



ST. BERNARD'S

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AND MINISTRY

PASTORAL FIELD EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral Field education is a sustained immersion experience in which a student can discover, test, and develop their gifts for ministry, with the guidance of a qualified supervisor and the support of regular theological reflection with their advisor. It assists students in the acquisition of skills and self-knowledge in the context of faith, tradition, and active ministry; it “will not only give the [student] a greater awareness of the needs and mission of the [diocesan] Church, but will assist in the discernment and development of his own . . . talents and gifts.” (*National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, 2nd edition, §228).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. *Knowledge Attained:*

- a. *demonstrate an understanding of the role and function of this ministry within the Body of Christ*
- b. *articulate a knowledge of the theological dimensions of this ministry*
- c. *provide evidence of careful consideration and discernment in relation to this ministry's contribution to one's human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral growth*

2. *Skills Attained:*

- a. *apply what one has learned in the areas of spirituality and ministry, faith and theology*
- b. *hone the communication and relational skills appropriate for a person engaged in active ministry*
- c. *exercise the pastoral skills needed to fulfill this ministry, such as collaboration, gift discernment, change and conflict management, leadership and administration, and/or counseling*
- d. *practice and refine the virtues of Christian discipleship, especially those which pertain most directly to ministers in the Church, such as “honesty, humility,*

*compassion, initiative, courage, vision, energy, hospitality, and Christian joy”
(Co-Workers in the Vineyard, 37)*

3. *Attitudes Attained:*

- a. *develop the habit of self-reflection regarding one’s gifts, personality, talents, strengths, weaknesses, and limitations*
- b. *cultivate a disposition which sees this ministry as an outward expression of one’s inner spiritual life; in particular, a life shaped by prayer and the liturgy*
- c. *grow in appreciation for the many and varied ministries that all work together to build up the one Body of Christ*

ELIGIBILITY

- Students must have completed at least one-third of their course requirements before they are eligible for Pastoral Field Education placement.
- For those with considerable experience in ecclesial ministry over the previous five years, the Pastoral Field Education requirement may be waived. Should the waiver be approved by faculty vote, an elective in Pastoral Theology (D Area) is required in lieu of Pastoral Field Education. The following steps outline the waiver process:
 - The student writes a letter to the Academic Dean requesting that a Pastoral Field Education requirement be waived.
 - The letter should include a description of the student’s experience in ecclesial ministry, including the titles of positions held (volunteer or paid) and the number of hours engaged in this ministry position (these hours should equal or exceed the number of hours specified by the Pastoral Field Education degree requirement [see below for further details]).
 - The Academic Dean will bring the student’s request to the faculty for a vote.
 - Should the faculty not approve the waiver request, the Academic Dean will communicate the reasons for this decision to the student.
 - Should the faculty approve the waiver request, the student will receive an approval letter from the Academic Dean. This letter, along with the letter sent from the student requesting the waiver, will be placed in the student’s file.
 - The student will then work with their advisor to select an elective in D Area.

CREDIT AND REQUIREMENTS

- Pastoral Field Education requires 50 hours per credit.
 - Three formats are commonly employed:
 - (1) Fall-Spring Sequence – 150 hours (3 credits) taken across two semesters, approximately five hours per week for a regular placement schedule
 - (2) Three-Summer Sequence – 50 hours (1 credit) taken per summer for three consecutive summers, approximately five hours per week for a regular placement schedule
 - (3) Single-Semester Sequence – 150 hours (3 credits) taken in a single semester, approximately 10 hours per week for a regular placement schedule

- Pastoral Field Education hours do not include time spent on course readings, preparation of reports, or theological reflection.

TUITION AND FEES

- Standard per-credit tuition for a St. Bernard's course is charged for Pastoral Field Education.
- No fees or payments are exchanged between the placement organization and St. Bernard's, or between the placement organization and the student. The placement organization receives the benefit of the student's presence, gifts, and ministry; the student receives the benefit of supervision and ministerial experience.

PLACEMENT

The Pastoral Field Education Associate develops and maintains a list of suitable placement organizations. A pastoral setting that provides the student with opportunities for human, spiritual, and pastoral growth may provide an acceptable placement.

- An appropriate placement organization is discerned through communication between the student, the Advisor, and the Pastoral Field Education Associate. If the student is in formation for the permanent diaconate, the Coordinator of Pastoral Formation of their home diocese will determine and arrange the placement, in collaboration with the Advisor and the Pastoral Field Education Associate.¹
 - During the semester prior to the desired placement, the student, the Advisor, and the Associate (and Coordinator, as applicable) meet to review the requirements of Pastoral Field Education and to consider possible options for placement.
 - Visits to possible placement organizations are encouraged during the discernment process.
 - Once a placement organization is chosen, the Associate (or Coordinator, as applicable) will contact the Supervisor at the organization to arrange the placement. Communication among all parties will occur as the details of the placement (dates, times, locations, tasks) are solidified.

LEARNING AGREEMENT

- Once the placement is confirmed and basic details solidified, the student and the Supervisor at the placement organization will develop a learning agreement that will identify in measurable terms the details of the placement. The learning agreement is the basis for all supervisory sessions and for theological reflection.
- The learning agreement must be completed before placement begins and finalized during the first three weeks of the placement. Upon completion, it will be sent by the student to the Pastoral Field Education Associate (and Coordinator, as applicable) and the Advisor for review and final approval.

¹ See *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, 2nd edition, §288, especially: "in consultation with the director of formation and others responsible for formation, [The Coordinator of Pastoral Formation] arranges for the pastoral placement of each participant, including an orientation and training of those who assist him in the assignment. Supervisory skills cannot be presumed; teaching them is a high priority. Good supervision guarantees that the pastoral assignment remains systematically educative and formational. The coordinator of pastoral formation also provides a written assessment of the participant's pastoral assignment."

SUPERVISION

- The guidance of a Supervisor at the placement organization significantly deepens the student's experience of ministry. The Supervisor is expected to have an advanced degree (e.g., in pastoral counseling, theology, social work, etc.), or other appropriate qualifications for this role.
- The Supervisor should fulfill a 'mentor' role by providing regularly scheduled opportunities for dialogue about issues and concerns relating to ministry.
- While Pastoral Field Education may be done in the context of one's employment, a student may not be supervised by their immediate manager/supervisor. Another appropriate person located at the placement organization will be selected as the Pastoral Field Education Supervisor.
- Evaluative Reports from the Supervisor are required after every Pastoral Field Education placement. Each report will be shared with the student and the Advisor. At the conclusion of the placement, a copy of the evaluation should be submitted to the Field Education Associate (and Coordinator, as applicable).

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND INTEGRATION

- Theological reflection and integration allow for ministerial experience to take on its full significance with regard to the formation of the student. The experience of pastoral action will be brought into direct engagement with the spiritual, human, and intellectual dimensions of formation.
- In order to achieve this reflection and integration, the Advisor will hold one meeting with the student per Pastoral Field Education placement, regardless of the number of credits/hours.
- The student will write one three-page integration and self-evaluation paper per one Pastoral Field Education placement, regardless of the number of credits/hours. The paper should address one or more of the following prompts:
 - a. What new theological, pastoral, and/or spiritual insights have you gained from this field education experience?
 - b. How have these insights informed your approach as a minister or your understanding of ministry?
 - c. How will your field education experience help you to encourage others in your community to participate in Christian service?
 - d. What have you learned about yourself from this field experience?
 - e. Is there anything you have done differently? If not, then why not? If so, then what would you have done differently and why?

EVALUATION

- Pastoral Field Education should aid the student in identifying areas of self-growth in ministry, articulating an understanding of ministry in the context of all dimensions of formation, and highlighting areas of future growth as an ecclesial minister.
- Instruments for achieving these goals are (1) evaluation of theological reflection and formational integration from the Advisor, (2) evaluation from the Supervisor, (3) the student's integration and self-evaluation paper, and (4) for those in formation for the permanent diaconate, the Coordinator of Pastoral Formation's written assessment of the

field education experience.²

- Graded assessment of the student's performance in Pastoral Field Education is provided according to St. Bernard's Pass/Fail grading system. Grading weights will follow the below percentage outlay per one Pastoral Field Education placement, regardless of the number of credits/hours:
 - 50%: Fulfillment of Learning Agreement
 - 50%: Integration and Self-Evaluation Paper

² See *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, 2nd edition, §162: "it is essential, therefore, that those who are responsible for selection and initial formation, including pastoral placement, discern whether the participant has integrated the various dimensions in formation that are needed for an effective diaconal ministry."