

Presbyterian Theological Centre - Sydney

FES Policy

Approved by PTC Faculty Sept 03.
Amended by PTC Faculty August 08

Field Education Scheme (FES) is the element of training at PTC in which students are involved in active ministry and in reflection on this ministry in congregational and other settings.

This policy has been adopted by the faculty of PTC and applies to the faculty, the FES co-ordinator, students enrolled in FES, FES trainers and presbyteries.

Definitions

Student - a student enrolled at PTC and enrolled in an FES subject

FES trainer - person requested by PTC to provide personal training for student during a ministry placement

FES co-ordinator - faculty member of PTC responsible for organising FES program.

Aims

The aims of the FES program are

1. to assist students to develop ministry competencies and skills¹ appropriate to their future ministry roles;
2. to assist students to develop an awareness of issues and dynamics in congregational life and ministry and in the denominational setting;
3. to assist students to develop an awareness of the culture and society in which they minister and its impact on ministry.

Method

The major element of FES training is a ministry placement with a trainer. FES involves other placements, projects and activities.

The FES training uses an action-reflection model. In this model a student participates in ministry, usually under the direction of a trainer, and then engages in critical reflection on his or her involvement, either individually, with peers and/or with the trainer. Ideally there should be a further opportunity for a similar ministry involvement, so that the student can put into practice what he or she has learnt from the critical reflection.

Students are required to keep a reflective journal as a means of ongoing reflection on their FES experience. The reflections in the journal should consider the student's reflections on

¹ Competencies are basic abilities and capacities which are required in all Christian ministry, skills involve the application of capacities to specific tasks, usually requiring more specific knowledge. For example 'ability to teach' is a competency; giving a children's talk is a skill. The list of competencies required for a ministry of teaching and leadership are given in Appendix 1. In general FES should focus on competencies rather than skills, since competencies are generally applicable. However toward the end of the course students should develop skills appropriate to their future ministry. For students who are candidates for the PCNSW it is possible to list a basic skill set required. For further information see [Appendix 1 - FES Competencies and Skills](#).

the development of his or her ministry competencies and skills along with observations of the issues and dynamics in congregational life and ministry and the culture and society in which they minister and its impact on ministry.

Trainers are usually people involved in full-time ministry, most often congregational ministers, who agree to train a particular student set period. A trainer may choose to involve others in training a student in particular areas of ministry.

At the commencement of each semester the trainer and student agree on competencies and skills on which they will concentrate. These are the agreed goals. The trainer and student also agree on the particular methods for developing and assessing those skills. This is the training plan. The agreed goals and the training plan are recorded in the learning contract. A learning contract is established each semester and reported to the FES co-ordinator.

FES also involves attendance at 4 seminars each semester organised by the FES co-ordinator.

FES students are expected to attend the following each semester

1. Introductory seminar (large group)
2. Preaching seminar (large group)
3. Case study review (small group)
4. Preaching review (small group)

The goals of FES relate to 'ministry formation'. The PTC course of training also involves 'theological formation' and 'spiritual formation'. The course is integrated, and so FES will involve aspects of 'theological formation' and 'spiritual formation', however these are not the primary focus of FES.

Assessment

FES placement is assessed by the FES trainer (in consultation with others when it is appropriate). The basis for assessment is:

1. the achievement of agreed goals during the semester (the focus is on development in the specified area);
2. the demonstration of satisfactory skills in key ministry areas (the focus is not simply on development but on showing that a student can function satisfactorily in a ministry role).

A student who wishes to appeal an FES report must do so in writing to the co-ordinator within two weeks of receiving the report.

Each semester in which a student is enrolled in FES he or she is required to keep a reflective journal. Each week's work should be written up and critically reflected upon (a weekly entry will be about 250 words). The reflection will include description, observations, musings and theorising. It should deal with both the student's own development of competencies and skills as well as with the issues and dynamics of ministry. The journal will be shown to FES co-ordinator twice during the semester (usually at FES Seminars) but it will not be graded or read.

The details of assessment for each component of FES is given under the description of

that component in the following section.

The result for an FES semester is based on the trainers report, reports from other ministry placements and activities during that semester, the completion of an FES journal and attendance at FES Seminars. The assessment is made by the FES co-ordinator. The result is either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Components

The FES consists of the following compulsory components.

1. A student must be enrol in FES for at least six semesters, and in each of these semesters must have a ministry placement, which involves 6-8 hours per week of active ministry and preparation (i.e. about 150 hours/semester). Ordination candidates must complete at least four semesters in a general congregational setting and may have up to two semesters in a specialist or non-congregational placement. Other students may have up to 4 semesters in a specialist or non-congregational placement. Assessment: report by trainer at the end of each semester.

The 6-8 hr /week is averaged over a semester and includes training activities and ministry the student undertakes as part of the FES appointment, but not 'normal' church commitments nor activities the student chooses to do without direction. As a guide the following would usually be included in FES hours - ministry commitments to which the trainer directs the student, preparation time for those commitments, training meetings with the trainer (and/or others).

The following would not usually be included in FES hours - church attendance once per Sunday, attending (not leading) a Bible study group, occasional hospitality given and received (e.g. having a family from church over to get to know them better), occasional church social events, travel time.

The trainer and student should use the ministry plan to negotiate the details of these expectations.

2. A student must participate in at least one four week full-time placement in a ministry role significantly different to his or her other semester placements. Assessment: report by trainer and a written report and reflection by student.
3. A student must take leadership of two different ministry projects or events which involve strategic thinking, a planning cycle², administration and group leadership (e.g. a church camp, an outreach event, an evangelistic camp). Assessment: report by trainer or observer and a written report and reflection by student.
4. Attendance at FES seminars held at PTC at least twice a semester during those semester in which a student has an FES placement. Assessment: attendance, completion of any preparation as required, participation in seminar discussion.

Possible components

² Planning cycle: develop aims, establish plan, execute plan, review

1. Preaching (compulsory for candidates during a congregational placement) a student preaches at least three times in a semester, discusses their preparation with their trainer (or delegated trainer), receives written or verbal feedback from a group of listeners and with the trainer reviews the sermon on tape or video. The preaching component also involves participation in at least two seminars at PTC each semester (over and above the FES seminars). Assessment: report by trainer at the end of semester, attendance and participation in PTC seminars.
2. FES co-ordinator may arrange group observation visits from time to time. Assessment: Report by group leader.

The PTC faculty has a particular responsibility for the adequate preparation of ministry and deaconess candidates. The PTC faculty may direct a candidate to undertake additional FES placements if he or she fails to demonstrate satisfactory achievement of competencies or skills. The need for such a placement will be indicated by unsatisfactory reports from the FES trainer, an unsatisfactory performance for which the FES co-ordinator can provide evidence to the PTC faculty or, in the case of a candidate, the provision of evidence by a Presbytery of an unsatisfactory performance. Any such placement will have very clear goals, activities and assessments arranged before the commencement of the semester.

FES placements

FES placements are decided by the faculty of the PTC. The FES co-ordinator may make interim decisions where necessary, these decisions will be subject to review by the faculty.

The placement process will allow students to indicate their preferences regarding the type of placement as well as a specific placement. As far as possible placements will be made in consultation with students and in order to satisfy student preferences, however the faculty retains the authority to make FES placements.

The FES co-ordinator may receive advice about a student's placement from a student's past or current trainer(s) as well as the presbytery or session holding jurisdiction over a candidate. The assembly has given the PTC faculty the responsibility for the training of candidates and this empowers the faculty to arrange FES placements. Presbyteries holding jurisdiction over a candidate must respect the integrity of the PTC FES scheme.

The FES co-ordinator will offer an opportunity for students to indicate preferences for FES placements (including block placements) before appointments are made. A student may speak to possible trainers and seek to arrange a suitable placement, however in such discussions the student should indicate that arrangements are not confirmed until made by the PTC faculty.

FES appointments will usually be made in December-January and both the trainer and students will be notified by mail. The co-ordinator will always contact the trainer and establish his or her willingness and suitability before an appointment is first made. The co-ordinator will always contact a student when making an appointment other than one requested by the student.

In the case of a student who is dissatisfied with his or her FES placement, he or she

should raise this with the FES co-ordinator. If still dissatisfied a student may then ask for the matter to be referred to the faculty, in which case he or she must provide a written submission explaining the reasons for dissatisfaction and requesting a variation of placement.

An FES ministry placement will usually consist of four semesters. If a student wishes to extend a placement beyond four semesters, he or she will need to demonstrate not only the practical advantages (e.g. family concerns, transport arrangement, ministry continuity) but also the way in which an extended placement will allow for new ministry involvement and the development of new ministry competencies and skills. A student wishing to extend a placement must prepare, with their trainer, a plan for the extended placement which clearly demonstrates how this will be achieved and present this to the FES co-ordinator. This must be submitted when the FES co-ordinator request expressions of preference for FES appointments.

Reporting Process

An FES trainer should meet with a student in the first two weeks of each semester to develop a learning contract and ministry plan for the semester. The learning contract will show the skills and competencies on which the student will focus for that semester, the method for that training and how it will be assessed. The ministry plan will indicate, as far as possible, the ministry activities in which the student is expected to be involved during the semester and the likely time these will take. The learning contract and ministry plan are submitted in the standard form provided by PTC

An FES trainer must meet with a student in the last two weeks of each semester to review the semester and prepare a report for the FES co-ordinator. The student must be given a printed copy of the report by the trainer. This report is submitted in the standard form provided by PTC.

Time

FES appointments are usually made from year to year. The year runs from February to November (in the case of single semester appointments Semester 1 is from February to June, Semester 2 is from July to November).

An FES appointment is made with the understanding that students will be available for: PTC mission (2 weekends usually in March or April), one weekend for PTC retreat (if held) and one Sunday PTC deputation (where required). When a student is undertaking a major ministry project as a component of FES, he or she should be allowed reasonable time for this, including preparation time. Where a student is involved in Sunday ministry they should be allowed at least three Sundays (during a year) for holidays and family responsibilities. When the FES placement is not for Sundays an equivalent allowance should be made. (A student with a Sunday placement should be involved in ministry activities approximately 35 Sundays during a year).

Absences from normal ministry placement must be negotiated with the trainer. In these negotiations a student must accept the direction of the trainer. Trainers should focus on the achievement of learning goals, rather than students simply meeting time requirements (For example speaking on a weekend camp for another church will take a student away from regular commitments, but may further the achievement of learning goals).

FES ministry involvement should not extend beyond an average of 8 hrs/week for a full-time student, including preparation. A Trainer is responsible not only for ensuring that a student has sufficient ministry involvement, but also that the student does not take on too great a ministry burden. The 8 hrs/week average should take into account the students leadership of any ministry projects or event during that semester, even if this is not directly related to FES placement. This limitation does not apply to students who are employed in a ministry role and studying part-time,.

Remuneration

FES is not employment and the PTC does not expect that students will be paid for their ministry involvement. Where a church or other ministry can afford to support a student financially PTC suggests the provision of a scholarship of \$2500 per semester. When this is not possible a church, or other ministry, should meet the ministry costs of a student. Where a student is not provided with scholarship, or a ministry requires extensive travel, a travel allowance should be paid at the rate approved by the Assembly (see www.pcns.org.au/m&m/stipends.htm).

Recognition of prior learning

Students may apply to be credited up to two semesters of FES on the basis of prior supervised ministry experience. Such an application must demonstrate not only ministry experience, but adequate, active and competent supervision. This should be demonstrated by the provision of reports or similar documentation by a trainer as well as by the student.

Recognised prior learning is usually granted for the completion of full-time two-year Metro training.

Students may also be granted recognition for prior learning for particular components of FES (for example block placement, observation visits, ministry projects or preaching). Recognition will be granted only when a student can demonstrate a reflective and supervised learning experience.

Recognition of prior learning is at the discretion of the FES co-ordinator.

Student expectation

An FES student is expected to:

- participate in all relevant seminars and activities arranged by PTC;
- participate in all ministry activities in a placement as agreed in the ministry plan;
- follow reasonable directions from a trainer about participation in and conduct of ministry activities;
- act in a way which is supportive of the ministry of the trainer;
- respect the confidentiality of the trainer, and other people with whom he or she has contact during a ministry placement (this includes when making reports to FES seminars);
- attend meetings with the trainer as arranged.

Trainer

The role of the FES trainer is essential for the success of FES.

Qualifications

An FES trainer must be a competent ministry practitioner in the area of training, with appropriate qualifications, recognition and experience. He or she should have some training in ministry training and/or supervision, or should participate in the training provided by PTC for FES trainers. program. From 2005 FES placements will only be made to trainers who have completed the PTC basic training for trainers or other equivalent training, and who can demonstrate an ongoing commitment to develop their training skills.

Expectations

An FES trainer is expected to:

- establish and maintain a positive, open, trusting and supportive relationship with the student;
- meet with the student to develop a learning contract and ministry plan within the first two weeks of semester and submit this to the FES co-ordinator;
- arrange regular meetings with the student for reflection on ministry activities and for meeting the goals of the learning contract. These meetings should be at least once every two weeks, and at least some should be a private meeting (although some may be held as group meetings);
- give the student accurate and fair feedback during the semester about the adequacy of the student's progress;
- provide a student with sufficient pastoral support and encouragement and be reasonably available to the student during the semester;
- make reasonable arrangements for the support of a student's family and their inclusion in the ministry where appropriate;
- respect the confidentiality of the student at all times, including refraining from making negative comments to others about the student and allowing the student reasonable freedom in expressing struggles and by only sending a report to the FES co-ordinator after the student has read it and had time to consider it and comment on it;
- attend an annual FES trainer's update (usually in early February) and actively develop his or her own skill in ministry training and supervision.

While a FES trainer should take an interest in all aspects of the welfare of a student, an FES trainer is not expected to be a spiritual mentor for a students. A trainer may take on this role at the request of a student, but in the first place PTC expects both student and co-ordinator to focus their relationship on ministry formation.

Development

PTC is committed to the development of excellence in FES trainers.

To assist this the PTC will:

- hold an annual FES trainer's update (usually in early February) which will include training for trainers;
- conduct a basic three day basic training for trainers, available in intensive and non-intensive modes from time to time;
- inform FES trainers of other opportunities for training.

FES Co-ordinator

The FES Co-ordinator administer FES and seeks to make it effective training for students.

The FES Co-ordinator is expected to:

- assist students in finding an appropriate FES trainer and appointment,
- assist trainers who wish to participate in FES to find an appropriate student,
- recommend FES appointments to PTC faculty for its decision,
- advice trainers and students of FES appointments,
- provide reporting forms for trainers and students,
- receive and read reports from trainers and students and on that basis assess students satisfactory completion of each year of FES,
- use FES reports as part of formulating reports to Presbyteries on candidates,
- provide training, information and support for trainers,
- provide information about FES for students,
- conduct seminars for students enrolled in FES,
- arrange observation visits for FES students as appropriate,
- be available to support and advise trainers and students about FES.

Unsatisfactory participation or training

If a trainer is concerned about the participation or actions of a student, or if a student finds his or her FES appointment inappropriate or the training unsatisfactory, the student or co-ordinator should raise this with the other person as soon a possible. If concerns remain he or she should seek assistance from the FES co-ordinator as soon as possible. The co-ordinator will attempt to resolve the concerns, and, if that is not possible, will rearrange or terminate the appointment.