SPI Formation for Ministry Absence Policy

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ST PADARN'S INSTITUTE

Document Control Table

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Document History

Version	Date	Author	Notes on Revisions
2	31 July 2026	Lyn Davies- Senior coordinator	The policy was updated to strengthen absence reporting and record-keeping, with the coordinator responsible for notifying relevant parties of candidate absences and identifying any attendance patterns.

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2. Introduction

The Formation for Ministry Programme has been designed as an integrated learning experience with each component a vital part of training for ministry. Missing any component, whether it is an academic session, Theology and Practice of Ministry residential, or placement experience could lead potentially to significant gaps which in many cases are difficult to address later. We expect each candidate to make every aspect of formation a priority for their period of training, to carefully consider their ability to be able to make this time commitment, and to ensure that other commitments do not intrude on this important opportunity for immersion in theological, practical, and spiritual formation.

Inevitably, however, from time-to-time situations arise which mean that absence is unavoidable. This policy outlines the candidate's and St Padarn's responsibilities if a

candidate must be absent from any aspect of their training, including their placement and residentials. St Padarn's is deeply concerned with the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of candidates. The measures outlined in this policy are to support St Padarn's care of candidates.

From time to time a candidate may need to be absent for reasons other than ill-health. This policy outlines what those reasons might be, and the measures in place to support candidates who need to take such absences. Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Surrogacy leave are covered in the St Padarn's Formation for Ministry Parental Leave Policy here.

This policy draws on principles laid out in the clergy handbook[1], however the financial provision differs as candidates receive a grant rather than a stipend.

3. Absence due to Sickness

3.1 Short-term Absence due to Sickness

If a candidate needs to be absent from training due to sickness for a period of between 1-7 days, then they need to inform the coordinator and include the personal tutor as soon as possible and provide the following information:

1. The reason for the absence.
2. The likely date of return to training.
3. Whether the absence is attributable to an injury sustained whilst in training activity, or to circumstances associated with their training.
4. If they are seeking medical advice.

If the period of absence includes time usually spent on placement, they should also let their placement supervisor know as soon as possible. The Programme Coordinator will inform the Director of Formation of the absence and let other relevant people involved in the candidate's training know.

On their return to training the candidate should be in contact with their personal tutor, sending them the completed self-certification form. The personal tutor may conduct a return to training interview.

[1] https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/clergy-handbook/clergy-sickness-ill-health-and-incapacity/

3.2 Long-term Absence due to Sickness

If a candidate needs to be absent from training for more than 7 days due to sickness, they should obtain a **Fit Note** from their doctor. This will give the date the doctor has declared the candidate will be fit for work. If no date is given, the candidate must return to the doctor and obtain a new note with a date by which they should be fit before they can resume training. As with shorter periods of sicknesses, the candidate should inform their Program coordinator and include their personal tutor as soon as possible and provide the following information:

1. The reason for the absence.
2. The likely date of return to training.
3. Whether the absence is attributable to an injury sustained whilst in training activity, or to circumstances associated with their training.

The candidate should also inform their placement supervisor of their absence, and its likely length. The Programme Coordinator will keep a record of the absence and let other relevant people involved in the candidate's training know.

On return to training the personal tutor will conduct a return to training interview in order to see if measures need to be put in place to help ensure the health issue does not reoccur and to assess if any support is needed to ease the candidate's return, for example, a phased return to training.

The candidate's DDO will be informed by the Director of Formation for Ministry if a candidate is absent for more than a week so they can give appropriate support.

Except in exceptional circumstances, grants will no longer be payable after a year, and training will be deemed to have ceased. If there are exceptional circumstances, consultation would take place with the candidate's Bishop, the DDO and the CEO of the Representative Body of the Church in Wales and this period may be extended.

4. Further Support for Candidates with ill-health

The causes of absence due to ill-health are sometimes straightforward and sometimes more complex. If a candidate has several incidents of short-term absence due to sickness or one or more long term absences, it may be that there are underlying issues causing the ill-health that need further support. The Director of Formation for Ministry may request that the candidate seek additional medical advice or undertake an occupational health assessment to ascertain any underlying causes. If there are

underlying causes, then St Padarn's will want to work with the candidate to wherever possible put a plan in place to help address the issues or support the candidate through them. This could include measures such as arranging for counselling if the health issues are related to mental health or looking at reasonable adjustments if a condition is ongoing. Candidates are encouraged to talk with their personal tutor if there is anything concerning them that may be affecting their health.

5. Compassionate Leave

Wherever possible candidates are encouraged to arrange matters such as routine medical appointments outside of their training time. However, there are times where matters other than ill-health arise that mean a candidate needs to be absent from training.

5.1 Short-term Compassionate Leave

This could include matters such as non-routine medical appointments, a funeral, moving house, taking a dependent to a medical appointment, emergencies.

For absences of 1 – 7 days the candidate needs to inform their personal tutor as soon as possible and provide the following information:

1. The reason they need to be absent.
2. The likely date of return to training.

If the period of absence includes time usually spent on placement, they should also let their placement supervisor know as soon as possible. The personal tutor will inform the Programme Coordinator of the absence, who will keep a record of the absence and let other relevant people involved in the candidate's training know (e.g., Formational Cell Guides).

The candidate should inform their personal tutor and their placement supervisor when they return to work. If a candidate is taking numerous periods of short-term absence the personal tutor may initiate a pastoral conversation to see if there are any underlying issues.

5.2 Long-term Compassionate Leave

This type of absence is most likely to be caused by serious life events such as bereavement, or the need to give a period of care to a sick spouse or relative. Such an event is likely to have an effect on the well-being of the candidate. St Padarn's will want

to be supportive of the candidate, as well as talk through the implications of the absence on training. A candidate in such a situation should talk to their personal tutor as soon as possible so that this support can be given. The personal tutor will discuss with the candidate the length of time they may need to be absent. A period of up to two weeks can be agreed between the personal tutor and the candidate. Any longer absence is likely to impact training and needs to be agreed by the Director of Formation for Ministry who will consult with the Diocese as appropriate.

Where long-term absence runs into months the arrangements and their impact on training should be reviewed regularly. It may be that it is appropriate that training be paused for a time. Pastoral support from the candidate's personal tutor should continue during this time. Other support such as counselling may be put in place, if appropriate.

After the conversation with the candidate's personal tutor the candidate should let their placement supervisor know of their absence. The personal tutor will inform the Programme Coordinator of the absence, who will keep a record of the absence and let other relevant people involved in the candidate's training know (e.g., Formational Cell Guides).

On return to training the personal tutor will conduct a return to training interview in order to see if measures need to be put in place to assess if any support is needed to ease the candidate's return, for example, a phased return to training.

Absence arrangements for long-term pastoral circumstances will depend on the circumstances. Except in exceptional circumstances, grants will no longer be payable after a year, and training will be deemed to have ceased. If there are exceptional circumstances, consultation would take place with the candidate's Bishop, the DDO and the CEO of the Representative Body of the Church in Wales and this period may be extended.

6. Absence from Residentials

Residentials form an essential part of formational training and are not optional. If a candidate has no choice but to miss a residential on health or compassionate grounds the appropriate processes outlined in this policy should be followed. Absence from residentials will be noted on a candidate's Bishop's report.

7. Absence and Grants

For absence of less than one week a candidate's grant payments are not affected.

For long-term certified absences due to ill-health grants will continue to be paid up to 52 weeks, except for the travel grant which would not be required. In exceptional circumstances, as outlined in the Long-term absence due to ill-health section, the grant payments may be extended.

For long-term absences which are agreed under the process outlined in the Long-term absence section above, grants will continue to be paid up to 52 weeks, except for the travel grant which would not be required. In exceptional circumstance, as outlined in the Long-term absence due to pastoral reasons section, the grant payments may be extended.

8. Absence and Academic studies

In some circumstances an absence of any length may affect a candidate's ability to fulfil the academic programme that is part of their training. For example, if an assignment deadline falls in a period of absence. As part of their Quality Assurance all Higher Education providers have to have arrangements in place which deal with the effects of absence on learners' studies. This policy for absence for the Formation for Ministry programme does not supersede absence arrangements for the academic programmes, it runs alongside them. Therefore, in addition to the steps outlined above, candidates will need to take further action if their absence is likely to mean that they need a deadline extension due to extenuating circumstances or an interruption of studies and should speak to the St Padarn's registrar as soon as possible. Candidates are encouraged to speak to the Registrar as soon as possible if their absence is likely to affect their academic studies.

9. Other Policies

Other St Padarn's policies, such as the St Padarn's Policy for Capability to Study may also be made use of where appropriate. If there is continued absence for reasons not outlined in this policy, or where absence is consistently not appropriately dealt with by the candidate then the St Padarn's Learners' Disciplinary Policy may be utilised. If a learner is unhappy with the way their absence has been dealt with, they are able to make use of the St Padarn's Non-Academic Complaints Policy.