listen empathically and enter sensitively into spiritual conversation.

(iv) Have sufficient life experience to enable them to respond with wisdom to a wide range of people from many different walks of life.

(v) Show an openness to learning from their own and others' experience.

(vi) Give evidence of a committed and mature Christian faith and be an involved member of a Christian community.

(vii) Demonstrate a love of and a commitment to prayer.

(viii) Be committed to the process of on-going spiritual direction as a directee and have engaged in it for some time.

(b) Application Process for entry to a formation program

The application process for entry to a formation program should normally entail:

(i) The applicant be given a clear outline of the program, indicating forms of assessment and expectations on completion of the course.

(ii) Completing a detailed application form and an autobiography.

(iii) Submitting at least two recommendations from referees who may be consulted.

(iv) An assessment interview, normally with two of the formation team who will assess the applicant's willingness and aptitude to engage in the process of formation. The interview may use videoconferencing, telephone, or other appropriate means because of issues of distance and accessibility.

3. Curriculum

(a) Introduction

(i) A formation program should give students a clear statement of the philosophy of formation in the course.

(ii) Giving the Spiritual Exercises effectively requires sound theoretical learning and skills training.

(iii) Given that an extended time is needed for students to integrate their cognitive, personal, and experiential learnings, formation programs should be spread over an extended period of time.

(iv) A program of at least 200 hours of student contact, plus at least 50 hours of supervision is required for those wishing to become a Giver of the Full Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Spiritual Director Member of Companions.

(v) A program of at least 100 hours of student contact, plus at least 20 hours of supervision is required for those wishing to become an Ignatian Spiritual Director Member of Companions

(b) Principles of Learning

The following principles of learning are suggested:

- The course content, process and learning goals should be clearly articulated.
- The program should be designed to help the students move towards the learning goals.
- The program should provide an adult learning environment.
- The program should integrate experience and theory.
- Learning processes may include lectures, written notes and set readings, seminars, group discussions, role plays, triads, a practicum in giving the Spiritual Exercises.

(c) Theory

(i) Since giving the Exercises is a practical art, theoretical components of a formation program should be taught in ways that relate to the actual practice of the ministry.

(ii) While it is not essential that the one who gives the Exercises have a degree in theology, it is important to have a basic understanding of theology and Scripture. A sound knowledge of Christology, the theology of grace and the New Testament is important.

(iii) Courses/students should also develop a broad theoretical base and include relevant theory on the psycho-spiritual development of the human

person, interpreting religious experience, the discernment of spirits, and different ways of praying.

(iv) Formation programs should include an understanding of social sin and social justice.

(v) Students should be able to distinguish clearly between psychological counselling and spiritual direction and be able to articulate the difference in terms of theory and praxis.

(vi) Students need to be able to recognise psychopathology and understanding of the need for and the process of referral and referral options.

(vii) Courses should include an understanding of the ethics of spiritual direction, and ethical behaviour should be modelled in all aspects of the formation program. A formation program should adopt a particular code of ethics and address the issues outlined in that code with students.

(viii) A detailed knowledge of the text of the Spiritual Exercises.

(d) A commitment to personal growth and on-going spiritual direction

(i) The nourishment of a prayerful and contemplative approach to life, self-awareness, and sensitivity to the movements of the Spirit are integral to Ignatian ministry and personal growth.

(ii) Personal experience and growth is the most important source of knowledge for the person training to be engaged in the ministry of spiritual direction. Therefore, each student is required to have regular spiritual direction throughout a formation program.

(iii) The process of spiritual direction requires appropriate relationships between directors and their exercitants. Therefore emphasis on the development of personal self-awareness and relational openness of the student is an essential requirement in formation.

(iv) The interpersonal relationship is a core element in the spiritual direction process. If it becomes apparent during a formation program that a student has major psychological issues to be attended to, he or she should be encouraged by the coordinators of the program to undergopsychotherapeutic counselling as a way of deepening personal congruence and self-awareness.

(e) Practicum in giving Exercises

(i) The practice of actually giving Exercises in their many different forms should account for a substantial proportion of the program.

(ii) During the spiritual direction practicum, the development is important of clear, accurate and helpful responding to the movements of the Spirit in the directee/recipient.

(iii) There are a variety of ways in which the Spiritual Direction Practicum can occur. One of the best forms of experiential learning occurs when the student spiritual director is actually engaged in the process of direction. Some examples are:

- Structured experiences within a formation program: For example, students working together in Diads, Triads, Quads, and role plays.
- Director-directee experience: The student gives the Exercises to exercitants under supervision.
- Directing a retreat in a retreat centre: The student directs a retreat under supervision.

(f) Supervision

Supervision is a formal, collaborative process which monitors, develops, and supports student directors. It is an essential component of any formation program.

(i) As giving the Spiritual Exercises is a practical art, supervision should be concurrent with the formation program and remain an integral part of the formation process.

(ii) 50 hours of face-to-face supervision in addition to the 200 hours of student contact, are required for the Giver of the Full Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Spiritual Director members of Companions. A component of the supervision with an approved supervisor must be completed after the 200 hours of face-to-face student contact.

(iii) 20 hours of face-to-face supervision in addition to the 100 hours of student contact, are required for Ignatian Spiritual Director Members of Companions. A component of the supervision with an approved supervisor must be completed after the 100 hours of face-to-face student contact.

(iv) Methods of supervision include live interviews, verbatims, case studies, role plays. Supervision may be conducted either one-to-one or in a group setting.

(v) On-going supervision and profession development remains an integral part of professional practice. Guidance in this must be offered as a part of the course.

(g) Distance education

Distance education meets the requirements of this document (e.g., admission, curriculum, assessment, credentials of the core staff, etc) in the following ways:

(i) Theory: The theoretical component of a formation program for givers of the Exercises could be done by distance education.

(ii) Practicum in giving the Exercises: A Practicum in giving the Exercises needs to be adequately supervised and assessed. It needs to be incorporated into the program through:

- Intensive residential programs which provide skills formation, supervision, and feedback.
- Placement programs with a carefully monitored report from approved supervisors to give evidence of progress. It would not be sufficient that supervision embraces merely a general administrative overview of the student director's work. Rather a detailed report from the approved supervisor on site in a form that addresses the student director's practical competencies as set out in the course should be sent to the director of formation as part of the assessment.

(iii) Given the special circumstances of distance education, each program needs to show how its particular sequence of formation meets the standards of this document. For instance, a particular distance education formation program might link in with another accredited program in the area where the student director lives as part of the requirements. Or an additional well supervised placement in the student director's locality could partially fulfil the requirements. Evidence would always need to be given that the standards of this document are not compromised.

4. Assessment

(a) Introduction

Assessment addresses both theory and practice and is carried out by the teachers on the program or by assessors from outside the program with ongoing feedback given to the students in facilitative ways. It is recommended that self-assessment by students in formation be a component of the evaluation process.

(b) Theory

There should be ongoing assessment of the knowledge of theory which is relevant to the level of the course. The student director needs to demonstrate an ability to engage in critical thinking in response to theory through written assignments, examinations, oral presentations, book reports, journaling, personal reflection papers, contribution to class discussion, etc.

(c) Practice

Since the purpose of the formation program is to produce competent givers of the Exercises, there is necessarily assessment of the student's spiritual direction practice. This assessment should include evidence of skills through live supervision in triads and rigorous, frequent one- to-one supervision.

5. Credentials of the Core Formation Staff

The following guidelines apply to the core staff who have the primary responsibility for a formation program. It is the responsibility of this core group to monitor the standards of those additional professionals who teach in a program on an ad hoc basis. The core staff of a formation program for givers of the Exercises should:

(i) Have qualifications in giving the Spiritual Exercises at least at the level of formation /education being conducted by the program.

(ii) Be experienced in the supervision of ministry and in adult education as consistent with the context in which they form spiritual directors.

(iii) Be givers of the Spiritual Exercises with proven ability, charism and at least five years' experience.

(iv) Be concurrently engaged in practice giving the Spiritual Exercises relevant to the course they are teaching or have had extensive experience sufficient for their role.

(v) Be engaged in ongoing professional development; and give evidence of such development when required.

6. Management and Administration of the Program

Companions recommends that a spiritual direction formation program ensure that its formation processes and administrative support structures support learning outcomes.

Companions recommends the administrative process include:

(i) Appropriate Occupational, Health and Safety Policies and Procedures to provide a safe learning environment.

(ii) A code of conduct to address participants' grievances.
(iii) Comprehensive Professional Indemnity and Public Risk insurances.

(iv) A Register of the formation team's Police Clearances and the respective State or Territory Working with Children Cards.

(v) Guidelines about the formation team staying abreast of developments in the field of spiritual direction through participating in professional development.

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