

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



THE ROLE OF GOVERNANCE

Scripture Reflection: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

It is the diocesan **bishop or major superior** who is primarily responsible for seminary admissions and the formation of priests. To fulfill this responsibility, he should work in close collaboration with seminaries and those delegated to this specialized ministry.

The bishop or major superior's governing authority exercises general oversight of the seminary; appoints the rector of the seminary (when applicable) and remains in close collaboration with the board of the seminary. He ensures that the seminary has a precise program "characterized by its being organized and unified, [and] by its being in harmony or correspondence with one aim which justifies the existence of the seminary: preparation of future priests" (*Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 61).

The bishop or the major superior oversees the implementation of the *Program of Priestly Formation*, and he ensures that the seminary statutes correspond to canon law. The diocesan bishop or major superior discharges these responsibilities personally and through the seminary board(s), the rector, and the rest of the seminary community. He is to visit the seminary regularly and exercise vigilance over it and the **formation of his seminarians**. A **relationship of trust** between the diocesan bishop or major superior and the rector will help to ensure that the bishop or major superior does not "undermine the Rector and other formators in the discernment of the vocations of the candidates and their adequate preparation" (*Ratio*, no. 128). He should encourage and support the rector and the rest of the seminary community in their dedication to this apostolate.

KEY WORDS

Bishop or Major Superior

Formation of Seminarians

Relationship of Trust

Seek Wise Counsel

Bishops and major superiors are encouraged to be generous in offering priests to serve in seminaries who exemplify the qualities that seminarians would be well-suited to emulate.

A seminary advisory board can provide a valuable service by offering **wise counsel** to the diocesan bishop or major superior on governance of the seminary in accord with church law, and the standards of the seminary's accrediting agency. Members of the board should represent the clergy, religious, and laity who share a concern for priestly formation in all its dimensions. They should be selected from the local Churches and from the religious institutes or societies that the seminary serves. The board should reflect the multicultural composition of the Church in the region and of the dioceses or eparchies it serves.

In addition to these administrative responsibilities concerning the seminary, the bishop or major superior should “establish a trustful dialogue with seminarians, so as to enable them to be sincere and open” (*Ratio*, no. 128). For this to occur, it is important that bishops and major superiors spend regular time with seminarians, both in one-on-one meetings and in visits to the seminary.

Frequent and open communication should be maintained among ecclesiastical authorities, the rector, and the rest of the seminary community to discuss the changing needs of the Church, the admissions process, the progress of seminarians, and developments in the seminary program.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How well does your seminary board(s) reflect the multicultural composition of the Church in the region and of the dioceses they serve?
2. How much involvement does the diocesan bishop or major superior have in the individual admission of applicants for the seminary?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How often should a seminary review their mission statement?

The most important administrative policy for a seminary is its mission statement. Each mission statement must incorporate a clear understanding of and commitment to the formation of men for the ministerial priesthood. It is also important for the seminary to regularly review their mission,

so as to best respond to the changing priorities of local Churches and the communities it serves through the establishment of appropriate policies. Each mission statement should reflect the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions of seminary formation.