



Thematic Guide for Formation Programs, OFS

Secretariat for Formation – CIOFS

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“Thematic Guide for Formation Programs”

Presentation Letter

The Secretariat for Formation of CIOFS and Presidency of CIOFS presents the document **“Thematic Guide for Formation Programs” (2023)** prepared by the International Formation Secretariat to offer general guidelines for formation based on the Rule and General Constitutions of the OFS. This new document offers general guidance for formation programs through common themes for all fraternities, while respecting different geographical and cultural realities. We believe in a formative process that furthers *“unity in diversity.”*

We hope that this guide will inspire formators around the world and help them by encouraging up-to-date ideas on *“how to work the formative dimension”* in local, regional and national fraternities, considering the human, Christian, and Franciscan dimensions of our lives as Secular Franciscans.

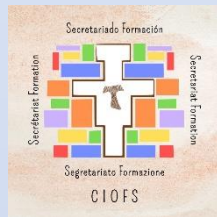
The International Formation Secretariat organized this document based on guidelines for formation offered by various national fraternities, formation experiences shared by formators all around the world and the work of previous formation commissions of the CIOFS Presidency.

The “Thematic Guide for Formation Programs” gives suggestions for all fraternities of the OFS offering signs of hope when we are faced with the challenges of our mission as Secular Franciscans in the Church and in the world.

Fraternally,

Secretariat for Formation of CIOFS





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THE TIME OF INITIATION

CCGG, Article 38

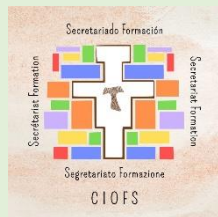
1. Rule 23 The time of initiation is a phase preparatory to the true and proper time of formation and is intended for the discernment of the vocation and for the reciprocal acquaintance between the fraternity and the aspiring member. It should guarantee the freedom and the seriousness of entrance into the OFS.
2. The duration of the time of initiation and the forms employed in its development are established by the national statutes.
3. It belongs to the fraternity council to decide possible exemptions to this time of initiation, keeping in mind the guidelines of the national council.

Secretariat for Formation – CIOFS

Rome, June 2023

The time of initiation	Objectives		<p># Accompany and encourage the aspirant to recognize the call (vocation), in particular the vocation to the Secular Franciscan order;</p> <p># Identify with the person of Christ who invites us to live in the Christian community;</p> <p># Discover in Francis and Clare their form of life which invites us to insert ourselves into the Franciscan family, into the fraternity, and from there to be present in the Church, in society and in the world.</p>
	Methods		<p># Effective participation in the life of the fraternity (interaction with the members; participation in fraternity projects);</p> <p># Accompaniment of the aspirant by the formator in collaboration with the Assistant where the aspirants contribute their own experiences during formation sessions and in fraternity gatherings;</p> <p># Dedicated formation sessions, with different methodologies: conferences; collaborative groups to discuss the topics; individual study/discussion groups;</p> <p># Carry out experiences of Franciscan prayer, biblical reflections, guided meditations;</p> <p># Use the “See/listen - Discern - Act - Celebrate” method (Cf. Mater et Magistra, 235) to produce formation materials and guide formation sessions.</p>
		Introduction	<p>The content of the time of initiation should present the aspirants with fundamental guidelines on the Franciscan charism, highlighting the unity that makes us a spiritual family, as well as inserting the candidate into the main elements of Christian life</p>

	Contents	Human Dimension	<p>How to discern and understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Self-knowledge; +The meaning of vocation; +The value of life; +The reality of the Family, work, social; circumstances and culture of the brothers; and sisters who come to the fraternity; +Interpersonal relationships in the fraternity, family and work; +Openness to the mystery the human person.
Christian Dimension		<p>Recognize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Our relationship with Jesus, the most Holy Trinity, Mary; +The role of the word of God in our Franciscan spiritual life; +Our baptismal commitment and Catholic Faith; +The prayer life of the fraternity, especially to promote the experience of Lectio Divina. 	
Franciscan Dimension		<p>Knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Francis and Clare of Assisi: life, vocation, spirituality and mission; +The extended Franciscan Family and of the role that the OFS plays in this family; +Conversion/penance as a characteristic of Secular Franciscans; +Franciscan Spirituality: the crib, the cross, and the Eucharist; +The role played by the fraternity in the life of the Secular Franciscan; +The existence of the Franciscan way of life according to a Rule; +The role that the OFS develops as laity in the Church (lay/secular Spirituality); +The apostolic and social dimension of the Franciscan charism; +Franciscans as evangelizers, promoters of justice, peace, and care for creation; +The Rite of Admission (Milestones and meaning). 	



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THE TIME OF FORMATION

CCGG, Article 40

1. Rule 23 The time of formation lasts at least one year. The national statutes can establish a longer period. The purpose of this period is the maturation of the vocation, the experience of the evangelical life in fraternity, and a better knowledge of the Order. This formation should be carried out with frequent meetings for study and prayer and with concrete experiences of service and of apostolate. These meetings should be held, as far as possible and opportune, in common with the candidates of other fraternities.
2. The candidates are guided to read and meditate on Sacred Scripture, to come to know the person and writings of Francis and of Franciscan spirituality, and to study the Rule and Constitutions. They are trained in a love for the Church and acceptance of her teaching. The laity practice living their secular commitment in the world in an evangelical way.
3. Participation in the meetings of the local fraternity is indispensable presupposition for initiation into community prayer and into fraternity life.
4. A style of teaching which is Franciscan in character and which fits the mentality of the persons concerned should be adopted.

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The time of Formation	Objetives		<p># The candidates will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deepen their knowledge of the life of Jesus, Saint Francis and Saint Clare - Discern their response in depth, and thus accept their call in the church and in the Franciscan spiritual family; - Be introduced to the elements of the Secular Franciscan charism, deepening their knowledge of the Rule and the Constitutions; - Be helped to discern their vocational call so that they will be able to consciously make their profession in the OFS.
	Methods		<p># Dedicated formation sessions using various methods: presentations; dialogue; collaborative work groups; use of online resources for example, videos, podcasts and reading;</p> <p># Concrete experiences: apostolic activities with the fraternity; application of the writings of Francis and Clare; seeing one's own life as a candidate promoting the fraternal relationship (integration) within the fraternity.</p> <p># Accompaniment of the candidate by the formator in cooperation with the Spiritual Assistant;</p> <p># Use the method "See/Listen - Discern - Act - Celebrate" (Cf. Mater et Magistra, 235) to produce formation materials and facilitate formation meetings.</p>
	Contents	Introduction	The content of the Time of Formation should present the study of the Rule and General Constitutions, as a way of deepening the specific elements that characterize Secular Franciscanism, so that the brothers and sisters in formation reach their human, Christian, and Franciscan maturity.
		Human Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Deepen self-knowledge + Deepen relationships with relatives. + Deepen relationships in the workplace + Deepen interpersonal relationships with the fraternity;

			+ Establish a relationship with the poor and with all those who live on the margins of society.
		Christian Dimension	+ Fostering and deepening the commitment to the Sacraments and to prayer life; (For example Adoration, Lectio Divina, Liturgy of the Hours, etc.)
		Franciscan Dimension	<p>+ The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order</p> <p>Art 1 – The Franciscan Family</p> <p>Art 2 – The Secular Franciscan Order</p> <p>Art 3 – The Rule of 1978</p> <p>Art 4 – Living the Gospel of Christ</p> <p>Art 5 – The Christian Faith</p> <p>Art 6 – The Church of the People of God</p> <p>Art 7 - Conversion</p> <p>Art 8 – Prayer and Contemplation</p> <p>Art 9 – Franciscans and Devotion to Mary</p> <p>Art 10 – Obedience is Love</p> <p>Art 11 – Poverty and Humility</p> <p>Art 12 – Freedom and Purity of Heart</p> <p>Art 13 - Fraternity</p> <p>Art 14 – Service to the Kingdom of God</p> <p>Art 15 – Justice and Fraternity</p> <p>Art 16 – Work: Gift of God</p> <p>Art 17 – Family, Peace, and Fraternity</p> <p>Art 18 – Universal Fraternity (Kinship)</p> <p>Art 19 – Dialogue, Joy, and Hope</p> <p>Art 20 – The OFS and Its Organization</p> <p>Art 21 – Council and Elective Chapters</p> <p>Art 22 – The Different Levels of Fraternity</p> <p>Art 23 – Time of Initiation, Time of Formation, and Profession</p> <p>Art 24 – Meetings and Fraternal Gatherings</p> <p>Art 25 – Fair Share</p> <p>Art 26 – Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance</p> <p>+OFS General Constitutions;</p> <p>+The Franciscan sources. (Writings of Saint Francis, Saint Clare, biographies, and other Franciscan authors.)</p> <p>+ Nature and History of the Secular Franciscan Order;</p> <p>+ Understanding of el YOUFRA-Children, YOUFRA-Adolescents y YOUFRA-Young Adults</p> <p>+ Rite of Profession (milestones and meaning).</p>



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ONGOING FORMATION

CCGG, Article 44

1. Begun by the preceding stages, the formation of the brothers and sisters takes place in a permanent and continuous way. It should be understood as an aid in the conversion of each [30] and everyone and in the fulfillment of their proper mission in the Church and in society.
2. The Fraternity has the duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed and of the temporarily professed, to help them become fully mature in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging.
3. Ongoing formation – accomplished by means of courses, gatherings, and the sharing of experience – aims to assist the brothers and sisters:
 - Rule 4 in listening to and meditating on the Word of God, "going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel";
 - in reflecting on events in the Church and in society in the light of faith and with the help of the documents of the teaching Church, consequently taking consistent positions;
 - in discerning and deepening the Franciscan vocation by studying the writings of Saint Francis, Saint Clare and Franciscan authors.

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Ongoing Formation	Objective	<p># Strengthen the vocation and sense of belonging of the professed members and help the newly professed to solidify their commitment and integrate into the fraternity.</p> <p># Respond to the church's call to mission as laity in the world by responding to the teachings of Jesus;</p> <p># Give new dimension to the lay vocation as part of the Franciscan family by following the spirituality of Saint Francis and by developing a deep knowledge of the Gospel, the Rule and Constitutions and the writings of Saint Francis and Saint Clare.</p>
	Methods	<p># Full participation in the Fraternity;</p> <p># Participation and animation of meetings, and Regional, National and International Chapters;</p> <p># Participation in meetings and celebrations with YOUFRA and the Franciscan Family;</p> <p># Concrete experiences: apostolic activities with the fraternity;</p> <p># Experiences of retreats, formation for formators, courses;</p> <p># Working methods: discussions in small groups; talks at fraternity gatherings; watch videos or listen to podcasts designated by the formation team; resources available on the CIOFS website; short weekly/monthly formation publications; online meetings and live streaming.</p> <p># Use the method "See/listen - Discern - Act - Celebrate" (Cf. Mater et Magistra, 235) to produce formation materials and facilitate formation meetings.</p> <p># It is also advised that formation materials from the Internet or social network groups not be used without a reliable source.</p>

	Contents	Introduction	<p>The content of Ongoing Formation should offer the continuous study of the Rule, the General Constitutions and other documents of the Order; continued study of the Franciscan sources; of ecclesial documents, with special attention to those that refer to the mission and vocation of the laity; all other secular issues that meet the specific needs of today's world in the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, socioenvironmental (Integrity of Creation), cultural, ecumenical and interreligious dimensions.</p>
Human Dimension		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Self knowledge + Interpersonal relationships; + Conflict resolution, dialogue, mediation; + Servant leadership; + Family and professional life; + Work as a gift from God; + Emotional health; + Meaning of human existence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Right to life and Bioethics; - Suffering and death; + The family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsible Parenthood; - Children's education; - Kinship and Sexuality; - Knowledge of the realities of young people; + The world: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The political, economic and socio-cultural reality - Human rights - The "Economy of Francesco": new challenges 	
Christian Dimension		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Application of the word of God to daily life: "Gospel to life and life to the Gospel." +Our Catholic faith and our role in the Church + Deepening of the sacramental aspect of life +How we apply our faith to our daily life in all dimensions + Deepening of the study of Church documents 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Catholic social teaching + Ecclesiology + Magisterium of the Catholic Church + Commitment of the laity: the mission of the laity in the Church. +Church and ecumenism: ecumenical and interreligious dialogue +Annual liturgical celebrations
		Franciscan Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Deepening of the knowledge of the Franciscan Sources (Writings of Sant Francis and Sant Clare, biographies and other Franciscan authors); + Saint Clare of Assisi: the feminine side of Franciscan spirituality; + Patrons of the OFS (Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Louis IX) and other Franciscan Saints; + Deepening of the knowledge of the Franciscan Family; +Secular Franciscan Spirituality; +Franciscan Mission; +Franciscan Theology; +Walking with YOUFRA in its process of vocational discernment; + Fraternal Animation; +Double-belonging OFS-YOUFRA; +Fraternal bonding with the First and Second orders and TOR; + Franciscan Annual Celebrations.