



Diocese of St. Petersburg

Office of the Diaconate Internship Handbook

*They must first be tested,
and then if there is nothing against
them let them serve as deacons.
1 Timothy 3:10*

REVISION 2-2025

Introductory Letter for the Start of your Internship

Dear Aspirant,

As you progress through the Diaconate Formation Program, I wanted to provide an overview of the upcoming internship experience—a crucial component of this formation process.

Your internship isn't just a service project; it's a transformative opportunity designed to evaluate and nurture your growth across the dimensions of formation as outlined in the National Directory: Human, Spiritual, Intellectual, and Pastoral. The internship requires a minimum of 40 hours of immersive engagement - 30 hours in the field and 10 hours of administrative time focused on supervision, instruction and reflective tasks.

What's unique about this internship is its tailored nature. It's about the meticulous selection of an experience specifically for you by the Diaconate Formation Team in collaboration with your mentor.

Once the internship is assigned, the aspirant will complete the Learning Agreement. This form will document the location of the internship experience, the time frames, and agreement of the Deacon Mentor and the on-site supervisor. The Learning Agreement delineates additional details of the internship (e.g., name of the supervisor) but also the specific formation goals, objectives and tasks to be completed by the aspirant. The Learning Agreement requires collaboration and signatures from yourself, your mentor, and the on-site supervisor. Again, it's imperative that the aspirant receive approval and complete these forms before the start of the internship.

It is also important to note that success on internship does not lie in satisfying the required hours of service. Rather, the final evaluation considers how this experience has shaped each of the formation dimensions. Input from your on-site supervisor and Deacon Mentor as well as your completion of the Reflection Paper will all play integral roles in assessing your growth in formation.

Throughout the Internship Handbook, you'll find comprehensive details on timelines, information on internship sites, discussion points regarding the reflection paper, and more.

This journey concerns your holistic growth across formation dimensions as well as progression as an aspirant with an evolving understanding of what pastoral ministry is. Embrace this internship experience as an opportunity to discover, reflect, and develop across the diverse dimensions of your formation.

Should you have any questions or need further assistance, I'm here to support you.



Deacon Glenn Smith
Associate Director of Formation

Introduction

In your second and third year of formation, you will have the opportunity to complete pastoral internships. The fourth year of formation builds upon these experiences and offers the opportunity to Shadow a deacon in a parish setting. This Shadowing experience is unique and distinct from internships and will be addressed separately.

The second- and third-year internships are essential to your formation in continuing to develop and practice skills that you will utilize - should you be ordained. The internships involve practical field experience encompassing a total of 40 hours. Because the internship is so integral to your formation of pastoral skills, it carries equal weight to the other dimensions of formation. Namely, your growth in self (Human) allows enhances your ability to mature in your spirituality/imitation of the person of Jesus Christ (Spiritual) with your academic/classroom work (Intellectual) feeding/informing personal spirituality. However, it is the Pastoral dimension that truly informs and makes ministry effect. In essence, the Human, Intellectual, and Spiritual dimensions allow the Aspirant to see/appreciate how God is present in the world. Though such personal spirituality is a necessary precursor, ministry's goal is not just for the **minister** to see God in the world but to assist **others** in seeing God in the world. Knowledge of these skills come from these other dimensions (e.g., classwork, spiritual direction, mentorship, etc.) but the ability to deepen and further hone these comes from practicing them with other people.

Because each individual Aspirant has different formation challenges or areas of growth, the internship experience is assigned in an effort to meet those needs. This selection is made in collaboration with the Formation Team and your Mentor. The on-site supervisor also plays a crucial role as one who is well acquainted with the particular site. In many cases, this on-site supervisor is not a deacon but has invaluable expertise in addressing the needs of those served. It is in these situations where close partnership with your Deacon Mentor will be essential. Your Deacon Mentor and on-site supervisor will guide this process through a Learning Agreement which outlines the specific goals, objectives, and tasks to be accomplished. Because it is guide to the internship, the Learning Agreement must be signed and submitted before initiating on-site work.

Upon completing the 40-hour experience, an evaluation session with your on-site supervisor takes place. Additionally, you are expected to compose a Final Reflection paper spanning ten to fifteen pages and submit this along with the supervisor's evaluation before the commencement of the fall academic semester. This reflective paper is one of the primary means of how the formation team will evaluate and assess your internship experience. This reflective paper will also contribute to how the mentor will assess for possible inclusion information in your Personal Growth Plan (PGP).

Dimensions of Formation

Human Dimension

Growth in Self-formation

A participant comes to formation with a history of interrelationships with other people. Formation for ministry begins with human formation and development. Participants “should therefore cultivate a series of human qualities, not only out of proper and due growth and realization of self but also with a view to the ministry”ⁱ

Spiritual Dimension:

A mature spirituality in imitation of Jesus

“Human formation leads to and finds its completion in the spiritual dimension of formation, which constitutes the heart and unifying center of every Christian formation. It aims to tend to the development of the new life received in Baptism.”ⁱⁱ

Intellectual Dimension

Knowledge of Faith and Church

Intellectual formation offers the participant “substantial nourishment” for his life's pastoral, human, and spiritual dimensions. Intellectual formation is a “precious instrument” for effective discernment and ministry.ⁱⁱⁱ

Pastoral Dimension

The Diakonia of word, liturgy, and charity

An integral formation must relate the human, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions to pastoral practice. “The whole formation imparted to the participants . . . aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ. . . Hence, their formation in different aspects must have a fundamentally pastoral character.”^{iv}

Your Guides in the Process

Your Deacon Mentor

Your Deacon Mentor plays a crucial role, possessing a deep understanding of your formation journey, strengths, and areas requiring growth. The Deacon Mentor also processes a broad range/depth of pastoral experiences as well as well-refined ministerial skills from which you can learn. Collaboration with your Deacon Mentor is essential in aligning your preferences and goals with the internships.

Your On-Site Supervisor

The on-site supervisor oversees the practical aspects of the internship and is intimately familiar with the ministry where the aspirant completes their 40 hours. If both parties are comfortable, the aspirant may work independently. However, regular meetings between the aspirant and supervisor for processing experiences are mandatory. The supervisor need not be Catholic, but embracing diverse perspectives is encouraged. In cases where the supervisor doesn't share the same background, considering collaboration with a deacon at the internship, and closer engagement with the Deacon Mentor, can enhance understanding of Catholic practices and cultural nuances.

Internship Assignment Process

Process: Assignments are based on aspirants' personality, skills, and developmental needs identified during discernment and evaluations. This should be consistent with the Deacon Mentors' evaluations and PGP.

Supervisory Structure: Each internship will have a supervisor responsible for overseeing and evaluating the aspirant's progress. The experience should be processed with the supervisor regarding relevance to diaconal formation. In the case of a non-deacon supervisor this should be done with the Deacon Mentor.

Your internships are intentional opportunities to foster your development holistically. Each experience prompts you to look inward, enabling you to contemplate how your experiences resonate across these dimensions. They're crafted to evoke your comprehensive understanding of ministry and evolving role.

Types of Internships

Social Services: Engaging in community service, working with marginalized groups, and understanding social justice issues.

Hospital/Hospice Ministry: Providing spiritual support and comfort to patients and families in healthcare settings.

Prison Ministry: Engaging with incarcerated individuals and supporting their spiritual needs.

Expectations and Responsibilities

Aspirant Expectations:

- Engage actively and responsibly in assigned tasks.
- Maintain professionalism and confidentiality.
- Seek guidance and support from supervisor and Deacon Mentor.
- Reflect on experiences and integrate experiences into their formation.

Supervisor Responsibilities:

- Provide guidance, support, and regular feedback to aspirants.
- Assess aspirant's performance using the provided evaluation criteria.

Internship Documents

All documents referenced in this correspondence, including the Internship Learning Agreement, Internship Hours Record, Supervisor and Intern Meeting Form, Examen and Journal guidance, and additional notes associated with the Internship Learning Agreement, can be readily accessed in this handbook

1. Internship Handbook

Provides comprehensive guidelines and information about the diaconate formation program's internship process. It outlines expectations, requirements, evaluation criteria, and guidance for aspirants undertaking internships.

2. Internship Learning Agreement

A formal agreement outlining the terms, objectives, and responsibilities of the aspirant and the internship site. It includes learning goals, activities, evaluation criteria, and signatures from the intern, supervisor, and mentor.

3. Internship Learning Agreement – Notes (Details of Relation to Supervisor)

Additional notes or guidelines associated with the Internship Learning Agreement. These could include clarifications, specific instructions, or other information pertinent to the agreement.

4. Internship Hours Record

A document used to record the number of hours the aspirant spends during the **on-site times** of the internship. It includes fields for date, hours worked, tasks performed, and supervisor signature. This should total at least 30 hours. Episodes of service should be limited and go across significant time. For example, completing an internship over a weekend is not acceptable as it deprives the Aspirant of witnessing change, deepening skills learned, and appreciation the progression of ministry.

5. Supervisor and Intern Meeting Form

A form used to document meetings between the intern and their supervisor. It may contain sections to record meeting dates, discussion points, progress assessments, and action plans. Such meetings **do not have to be on-site**. This is **NOT** offering service but processing the service offered. This can total 10 hours. Along with the on-site hours, it should be at least 40 hours.

6. Examen, Journal, and Reflection Paper

This document offers guidance for the Examen—a daily spiritual practice—and journaling activities, including prompts and instructions. It also supports crafting the required reflection paper. It is strongly recommended that the Aspirant journal at each episode of service rather than waiting until the end of the experience. This will prevent otherwise important insights to be lost.

7. Acknowledgment of Handbook Review

An acknowledgment form confirming that the aspirant has received, read, reviewed, and understood the contents of the Internship Handbook.

INTERNSHIPS CANNOT BEGIN WITHOUT ALL THE REQUIRED SIGNATURES

**ALL DOCUMENTS ARE SUBMITTED TO THE FORMATION STAFF AT:
diaconate@dosp.org**

Internship Timeline

The internships typically begin after the 1st of the year during your 2nd year in formation. Before you start your assigned internship, meet with your mentor, and if necessary, the Formation Director, to clarify the direction your internship should take. Then review the internship handbook for guidelines and expectations. Please approach these field experiences as an opportunity for growth. If your supervisor does not spontaneously offer suggestions for change/development, elicit them. The internship experience is crucial to your formation. It is an opportunity for continued growth and development.

Daily Reflections Journal:

Utilize journal entries as the primary foundation for your reflection paper. Craft a narrative that integrates these journal reflections, creating a cohesive and insightful piece. However, refrain from including content more suited for discussions with your mentor or spiritual advisor. Your journal should encompass topics worth discussing with your spiritual guide. If it lacks such content, consider reevaluating your approach. Remember, not every ministry experience aligns with every individual. The essence lies in your growth across all dimensions of formation, irrespective of the specific ministry experience. Focus on your overall development rather than perceiving difficulties in a particular ministry as a reflection of your capabilities.

Throughout Internship Period:

Engage in the Examen daily and maintain a reflective journal to document experiences and insights. Complete designated internship hours as per program requirements. Regularly meet with the on-site supervisor to discuss experiences and progress.

During Internship:

Maintain and update the Internship Hours Record with accurate hours.
Use the Supervisor and Intern Meeting Form to document meetings and discussions.
Incorporate observations from the Examen into reflective papers and evaluations.

Post-Internship:

After Internship Completion: Finalize reflective paper based on the Examen, journal entries, and observations from the supervisor. Submit Documentation: Ensure all required documentation, including reflection papers and completed forms, are submitted by the specified deadline.

Submission Deadlines:

Before the Fall Semester Starts: Submit the completed reflection paper, Internship Hours Records, Supervisor and Intern Meeting Records, and any other required documentation.

Reflection Paper and the Examen:

The reflection paper of between ten and fifteen double-spaced pages will be the primary way the formation team evaluates this essential piece of your formation. The key to your reflection paper is to assess growth or challenges in your dimensions of formation due to your internship. If you don't understand the dimensions, meet with your D e a c o n M entor or the Formation Director before beginning your internship.

Below are some sample questions.

- Was I scared, bored, excited, sad, comforted, angry, confused, repulsed, etc.? ***Human Dimension***
- Ask what these moments and feelings tell you about yourself in ministry, the presence of God at that moment, and what conclusions you can discern from those two things. ***Spiritual Dimension***
- Did the experience influence your feelings about people you may not have come in contact with before? ***Human Dimension***
- Did it influence how you think about your parish, job, and family? ***Human Dimension***
- How did what you learned in your academic classes come into play? ***Intellectual Dimension***
- Did this experience influence your notion of God and the Church? ***Pastoral/Spiritual Dimension***
- How did this experience foster my growth in allowing people to be better see God and grow in ministry? ***Pastoral Dimension***

Summary of Requirements

The requirements for the reflection paper are as follows:

- **Length:** The reflection paper should be between ten and fifteen double-spaced pages.
- **Content Focus:** The primary evaluation criteria for the formation team is an honest assessment. of growth or challenges in the dimensions of formation resulting from your internship.
- **Understanding of Dimensions:** Ensure comprehension of the dimensions of formation. Seek guidance from your mentor or Formation Director. if clarification is needed before starting the internship.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Papers must address growth or challenges in the dimensions of formation.

Additional guidance includes:

- Utilizing your journal entries as the foundation for the reflection paper.
- Ensuring the paper content is suitable for reflection rather than discussions with mentors or spiritual advisors.
- Acknowledging that challenges in specific ministry experiences don't define your capabilities as a person or future deacon.
- Prioritizing overall growth across all dimensions of formation rather than focusing solely on difficulties in a particular ministry.
- Reflection papers should not be and accounting of daily events, though some of this may be necessary for a limited degree.
- Reflection papers can include some discussion of the personal details of persons served. However, this should not be the entire focus of the paper not how they came to see God in this experience through your efforts, or challenges to this.

Diocese of St. Petersburg Diaconate
Formation [Internship](#) Program
Acknowledgment of Handbook Review

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received, read, and thoroughly reviewed the contents of the Diaconate Formation Program Handbook, including all attached documents, guidelines, and related materials pertaining to the internship.

I confirm my understanding of the guidelines, expectations, and procedures outlined within the handbook, particularly regarding the internship, reflection paper, Examen, journaling activities, and other relevant components.

I am committed to adhering to the principles, protocols, and directives outlined in this handbook throughout my participation in the program.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgment Receipt Date: _____

Signed: _____

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Formation [Internship](#) Program
Examen, Journal, and Reflection Paper

It is strongly recommended that you keep a journal during your internship to help process the experience with your supervisor and prepare for your final reflection paper. Additionally, you might consider using the Examen in maintaining this journal.

The Examen is a daily spiritual practice first put forward by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus or Jesuits. As with all prayer, remind yourself that you are in God's presence, and ask God to help you with your prayer. The Examen consists of five parts:

1. **Gratitude:** Recall anything from the day you are incredibly grateful and give thanks.
2. **Review:** Recall the events of the day, from start to finish and in detail, noticing where you felt God's presence and where you accepted or turned away from any invitations to grow in love.
3. **Sorrow:** Recall any actions or dispositions you regret
4. **Forgiveness:** Ask God's forgiveness. Decide if you need to reconcile with anyone you may have hurt.
5. **Grace:** Ask God for the grace you need for the next day and an ability to see God's presence more clearly

For your internship, keeping this type of journal in the format of this five-step prayer will be invaluable in personal reflections and the reflection paper. It cannot be emphasized enough that the reflection paper should ***not*** be a diary of entries. Instead, the reflection paper should be a narrative integration of your journal.

The journal will be the building block for your reflection paper. However, the journal should ***not*** be forwarded to the Formation Team. If you complete the journal described above, it will likely contain some critical and deeply personal insights. Deep personal reflections would be best discussed with your spiritual advisor or confessor.

Instead, in developing the reflection paper, you might review your journal entries. It is helpful to ask yourself how you felt at the time of each incident. Was I scared? Bored? Excited? Sad? Comforted? Angry? Confused? Ask what these moments and feelings tell you about yourself in ministry.

The Reflection Paper

Once you have the "building blocks" with the assistance of the Examen and Journal, it will be time for you to write your Reflection Paper. Per the Aspirant & Candidate Internship Handbook, the paper should be between 10 and 15 pages long. Reflection is a primary mechanism the formation team uses to evaluate your internship.

Diocese of St. Petersburg Diaconate
Formation Internship Program
Internship Learning Agreement

Name of Intern: _____

Name of Formation Mentor: _____

Contact Information for Internship Supervisor:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Email: _____

Contact Information for Internship Site (if different from above):

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

THE INTERNSHIP SUPERVISOR AND THE INTERN AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

A. Dates of Internship

Start Date _____ End Date: _____

B. Objectives: The intern and the internship supervisor set the following objectives for the internship period (adding more as needed).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

C. Supervision: The intern and intern supervisor agree to meet for formal supervision at regularly scheduled times/locations.

Day of the Week: _____

From _____ Until _____

Location: _____

D. Specific Tasks The supervisor and intern will be involved in the following specific tasks as part of his internship:

<u>SPECIFIC TASKS</u>	<u>DAY OF THE WEEK</u>	<u>TIME OF DAY</u>
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E. Completion of Learning Agreement: After completing and signing this learning agreement, the intern will send a copy to Diaconate@dosp.org

F. Supervisor Evaluation: To provide the formation team with timely supervisory input, please have your supervisor return the evaluation to the Office of the Diaconate. It should be returned to the office within one week of the completion of the internship. It can be emailed to the Office of the Diaconate, at diaconate@dosp.org. A meeting between the intern and supervisor to discuss the evaluation should precede its submission.

G. Additional notations:

THIS AGREEMENT IS MADE AND ACCEPTED BY:

Intern _____

Date: _____

Supervisor: _____

Date: _____

Formation Advisor (Mentor): _____

Date: _____

Documents, along with the Supervisor & Intern Meeting Record form, will be forwarded by you to Office of the Diaconate, at diaconate@dosp.org.

Diocese of St. Petersburg Diaconate
Formation [Internship](#) Program
Internship Hours Record

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

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Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Date: _____ # of Hours: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

If necessary, note more meetings below or on the back of the sheet.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Diocese of St. Petersburg Diaconate
Formation [Internship](#) Program
Supervisor and Intern Meeting Form

Meeting 1 Date: _____ Time: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Meeting 2 Date: _____ Time: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Meeting 3 Date: _____ Time: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Meeting 4 Date: _____ Time: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Meeting 5 Date: _____ Time: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Meeting 6 Date: _____ Time: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Meeting 7 Date: _____ Time: _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Final Meeting to Discuss Evaluation:

Final Meeting Date: _____ Time _____ Supervisor Initials _____

Supervisor Evaluation

Regular meetings between you and your supervisor are not optional, and a record of the meetings is part of the supervisor evaluation form. The Supervisor & Intern Meeting Record Form should be included with the evaluation and reflection paper. Even though the Supervisor evaluations will be forwarded by you, your signature on the supervisor evaluation indicates that you have met with your supervisor and discussed the evaluation. Internships are not complete without a supervisor's evaluation.

Supervisor Notes: