

Formation Guidelines

Formation Guidelines: Recommendations to Foster, Support, and Recognise the Formation of Spiritual Directors in Australia (Revised June 2008)

Preface To serve the spiritual direction community of Australia, the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD) desires to

- foster new initiatives in the formation of spiritual directors;
- support the ongoing growth of developing formation programs; • recognise programs that achieve excellence in the formation of spiritual directors.

In fostering new initiatives, supporting developing programs, and recognising the excellence achieved in Centres forming directors, AECSD seeks to work alongside programs committed to educating spiritual directors throughout Australia. AECSD endeavours to foster emerging programs and support developing centres. AECSD also offers nationwide recognition to established programs demonstrating excellence. Through recognition, AECSD offers public acknowledgement and ongoing monitoring to such programs for the formation of spiritual directors. Collaborating with formation programs, AECSD offers recommendations to assist formators design and implement their programs. These guidelines seek to assist emerging programs to plan and conduct their early formation processes. Developing formation programs are invited to draw upon these recommendations for ongoing support. In addition, established programs might draw upon these recommended guidelines to demonstrate their achieved excellence in the formal process of applying for AECSD recognition. AECSD invites the spiritual direction community in Australia into dialogue about these recommendations, in order to foster, support, and recognise the formation of spiritual directors in this country. Introduction Four key formative elements enable the effective formation of spiritual directors: • applicants need to be suitably assessed; • the content and process of formation programs need to be comprehensive and integrated; • ongoing processes of assessment need to be in place; • the members of the formation team need to be well qualified and competent. A glossary of terms is at the end of this document.

1. Admission

1.1 Introduction

Granted that formation programs for spiritual directors offer professional qualifications to their graduates, careful admission procedures are required. It is recommended that, before acceptance, applicants

- 1.1.1 show some sense of call to the ministry of spiritual direction;
- 1.1.2 demonstrate a capacity to listen emphatically and sensitively;
- 1.1.3 have sufficient life experience to enable them to respond with wisdom to people from different walks of life and with different levels of experience;
- 1.1.4 show an openness to learning from both their own and others' experience;
- 1.1.5 give evidence of a mature Christian faith and an openness to other faiths;
- 1.1.6 demonstrate a commitment to prayer;
- 1.1.7 have been in spiritual direction themselves for a period of time.

1.2 Recommendations for the Application Process

To apply for admission, it is recommended that applicants would normally

- 1.2.1 complete a detailed application form and autobiography;
- 1.2.2 submit two recommendation forms with referees who may be consulted;
- 1.2.3 participate in an assessment interview with two of the formation staff who will assess the applicant's willingness and ability to engage in the process of formation.

2. Curriculum

2.1 Introduction

The effective practice of spiritual direction requires sound theoretical learning, skills training, supervised spiritual direction practicum, and personal development. Therefore, the following learning principles are recommended:

- a clear statement on the program's philosophy of formation, course content, and learning goals be given to students;
- the program integrate experience and theory in an adult learning environment. As well, it is recommended that a program include at least 200 hours of student contact in addition to at least 50 hours of supervision for each participant.

2.2 Recommendations for Curriculum

2.2.1 Theoretical content:

it is recommended that a program include the following subject areas

- Scripture and theology, in accord with the program's religious tradition;
- the psycho-spiritual development of the human person;
- the nature of religious experience, the discernment of spirits, and ways of prayer;
- issues related to social justice;
- the different theories and praxis of spiritual direction and psychological counselling;
- the practice of professional referral;
- the ethics of spiritual direction practice.

2.2.2 Ongoing spiritual direction and personal growth:

it is recommended that students

- continue to receive spiritual direction during the program of formation;
- be recommended to other professional support where necessary;
- be encouraged in a contemplative approach to life and growth in self-awareness.

2.2.3 Spiritual Direction Practicum:

the practice of spiritual direction is integral to the program. The following are recommended

- structured experiences: diads, triads, quadrads, role plays with fellow students;
- director-directee experiences: students give spiritual direction under supervision; students direct a retreat under supervision.

2.2.4 Supervision,

as an essential component of the formation program, monitors, develops, and supports students' ministry. It is recommended that

- the 50 hours of supervision comprise at least 30 hours of personal supervision and at least 20 hours of supervisory learning in a group context;
- personal supervision be either one-to-one (at least 10 hours) or in a group setting;
- in group settings, the supervisor is present for the whole time of supervision;
- only the student receiving supervision in the group claims the time as part of his/her 30 hours of personal supervision; other members of the group may claim the time towards their 20 hours of supervisory learning;
- students be encouraged to continue professional development and supervision after completion of the program.

3. Assessment

3.1 Introduction

Assessment of students' integration of the theory and practice of spiritual direction is ongoing throughout the program with regular feedback given to students.

3.2 Recommendations for Assessment

It is recommended that students' self-assessment, peer assessment, staff assessment, and assessment by external assessors all be included in a program. Methods of assessment may involve

- 3.2.1 written assignments, reflection papers, oral presentations, contribution to group activities, etc;
- 3.2.2 supervisory reports of students' practice of spiritual direction.

4. Credentials of the Formation Team

4.1 Introduction

The core staff are responsible for formation in a program; they, in turn, monitor the contributions of other professionals who are

involved in aspects of the program. All members of the formation team need to be qualified and competent in their areas of expertise in the program.

4.2 Recommendations for credentials of formation staff

It is recommended that the core staff of a formation program:

- be qualified practising spiritual directors with at least five years experience as spiritual directors;
- be experienced in supervision of ministry and in adult education;
- engage in ongoing professional development.

Glossary of Terms

Spiritual direction: Many different terms have been used to describe the ministry of spiritual accompaniment. This document uses the term "spiritual direction", because of its common usage in the Christian tradition. In spiritual direction, the spiritual director attends in a contemplative way to the spiritual experience of the directee.

Spiritual director: A "spiritual director" is a person who engages in an intentional relational process with a directee to enable that person being accompanied to notice and to attend to his/her transforming experience of encounter with what is Ultimate.

Directee: Linked to the definition of the spiritual director is the "directee". A directee is a person who engages in a process of being accompanied by a director primarily to deepen his/her relationship with what is Ultimate.

Supervision: "Supervision" is a formal, collaborative process that monitors, develops, and supports student directors. Supervision provides the opportunity to assess and extend competencies, ensures adherence to standards and allows for the development of individual styles.

Personal supervision: "Personal supervision" is either one-to-one with a supervisor or in a small group with a supervisor.

Supervisory learning in a group context: "Supervisory learning" in a group context is the learning a group member receives through participation in and attending to another group member's personal supervision in a small group (e.g. triad, quadrad).