

Professional Development Guidelines

Professional development is the education you undertake in order to ensure you continue to grow and develop as a spiritual director. It is an intentional movement towards continual small improvements in your practice. When you have drawn up your professional development plan, it would be wise to talk it over with your supervisor, as they best know how you work and any weaknesses you may not be aware of.

Step 1: Review

Spend some time reflecting on your practice and experiences of offering direction; in particular when you have been aware you have been dissatisfied with how you handled a particular situation or directee. Be very honest in this review.

1. What was going on at that moment? What are the issues?
2. What happened within you in the midst of this experience?
3. Did this experience “push any buttons” in areas where you either lack experience, confidence, or feel uncomfortable.
4. How might you address these areas? e.g. is there a course being offered locally or online that might help you? Is there a book you know of that touches on this topic? Do you know another spiritual director who has experience in a particular area that you could go and “interview”?
5. What are the **areas you have found which could benefit from some intentional effort to improve?**
6. Decide how you might address these areas and talk it over with your supervisor.

Step 2: Plan

Write an action plan focussing on each area for development. Try and set yourself realistic goals for achieving growth. If you decide to read a dense theological treatise allow a realistic timeframe in which to achieve this! Regularly review your plan. Are you learning new techniques, helpful knowledge, new ways of being with your directees?

Step 3: Take Action

Start the action you have proposed and discussed with your supervisor. Review your practise and monitor your reactions. Are you beginning to feel more confident in situations that previously caused anxiety? Do you feel more confident with your understanding in this area? Is the way you are with your directees more consonant with your ideals?

Writing your professional development plans down (rather than just having an abstract idea in your head) gives you something to keep referring back to, and also to measure your progress against.

Step 4: Stay accountable

Share your plans with your supervisor. That way, you’ll be able to tell them about your progress and they can offer support and encouragement when you need it.

Step 5: Keep a journal

Record your professional development activities in a diary or journal. It can be really useful to get your thoughts, feelings, frustrations and achievements down on paper, while helping you to see how much you are actually accomplishing. Also good fodder for sharing with your supervisor! You may also need this information for relicensing.

Step 6: It's up to YOU

Your professional development is your responsibility. ACSD has an expectation that you will continue to grow as a spiritual director, and has included the space to record your professional development on the relicensing form, not to police your growth but to encourage you to explore areas out of your comfort zone and help you become a better Spiritual Director.

It's Never "Final"

Your development plan is not written in stone. It can, and should be, reviewed and revised on regular basis. To grow in our practise we need to remain responsive to our circumstances, God's leading, and our directees.

It's Never Completed

Professional development is never complete. If you want to continue moving forward in your faith/practise/relationship with others, and with God, you must continue extending your boundaries and growing your skills. Learning is a lifelong process.

Some examples of professional development that would fulfil ACSD's expectations:

- reading books, articles, papers, that extend you/challenge you in some way
- doing an online course from the likes of:
 - <http://www.openuniversity.edu/courses>
 - <https://www.open2study.com/>
 - <https://www.coursera.org/>
 - www.spiritualityandpractice.com/
 - <https://cac.org/>

Many tertiary providers now present free lectures online. Explore what is available on the web.

- seminars, public lectures at Universities, other educational providers
- going on retreat, 'quiet days' with a faith development aspect
- attending ACSD Training Events
- attending talks at your local spiritual directors' support group
- short courses in counselling techniques, enneagram, Myers Briggs, Strength Finders, Interactive Drawing, etc.