

Proposed Framework for the Accreditation of Catechetical Centers  
(National, Congregational and Diocesan)

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## I. Rationale

Guide for Catechists, 30

*Where possible, catechists should be trained in their own special centers or schools. Church documents from Ad Gentes to Redemptoris Missio stress the importance of making efforts "to establish and support schools for catechists, which are to be approved by the Episcopal Conference and confer diplomas officially recognized by them."*

*It is important to promote contacts between catechetical centers, especially at a national level, under the guidance of the Episcopal Conference.*

## II. Sources of Data for the Framework

GDC General Directory for Catechesis (1997)  
GC Guide for Catechists (1993)  
ExC Ex Corde Ecclesiae (1990)  
CIC CLCode of Canon Law (1983)  
CS The Catholic School (1977)  
GCD General Catechetical Directory (1971)  
PAASCU Manual of Accreditation

## III. Proposed Process

1. Drawing up a Synthesis of Ideals, Principles, and Theories on Catechesis, Catechetical Formation, Catechetical Formators, Catechists, and Catechetical Centers - See Exhibit A.
2. Identification of Broad Areas for Evaluation according to the synthesis and the components and elements constituting each area.  
*The data for this stage are incorporated in Exhibit A.*
3. Identification or Description of Minimum Level to Maximum Level of Performance / Application of Ideals, Principles and Theories per area, leading to a GRID or set of criteria or norms for evaluation - See Exhibit B.  
*This stage of the process is to be done through a consultation meeting with some catechetical centers. They are the best resource for filling up the grid for the minimum to the maximum levels of performance or application of the principles that make up the grid.*
4. Designing the procedure to apply the norms or criteria for accreditation.  
*Here the PAASCU model may be used*
5. Creation of the team of accreditors.

## EXHIBIT A

### Synthesis of Principles for the Accreditation of Catechetical Centers

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#### I. Vision-mission-aims-objectives

##### Vision

*References: ExC21, CS53, ExC14*

##### **1. An authentic human educational community that (is)**

- 1.1. animated by the spirit of Christ, the person and message of Christ, which gives the school its distinctive character;
- 1.2. animated by a spirit of freedom and charity;
- 1.3. characterized by mutual respect, sincere dialogue, and protection of the rights of individuals;
- 1.4. assists each of its members to achieve wholeness as human persons.

##### **2. An authentic human educational community where**

- 2.1. everyone
  - helps in promoting unity, and each one, according to his or her role and capacity,
  - contributes
    - toward decisions which affect the community and also
    - toward maintaining and strengthening the distinctive Catholic character of the institution.
- 2.2. where Catholic ideals, attitudes and principles penetrate and inform the school's activities in accordance with the proper nature and autonomy of these activities.

##### **3. An academic institution in which Catholicism is vitally present and operative.**

##### Mission

*References: GDC 249, CS56, 53*

##### **1. To give a comprehensive and systematic catechetical formation of a basic nature** over a period of time during which the specifically catechetical dimensions of formation are promoted:

- the Christian message;
- knowledge of the human persons and their socio-cultural situation;
- the pedagogy of faith.

##### **2. To give education**

- 2.1. not for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events and things.
- 2.2. where knowledge is considered not as a means of material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others.

##### **3. To promote faith-relationship with Christ** in whom all values find fulfillment.

## **Aims**

*References: CS35-37,49,53*

As a Catholic school, a school for ordinary catechists, the catechetical center aims at:

- 1. The critical communication of human culture and systematic transmission of values for living in the light of faith**
- 2. The total formation of the individual of those particular virtues**  
guided by its Christian vision of reality,  
enabling them to live a new life in Christ,  
helping them to play faithfully their part in building up the Kingdom of God,  
bringing forth of the power of Christian virtue by the integration of culture with faith  
and of faith with living.
- 3. A synthesis**
  - 3.1. **of culture and faith** by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel;
  - 3.2. **of faith and life**, through the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christians.

## **Essential Characteristics**

*Reference: ExC13*

Therefore, like a Catholic university, the catechetical center must have the following essential characteristics:

- 1. A Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the school community as such;**
- 2. A continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge**, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;
- 3. Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church;**
- 4. An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.**

## **II. Formators-Teachers / Faculty**

*References: CS 43, 47, 48, ExC 22*

- 1. The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher.** Thus teachers are called to:
  - 1.1. a noble task of imitating Christ, the only Teacher, so that they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behavior;
  - 1.2. be witnesses and educators of authentic Christian life, which evidences an attained integration between faith and life, and between professional competence and Christian wisdom.
- 2. All teachers are to be inspired by academic ideals and by the principles of an authentically human life.** Thus, teachers seek to
  - 2.1. improve their competence and
  - 2.2. set the content, objectives, methods and results of research in an individual discipline within the framework of a coherent world vision.

**3. Through and with the teachers the Catechetical Center as a Catholic school creates within its walls a climate in which the faith of the catechists-students**

3. 1. will gradually mature and
- 3.2. enable them to assume the responsibility placed on them by Baptism and as catechists of the Church.

### **III. Catechists-Students (Being)**

#### **Necessity and Nature of Spirituality for the Catechist**

*References: GDC 239, GC 6, GC 22*

To have a deep spiritual life, is the most important aspect of the personality of the catechists and therefore the one to be most stressed in formation.

1. The formation of the catechists-students nourishes their *spirituality* as catechists so that their activities spring in truth from their own witness of life.
2. Catechists-students have a deep spirituality.
  - that is closely bound up with their status as lay Christians, made participants, in their own degree, in Christ's prophetic, priestly and kingly offices.
  - that is conditioned by their apostolic vocation and bears the marks of:
    - openness to God's Word,
    - to the Church and
    - to the world;
    - authenticity of life;
    - missionary zeal;
    - devotion to Mary.
3. Catechists-students attain interior maturity through an intense sacramental and prayer life with the following elements:
  - reception of the Eucharist
  - lived liturgy
  - recital of part of the Divine Office (lauds and vespers)
  - daily meditation
  - personal prayer
  - frequent reception of the sacrament of penance
  - participation in spiritual retreats
  - spiritual direction
4. Catechists-students cultivate their own interior life in the school community that offers them a stimulus and an example to maintain their own fervor and grow in apostolic spirit.

#### **Human Maturity**

*Reference: GC 21*

What is to be aimed here is to develop catechists-students with human maturity, suitable for a responsible role in the community. The aim of catechetical formation will be to build on the human qualities already present, to develop them and add the necessary skills for a fruitful ministry.

1. The catechists-students-possess in the purely human sphere:
  - psychological equilibrium
  - good health
  - a sense of responsibility
  - honesty

- dynamism
  - good professional and family conduct
  - a spirit of sacrifice
  - strength
  - perseverance
2. With a view to the functions of a catechist, they have:
- good human relations
  - a grasp of their own culture
  - ability to communicate
  - willingness to work with others
  - leadership qualities
  - balanced judgment
  - openness of mind
  - a sense of realism
  - a capacity to transmit consolation and hope
3. With a view to particular situations or roles, they develop aptitudes for working in the fields of:
- peacemaking,
  - community organizing and development
  - socio-cultural promotion
  - justice
  - Health care, etc.

**Apostolic Maturity; Pastoral Spirit & Missionary Zeal; Service to the Community as a Whole and to Particular Groups**

*References: GDC 239, GC 11,24,25,26*

Formation also constantly nourishes the *apostolic consciousness* of the catechists, that is, their sense of being a minister of the Word and an evangelizer in the Church.

1. Catechists-students develop for their pastoral ministry:
  - a spirit of pastoral responsibility and leadership;
  - generosity;
  - dynamism and creativity;
  - ecclesial communion and obedience to Pastors.
2. Catechists-students are taught, theoretically and practically, :
  - to devote themselves as lay Christians to the missionary apostolate.
  - to show sensitivity in dealing with people in difficult situations such as those in irregular marriages, the children of broken marriages;
  - to express to them and share with them the immense compassion of the heart of Jesus.
3. Catechists-students are prepared:
  - to work with harmony with the local priests and religious, and especially with other members of the laity involved in the apostolate;
  - to promote communication and communion between the members of the community, and
  - to devote themselves to the groups committed to their care, trying to understand their particular needs so as to help them as much as possible.
4. Catechists-students are encouraged to receive the canonical mandate or mission.

## **IV-A. Formation Program / Instruction (Knowing)**

Catechists-students should have attained beforehand a certain level of education, at least they have completed secondary education. However, standards for admission should be above average, as candidates should be able to follow a course of "higher religious education."

Catechists-students should dedicate themselves to their studies so as to become lamps to light the way of their brothers and sisters.

### **The biblico-theological formation of the catechist**

*References: GDC 240, 241, GC 23*

In spite of the diversity of subjects, the biblico-theological formation of the catechists-students should be global and not compartmentalized, such that they do "not only communicate the Gospel accurately," but also "make those being taught capable of receiving it actively and of discerning what in their spiritual journey agrees with the faith."

- 1. The catechists-students have a comprehensive awareness of the Christian message,**  
with its various elements
  - 1.1. structured around the central mystery of faith, Jesus Christ, and
  - 1.2. in harmony with each other by means of an organic vision that respects the "hierarchy of truths".
- 2. The catechists-students possess an overall vision of faith that brings unity and harmony**
  - 2.1. to the knowledge acquired,
  - 2.2. to their personalities, and
  - 2.3. to their apostolic service.
- 3. The catechists-students develop a synthesis of faith that**
  - 3.1. helps them mature in their own faith and
  - 3.2. enables them to give a reason for their hope in view of the world and its grave and complex problems.
- 4. The catechists-students undergo a biblico-theological formation that**
  - 4.1. is close to human experience and**
  - 4.2. in some fashion adopts a catechetical style while remaining theological.**

### **The human sciences and the formation of catechists**

*References: GDC 242,243, GC 23*

In their formation program theology and the human sciences mutually enrich each other.

1. Catechists-students are challenged
  - 1.1. to pursue an education that combines excellence in humanistic and cultural development with specialized professional training.
  - 1.2. to continue the search for truth and for meaning throughout their lives
  - 1.3. to acquire or, if they have already done so, a deepening of their Christian way of life that is authentic;

- 1.4. to realize
  - the responsibility of their professional life,
  - the enthusiasm
    - of being the trained "leaders" of tomorrow,
    - of being witnesses to Christ in whatever place they may exercise their profession.
2. The catechists-students are introduced into "an analysis of the religious situation as well as of the sociological, cultural, and economic conditions to the extent that these facts of collective life can greatly influence the success of evangelization.
3. The contents and materials of the formation program are connected to the new and emerging life situations of the catechists-students.

## **IV-B. Formation Program / Instruction (Savoir-Faire)**

### **Pedagogical Formation**

*References: GDC 244, 245; GC 12-16*

The pedagogical formation must be closely related to praxis: one must start with praxis to be able to arrive at praxis.

1. Through the pedagogical formation that seeks to mature their educational capacity, the catechists-students acquire:
  - 1.1. an ability to be attentive to people,
  - 1.2. an ability to interpret or respond to educational tasks or initiatives in organizing learning activities, and
  - 1.3. the ability of leading a human group toward maturity.
2. The catechists-students acquire their own style of imparting catechesis by adapting the general principles of catechetical pedagogy to their own personality.
3. The catechists-students are the protagonists of their own learning by being creative in formation and not by just applying external rules.

### **Need for inculturation**

1. Catechists-students are specifically prepared for inculturation, with courses on the elements of cultural anthropology and on their own culture.
2. Catechists-students show their conviction that the gospel is strong enough to penetrate any culture and enrich and strengthen it from within.

### **Human Development and Option for the Poor**

1. The catechists-students
  - 1.1. are close to the people,
  - 1.2. help them to understand the realities of social life so as
    - to try to improve it, and
    - to speak out for the weak and defend their rights, when necessary;
  - 1.3. act in union with the community, in a program drawn up with the approval of the Bishop, when it is necessary to take practical initiatives in human development.

2. Catechists are prepared to pay attention also to particular groups in need: those who are oppressed, persecuted or marginalized, the handicapped, the unemployed, prisoners, refugees, drug addicts, those suffering from AIDS, etc.

### **Spirit of Ecumenism**

1. The catechists-students are prepared to promote an ecumenical spirit in the community, beginning with the catechized.
2. The catechists-students show a deep desire for Christian unity.

### **Dialogue with Those of Other Religions**

1. The catechists-students develop openness to inter-religious dialogue and are trained to take part in it.
2. The catechists-students manifest
  - 2.1. a listening attitude to the Spirit,
  - 2.2. accurate knowledge of the other religions practiced in their area,
  - 2.2. a conviction that  
salvation comes from Christ and  
dialogue does not lead to religious relativism,  
dialogue be continued, even when it seems difficult or misunderstood
  - 2.3. and practical cooperation with non-Christian bodies in facing the great challenges to humanity.

### **Attention to the Spread of Sects**

1. The catechists-students have a working knowledge of the different sects, their teachings, the points on which they particularly attack the Church.
2. The catechists-students can
  - 2.1. point out the inconsistencies of the sects and
  - 2.2. forestall their encroachment by giving positive instruction and encouraging the Christian community to greater fervor, and
  - 2.3. proclaim clearly the Christian message,  
by giving personal attention to people and their problems,  
helping them to clarify doubts and  
being wary of the specious promises of the sects.

## **V. Community Involvement**

*References: CS*

The Catechetical Center works closely with other Christian bodies (the family, the parish and Christian community, youth associations, etc.)

## **VI. Facilities / Physical Plant**