

**Australian and New Zealand Association  
for Theological Field Education**

**Recommended Standards and Best Practice for  
Theological Field Education Programs**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE) programs are one component of the total process of formation for ministry. An STFE program is understood to be that process which a student enters to reflect upon their experience in a ministry setting. This process includes education, ministry experience, theological reflection, and supervision. The process seeks to integrate theology, practice, and personal identity to equip people for ongoing ministry. Ministry contexts may include parish, local church, chaplaincy, cross cultural placements, church planting or emerging faith community and mission paradigms.

There are several challenges in the delivery of STFE across the colleges and denominations which this set of standards seeks to address:

1. Resourcing

The resourcing of STFE processes is a concern as STFE is often under-funded within the colleges. STFE does not conform to the regular class-size norms. Similarly, when taught at postgraduate level, it often does not conform to the need for lecturing staff to have doctoral qualifications in teaching.

2. The accreditation of Pastoral Supervisors

There is growing awareness of the need for formal processes for accreditation, but it is important to recognise that there are different processes for gaining this accreditation. A Grad Cert Supervision or equivalent may become a requirement for accreditation, but the accreditation processes are often denominational. A suite of possibilities that include academic qualification, pastoral experience, denominational accreditation, and in-house training are likely to be part of these accreditation processes.

3. Safeguarding/ethical practice

Ensuring students, staff and contexts are all aware of the ethical frameworks, including safe practice/boundaries, for ministry is a growing need and a learning area for denominations and colleges. Communicating the ethical frameworks can be assumed or be a task in conforming to an external measure. It is important that all involved are given the tools to reflect on the theological frameworks that inform codes of ethics and so inform their practice meaningfully.

4. Integration – Theology

Ensuring the integration of theology, practice and personal identity is at the heart of the STFE processes. It is potentially tempting to focus upon skills needed for ministry as the measure of the program, rather than the capacity to respond theologically to the challenges of ministry. Ministry experience is the starting point for this theological endeavour.

## **1. GOALS OF SUPERVISED THEOLOGICAL FIELD EDUCATION**

1.1 Personal development and self-awareness

1.2 Ministry competence and the development of skills for ministry

1.3 Theological understanding through theological reflection

1.4 Integration of theological frameworks with ministry practice

1.5 Christian commitment and denominational identity

1.6 An integrated understanding of Child Safeguarding and Professional Ministry Standards

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

2.1 STFE Program - the overall program of supervised theological field education which takes place under the direction of a college coordinator. It may involve units of study at different levels or for different contexts. Some field education programs may be accredited toward academic awards, whilst others are 'not for credit' as part of denominational formation processes. In some cases, the term used for an STFE Program is Ministry Internship.

2.2 STFE Coordinator (Director/Lecturer) – a qualified person appointed by and accountable to the relevant college or denominational body and charged with responsibility for the STFE program.

2.3 Ministry Mentor (Fieldwork Supervisor) - a qualified person in the ministry context who is responsible for the student and will observe the student's ministry and report on their progress. Different contexts and traditions may use different terminology, but the nature of this role is oversight of the student within the field placement.

2.4 Pastoral Supervisor - a qualified person who provides pastoral supervision/external mentoring to the student and assists them in reflecting on their ministry. In some situations, this person may be the same as the Ministry Mentor, however it is recommended that they be external to the ministry placement.

## **3. REQUIREMENTS FOR STFE PROGRAMS**

The following provides the entry and foundational requirements for an STFE context.

3.1 STFE is generally undertaken once a student has completed foundational studies in different disciplines. That is, students would normally have completed units in Biblical Studies, Christian Theology and Practical Theology. In some situations, field education units may be taken concurrently. There is also the possibility of some ministry experience before formal study, but such experiences would need to be well prepared and have suitable debriefing.

3.2 Students must have an interview with the STFE Coordinator (Director) who has oversight of the program, to confirm suitability to undertake the program.

3.3 Entry into STFE requires the student to undertake training and supply appropriate safeguarding documentation, and any other documentation or approvals needed by a denomination or accrediting body.

#### **4. STFE PROGRAM DESIGN**

##### **4.1 Theological Field Education Programs:**

4.1.1 Include a significant ministry placement which constitutes the 'field'

4.1.2 Formal pastoral supervisory relationship

4.1.3 College teaching input including theological reflection with a peer group.

4.1.4 Reflection and assessment activities

##### **4.2 Ministry placements:**

4.2.1 A placement agreement/covenant between the College, the local context and the student clarifies the 'field' and expectations of each party. This must identify the context, the relationships of accountability, the student's goals and the procedures for reviews.

4.2.2 The Ministry Mentor must be identified, and the role and tasks of the student clarified.

4.2.3 The placement agreement/covenant is between the parties involved in the placement: Student, STFE Coordinator, Ministry Mentor and Pastoral Supervisor.

4.2.4 The Ministry Mentor reports on the student's progress to the STFE Coordinator.

4.2.5 In some cases, the ministry placement itself may involve a group reflection process that offers feedback to the student on their ministry engagement. This may be known as a feedback group or a field committee.

4.2.6 The primary focus of the ministry placement is education and formation for ministry, and it may or may not include payment/stipend.

4.2.7 The process of negotiation of placements differs between college and denominational contexts but is in consultation with the student.

### **4.3 Pastoral Supervision:**

4.3.1 It is recommended that all students receive at least 6 hours pastoral supervision per semester, with an accredited Pastoral Supervisor who may be separate from the student's placement.

4.3.2 Pastoral Supervisors will report on the student's progress to the STFE Coordinator.

4.3.3 Pastoral Supervisors will have had significant supervision training, that equips them for supervision of students, with attention to these areas:

#### 4.3.3.1 Formative

- awareness of the dynamics present in intercultural supervision
- the need to emphasise personal and lifelong formation in and for ministry
- have highly developed skills and capacity to integrate theology, scripture, ministry, and personal experience
- have developed the skills to undertake social, cultural, and theological analysis
- familiarity with the models and methods of supervisory practice
- encouraging the development of leadership style and skills
- the importance of collaborative learning and relationships, including the concepts of transference and countertransference
- supporting students to identify gaps in ministerial praxis that needs further attention
- practice models and methods of theological reflection in a community setting

#### 4.3.3.2 Normative

- accreditation by the relevant college or denominational body
- awareness of professional ethical standards, their theological and social underpinnings, and their outworking in ministry contexts
- understanding of issues relating to power and inequity in pastoral ministry
- awareness of boundary issues in supervision and capacity to supervise in an ethical manner

#### 4.3.3.3 Restorative

- creating an environment where a person can continue to discern their ministerial call and vocation
- maintaining healthy, trusted and where appropriate, confidential relationships between field education programs, theological colleges, and relevant denominational personnel and structures

### **4.4 STFE Coordinator:**

Field Education Coordinators shall:

- be encouraged to have appropriate theological and professional and supervisory qualifications. It is recommended that this include a post graduate award in Supervision or research in the area.

- have established their ability to engage in theological reflection through ministry practice
- have administrative ability
- be formed and confirmed for the role according to the Institution/theological college/denomination's requirements
- undertake regular professional development in reflective practice
- be committed to the educational process of the program
- be committed to, and participate in the total theological enterprise and the life of their ecclesial community
- have the capacity to assess students and supervisors
- give feedback to students in an appropriate and timely fashion
- oversee the interview and admission procedures
- monitor student progress and manage disruptions within the processes.

#### **4.5 Assessment:**

Students in STFE are required to present assessments that may take several forms:

- a weekly journal of activities and reflections upon learning
- case study/studies
- self-evaluation
- feedback from the ministry placement
- integrative essay
- book review with reflection upon readings

#### **APPENDIX 1 - CHECKLIST**

STFE Unit

1. Has the student fulfilled the pre-requisites for enrolment in the unit?
2. Is the unit content and bibliography satisfactory?
3. Has the student, with assistance of the unit coordinator, set ministry and personal learning outcomes that are suitable for the context and level of the unit?
4. Are the assessment (evaluation) tasks clearly linked to ministry and personal learning outcomes?
5. Are there opportunities for peer review with others enrolled in the unit?
6. Is there a process for regular dialogue between the unit coordinator, the onsite supervisor and the student with regard to?
  - a. issues arising in the students experience of ministry
  - b. review of the learning outcomes
  - c. advice about an intervention
  - d. integration of theological understanding and ministry praxis
7. Is there a process for review of self-care by the student?
8. Is there provision for feedback from members of a congregation or workplace participants?
9. Is there provision for periodic review of progress according to the learning outcomes?

10. If the placement is in an international context is there provision for appropriate briefing about the cultural context and local expectations?
11. During and at the conclusion of the theological field placement, is there provision of opportunities to integrate student learning?
12. Is there provision for feedback to the unit coordinator from the on-site supervisor and those in the ministerial context?

#### Ministry Context

13. Ensure student has police and working with children clearances
14. Ensure that there is on site supervision and support
15. Ensure that the student provides emergency contacts to the unit coordinator and the on-site supervisor
16. Ensure formal introduction of the student to ministry context and appropriate information provided to people in the pastoral context
17. Ensure that the student has an introduction to and access to professional resources for referrals
18. Ensure there is appropriate insurance cover for off campus ministry
19. Ensure that the work context is free of hazards and meets OHS standards
20. Ensure that there is appropriate use of a time sheet for the ministry involvement

#### **APPENDIX 2 - PROCESS OF REVIEW AND/OR ACCREDITATION OF THEOLOGICAL FIELD EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY ANZATFE**

##### **1. An official request is received from an institution**

The request should include a clear statement of the type of accreditation being sought, the relationship of such a request to the body that grants academic approval (if applicable), and an indication as to whether a review of an existing program is being sought or approval of a new program.

##### **2. Formation of a Review/Accreditation Panel**

Following a request for a review or accreditation, a Review Panel will be appointed at the next meeting of ANZATFE or, if necessary, by the Executive after consultation with the Committee.

The Panel shall normally be comprised of the following:

- a member of the Executive of ANZATFE
- a member of the state or national Professional Standards body of the denomination/religious tradition (as appropriate)
- a representative appointed by the institution seeking review or accreditation (other than the program director)
- an ecclesial representative (as appropriate)
- a field supervisor working within the program that is seeking accreditation

All nominees to be approved and appointed by the Executive Committee of ANZATFE.

### **3. Documentation Presentation and Content**

The Institution seeking the review/accreditation will provide a copy to each member of the Review Panel and one to ANZATFE for its records. The documentation shall be made available to the Review Panel at least two-weeks prior to the date the Review Panel meets. Documentation will include the following:

#### *a. Introductory Comments (e.g.)*

The introduction will include the following:

- an introduction to the institution and its academic accreditation relationships
- a description of the relationship between the Theological Field Education Program and the wider academic program of the institution
- a statement outlining the relationship between the Theological Field Education program and the church community of which it is part.
- a statement outlining the level of accreditation being sought

#### *b. A presentation of the whole of the program:*

This presentation will include a description of expectations in relation to lectures, tasks, schedules, timetable, resources, documentation, bibliography etc.

#### *c. A statement of the aims and objectives:*

Such a statement will include intended learning outcomes for students entering the program.

#### *d. Faculty and Staff*

The documentation will include a description of the qualifications, terms of appointment, and experience of the Director of the Program.

The documentation will also include a statement outlining the role, style, and responsibilities of supervisors within the program. It will include a statement of their qualifications, training, experience, and accountability.

#### *e. The Field Context for Learning*

An outline of one or two field placements will be provided. This will include a description of the expectations of the student in the placement and the placement for the student.

- lay involvement
- accountability
- time commitment
- field evaluation forms
- local supervision

*f. Assessment*

A description of the method/s of assessment of students will be included. Such a description will include a statement regarding the basis of assessment (i.e., what constitutes a pass or fail), the frequency of assessment, the forms used for assessment.

**4. Review outcomes**

The Review Panel may recommend the granting of full approval or interim approval pending the provision of further documentation as needed by the Review Panel. If invited or desired the Review Panel or may undertake a site visit prior to granting full approval.

**5. Ongoing review process**

The recommendation for accreditation will be for a maximum period of five years after which a further review will be requested.

If interim approval is granted it will be subject to a full review after not more than two years.

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