

Permanent Diaconate Formation Process

The Programme of Formation for the Permanent Diaconate is outlined in the '*Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*'.

Stage 1

• Accompaniment and Initial Discernment

- Expression of Interest - Participation in Information Sessions and Prayer at the Diocesan Level
- Accompaniment and Discernment - Accompaniment with a Member of the Diocesan Formation Team
- Formal Application and Selection - Diocesan Director of Diaconal Formation and Diaconal Formation Team assess suitability of candidate and make recommendation to the Local Ordinary

Stage 2

• Aspirancy Propaedeutic Programme (1 Year)

- One Year preparation and spiritual accompaniment at the Diocesan Level
- Spiritual Direction and Parish Pastoral Accompaniment
- Broad programme of preparation with formation meetings and opportunities for retreat and prayer at the Diocesan / Regional Centre Level.
- Formal Assessment for Candidacy - Diocesan Director of Diaconal Formation and Diaconal Formation Team assess suitability of candidate and make recommendation to the Local Ordinary.
- Rite of Candidacy for Holy Orders

Stage 3

• Candidate Formation Programme (3 Years)

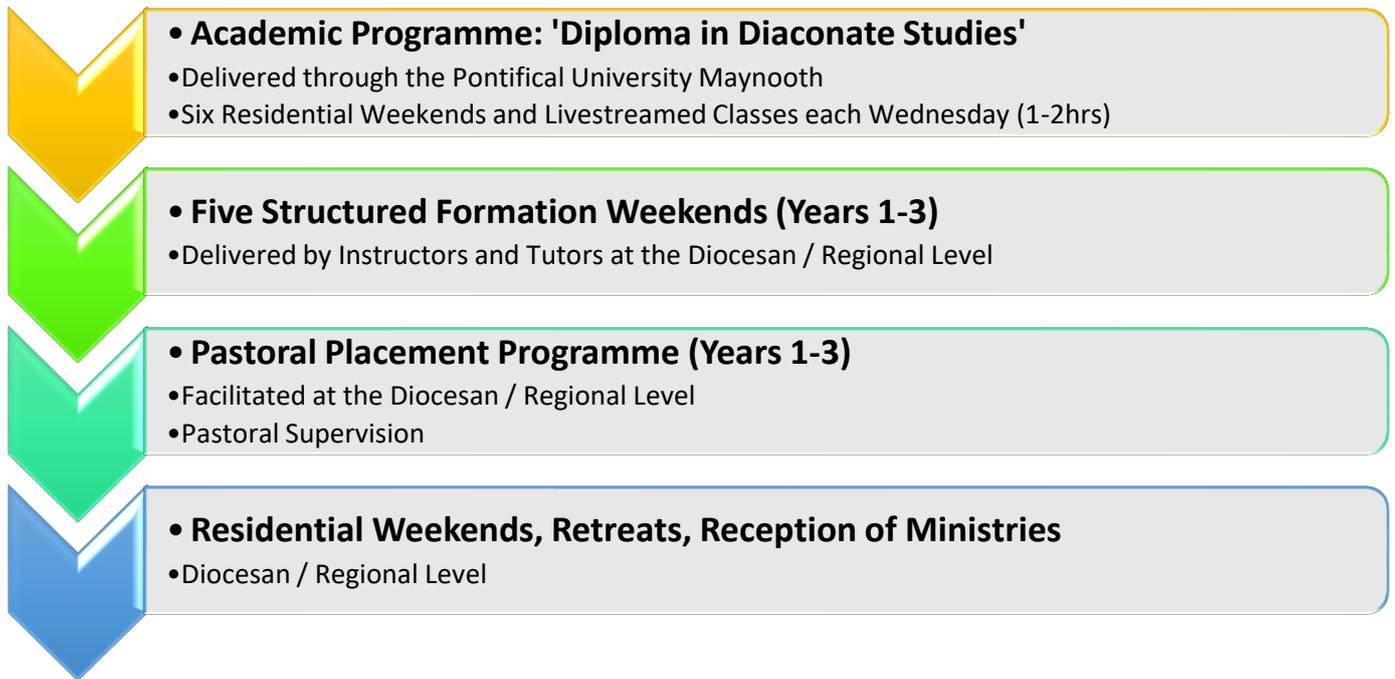
- Three Year structured programme of theological studies; liturgical, pastoral and spiritual formation through the Pontifical University Maynooth and the Diocesan/Regional Centre.
- Spiritual Direction and Vocational Formation at the Diocesan Level
- Days of Recollection and Retreats at the Diocesan/Regional Centre Level
- Spiritual and Human Formation for the Candidate and his Family
- Pastoral Placement in Parishes and Pastoral Reflection at the Diocesan/Regional Centre Level
- Institution to the ministry of Lector and Acolyte
- Formal Assessment for Ordination to the Diaconate - Diocesan Director of Diaconal Formation and Diaconal Formation Team assess suitability of candidate and make recommendation to the Local Ordinary
- Ordination to the Diaconate by the Local Ordinary

Stage 4

• Ongoing Vocational Formation

- Diocesan Appointment
- Ongoing Spiritual Direction and Vocational Formation
- Post-Ordination Formation Programme for New Deacons
- Ongoing pastoral mentorship and formation
- Ongoing Pastoral Formation and Support for Deacons and their Families

Key Elements of the New Programme



Supporting the Implementation of the New Programme

This implementation of this new programme will be supported by the appointment of a 'National Coordinator for the Formation of the Permanent Diaconate' which is included within the costings. The Faculty of Theology and the Formation Team of the National Seminary are willing to be a resource to the 'National Coordinator' in supplementing the integrative, practical, experiential and spiritual aspects of formation.

Maynooth 'Diploma in Diaconate Studies'

The new academic programme will be consolidated at Maynooth to ensure consistency of academic provision. It will be a blended model comprised of six on campus residential weekends and weekly online live streamed classes (supported with asynchronous online materials).²

Programme Aims

The aims and learning outcomes of the programme are those already agreed with the National Training Authority. The aims of this programme are:

- To equip future permanent deacons with broad knowledge of the theological content of their faith
- To foster the development of a reflective approach to ministry thereby ensuring a fruitful meeting between faith and contemporary culture
- To deepen awareness and appreciation of the wide variety of the forms of ecclesial ministry, lay and ordained
- To enable candidates to acquire skills and resources that will sustain them throughout their ministry.

Programme Learning Outcomes

By the end of this programme successful candidates will be able to:

- exhibit a foundational knowledge of the doctrines of faith and theology
- demonstrate an ability to read and interpret biblical and ecclesiastical texts
- utilise the skill of theological reflection
- apply research methods appropriate to theology and pastoral ministry
- draw on bibliographical resources, research methods and secondary material responsibly.

Programme Delivery

The *Diploma in Diaconate Studies* is a 90 credit (level 7) part-time hybrid programme over three years.

- Students will be registered with the Pontifical University and so have rights to all the campus resources, including library, the virtual learning environment, student support services, etc.
- Module descriptors identify the learning aims and outcomes, the methodological parameters of each subject, and the prescribed reading. Module assessment will be aligned to the programme aims and learning outcomes and at an appropriate level and manner for adult learning
- Each module is delivered in part on campus and part online through livestreaming and asynchronous delivery.
 - Six residential weekends will be held in Maynooth each year. The class time period is between 7.00pm Friday to 5.00pm on Saturday. Time between classes will be utilised for student support, library access and study.
 - Time may be allotted during these Maynooth residential weekends for further inputs on pastoral, human and spiritual formation, particularly common prayer and Eucharist. Opportunities are also available for experiences such as Theological/Pastoral Reflection and Homiletics. These will not be credit bearing.
 - Online classes will be livestreamed each Wednesdays (1 to 2 hours) supported by asynchronous material.
- Academic Assessments will be tailored to the learning outcomes, ministerial ethos and the level of the students of the programme.
- Ample time will be available during on-campus residential weekends for accessing library resources and provide academic student support.

² While over half the modules (50 credits) will be shared with the *Higher Diploma in Theological Studies* (Level 8), module assessment will be appropriate to the Level 7. A further 40 credits will be specific to the Diaconate cohort.

Academic Programme ³

Year One	
Semester 1	
Introduction to Theology	7.5 Credits
The Bible and its Worlds	7.5 Credits
Semester 2	
Catholic Social Teaching	5 Credits
Foundations of Worship	5 Credits
Pastoral Theology	5 Credits
Year Two	
Semester 1	
The Church and its Sacraments	5 Credits
The Catholic Moral Tradition and Bioethics	5 Credits
The Old Testament	5 Credits
Semester 2	
Understanding Jesus Christ Today	5 credits
The New Testament	5 credits
Theological Anthropology	2.5 Credits
Catechetics	2.5 Credits
Year Three	
Semester 1	
Ethics of Love & Family	2.5 Credits
Canon Law 1	2.5 Credits
Spiritual Theology and Mariology	5 Credits
The Christian Communities of John and Paul	5 Credits
Semester Two	
Church History	5 Credits
Canon Law 2	2.5 Credits
Seven Sacraments	2.5 Credits
Theology of the Diaconate and the New Evangelisation	5 Credits

Participation of Wives

Wives are welcome to attend the academic programme in Maynooth and encouraged to participate in the process. They could choose to audit or, if they wish, they are welcome to enrol and undertake the 'Higher Diploma of Theological Studies' for credit to gain a qualification.

Possibility of Further Studies and Ongoing Academic Formation

The Diploma will remain at level 7 to allow mature candidates who do not have a primary degree to enter the programme. At the same time, the programme allows candidates to undertake the modules in the Higher Diploma in Theological Studies (level 8), thereby providing a means of progression to Masters level programmes (level 9). These programmes could easily be integrated into an Ongoing Vocational Formation programme for ordained deacons currently in ministry.

³ The Diploma in Diaconate Studies is aligned to the doctrinal formation curriculum for the Permanent Diaconate. See Appendix 1 of the Directory and Norms for the Permanent Diaconate in Ireland, (2021 - Draft).

Structured Formation Weekends at the Diocesan / Regional Centre Level

Diocesan Directors of Diaconal Formation will remain central to the formation and instruction of candidates at the local diocesan level. As is currently the case, the Diocesan Directors would oversee the local admissions procedures, propaedeutic year, and local formation of candidates, including pastoral placements and supervision.

Alongside the academic provision through Maynooth, there will be a series of structured formation weekends throughout each year of the programme (5 weekends per year). These structured formation weekends will explore human development, liturgical, spiritual, and pastoral aspects of the programme facilitated by local/regional instructors.

Organised by the Diocesan Director of Diaconal Formation, it is proposed that candidates will gather for these five weekends each year to meet locally to enhance local identity and rootedness in the community. These weekends would provide further structured opportunities for the integration of the human, pastoral, spiritual pillars of formation, alongside the academic programme.

The material covered during these structured formation weekends are not credit bearing but the candidates will engage in formative reflection upon these sessions through a process of pastoral reflection and journaling. (Assessment of the Structured Formation Weekends)

Indicative Timetable for Structured Formation Weekends in the Diocese / Regional Centres

Friday Evening (6-9pm)

6.00 - 6.30	Evening Prayer
6.30 - 7.45	Session 1
7.45 - 8.00	Break
8.00 - 9.00	Session 2
9.00	Night Prayer

Saturday (9am-5pm)

9.00 -10.00	Morning Prayer and Mass
10.00-11.30	Session 3
11.30-11.45	Break
11.45-1.00	Session 4
1.00-2.00	Lunch
2.00-3.30	Session 5
3.30-3.45	Break
3.45-5.00	Session 6
5.00	Evening Prayer

Indicative Content of Structured Formation Weekends

Year 1 (2022-2023)

Weekend 1	-	Discerning a Sense of Vocation – The Call to Ministry (September) NBSCCCI ‘Head to Heart’ Safeguarding Programme Year 1 Discernment as a Prayerful Process of Decision Making The Role of Spiritual Direction in Discernment Discerning my Personal Vocation: Called and Gifted The Role of the Diaconate in the Framework of Ecclesial Ministry The Method of <i>Lectio Divina</i> and Guided Prayer
Weekend 2	-	Homiletic Practice and Ministerial Outreach (November) Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew (New Liturgical Year A) Proclaiming the Word of God in Public An Approach to Collaborative Ministry Managing my Relational Issues within the Family ‘Ministering to the Margins’ – Stages of Faith Development – A searching Faith
Weekend 3	-	Pastoral Theology and Practice (Human Development) (February) Models of Pastoral Ministry The Ministry of Jesus as a Model of Pastoral Care Cultivating the Art of Self-Care in Ministry The Importance of Personal Reflection in Pastoral Ministry Structures of Supervision in Pastoral Ministry: What are my Support Structures?
Weekend 4	-	Liturgy and Sacramental Preparation (Baptism) (May) The Theology of Baptism The Canon Law of Baptism The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults Baptismal Catechesis and Working with the Parish Baptismal Team Celebrating Baptism in the Parish Setting
Weekend 5	-	Living a Diaconal Ministry (June) Discerning Needs and Expectations in Ministry Dealing with Personal Conflict Combining the Commitments of Marriage with Ordained Ministry / Living Celibacy A Reflection on the Ministry of Lectorate

Year 2 (2023-2024)

Weekend 1 - Discerning a Sense of Vocation – The Call to Ministry (September)

NBSCCCI 'Head to Heart' Safeguarding Programme Year 2

Discernment as a Prayerful Process of Decision Making

Personal Discernment and Family Discernment

Growing in Holiness: Articulating my Personal Spirituality

Seeking an 'Integral Formation' – Human, Spiritual, Academic and Pastoral Development

Lectio Divina and Different Methods of Prayer

Weekend 2 - Homiletic Practice and Ministerial Outreach (November)

Introduction to the Gospel of Mark (New Liturgical Year B)

Preparing and Delivering a Spiritual Reflection

The Art of Leading Scriptural Reflection in a Parish

Pastoral Planning within the Parish

'Ministering to the Margins' – Planning pastoral outreach within the Parish (e.g. St.V.de P.)

Weekend 3 - Pastoral Theology and Practice (Human Development) (February)

Embedding Self-Care in Ministry: Balancing Work, Family and Ministry

Peer Supervision in Ministry – Case Studies

Articulating my personal capabilities and limitations

Ministering to the Vulnerable – The Art of Learning and Unlearning Personal Behaviours

Models of Ministry to Young Adults

Weekend 4 - Liturgy – Sacramental Preparation (Funerals) (May)

Ministering to the Sick and Dying

Ministering to the Bereaved

Liturgical Preparation: Planning a Funeral Liturgy

The Art of Celebrating the Rites of Christian Burial

Structures for ongoing Pastoral Support for the Bereaved

Weekend 5 - Living a Diaconal Ministry (June)

Diocesan Structures: The Role of the Bishop, Curia, Vicar General, Chancellor, Judicial Vicar etc

Parochial Structures

The Role of the Deacon in Celebrating Sacramentals and Blessings

Cultivating a Eucharistic Spirituality: Taken, Blessed, Broken and Given

Understanding the Ministry of Acolyte

Year 3 (2024-2025)

Weekend 1 - Discerning a Sense of Vocation – The Call to Ministry (September)

NBSCCCI 'Head to Heart' Safeguarding Programme Year 3

Reflecting on my personal Diaconal Identity

The Skills of Liturgical Preparation and Evaluation

Being an Effective Presider, leading people in prayer

Lectio Divina and Different Methods of Prayer

Weekend 2 - Scripture and Homiletic Practice (November)

Introduction to the Gospel of Luke (New Liturgical Year C)

Preparing and Delivering a Homily

A Framework for Collaborative Ministry

The Role of the Deacon in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Support for Schools

Ministering to the Margins – e.g. Ministering to the Travelling Community / Prison Ministry

Weekend 3 - Pastoral Theology and Practice (Human Development) (February)

Appropriate Boundary Setting to maintain personal health and well-being

Nurturing the Discipleship and Gifts of Others

Ministering to the Vulnerable: Confronting my Personal Prejudices

Ministering to the Vulnerable: Inclusion and the Diversity of Family Experience

Managing Conflict: Maintaining Good Working Relations with Parish Staff

Weekend 4 - Liturgy – Sacramental Preparation (Marriage) (May)

The Theology of Marriage

The Canon Law of Marriage: Canonical Impediments, Consent and Canonical Form

Pastoral Preparation: Marriage Preparation, Pre-Nuptial Inquiry and Civil Documentation

Liturgical Preparation: Planning and Celebrating a Marriage Liturgy

Pastorally Supporting Newly Married Couples and Families

The Process of Annulment and the Role of the Marriage Tribunal

Weekend 5 - Living a Diaconal Ministry (June)

Living the Virtue of Obedience

The juridical relationship between the diaconate, the presbyterate and the episcopate

Deacon of the Word and Deacon of the Altar – Liturgical Considerations

Diaconal Ministry within the Deacon's Family

A Reflection on the Rite of Ordination to the Diaconate

NBSCCCI 'Head to Heart' Safeguarding Training

In collaboration with the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI), in addition to the requisite national safeguarding training undertaken at the diocesan level (Propaedeutic Year), all candidates for the Permanent Diaconate will also complete the **National Safeguarding Formation Programme (Head to Heart) over the course of the three years.**

The aim of this programme is to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the core elements of child safeguarding, which the National Board believe will assist in the development of permanent deacons who are more aware of and more responsive to safeguarding matters. The training is designed to be reflective and to facilitate open dialogue about difficult historical and current challenges of ministry with children.

Over the course of their three-year candidacy formation candidates will complete modules exploring various areas of child safeguarding. Each module includes reflective exercises before and after a formal input by an expert in the relevant area. Over time this forms a learning journal which each candidate retains as part of their ongoing ministry.

Other Possible Opportunities

Some consideration is being explored to organise a week-long residential summer programme in the month of June at the Pontifical Irish College, Rome, bringing together the permanent diaconate candidates where they and their families could take a structured historical / theological / spiritual programme.

Costings of the New Programme⁴

The following information is provided to demonstrate the inherent annual Costs associated with the Programme of Formation for the Permanent Diaconate. This information is merely indicative and is provided to illustrate that the new programme is at least comparable in terms of cost with the current provision:

Current Programme

Annual Registration per Candidate (Maynooth)	€150 per student
Cost for Delivery of the Academic Programme at the Diocesan / Regional Level	Academic Tutor – Approx. €600 per weekend 15 Academic Weekends in each Centre 15 x €600 = €9000
Residence and Meals for Regional Weekends	15 Academic Weekends (Friday to Saturday)
Costs for Retreats	Three Annual Residential Weekends (Fri-Sun)

New Programme

Annual Registration per Candidate (Maynooth) ⁵	Approx. €5,500 per student (incl. Residential Costs for 6 Weekends)
Cost for Delivery of the Structured Formation Weekends at the Diocesan / Regional Level	Approx. €350 per weekend (€35 hourly rate) 5 Academic Weekends 5 x €350 = €1,750
Residence and Meals for Regional Weekends	5 Academic Weekends (Friday to Saturday)
Costs for Retreats	Three Annual Residential Weekends (Fri-Sun)

⁴ These costings are dependent upon the number of candidates enrolled on the programme. The current projections are based on the enrolment of at least 10 candidates.

⁵ Based on the registration of 10 candidates. The greater the number of candidates then the lower will be the projected costs per student.

Maynooth Diploma in Diaconate Studies Programme

Indicative Calendar - Diaconate Programme 2022-2023		
Week	Date	Details
1	September 2-3	<i>Weekend One (Friday - Saturday in Diocese/Centre)</i>
	September 9-10	
	September 16-17	
2	September 23-24	<i>Weekend Two (Friday-Saturday in Maynooth)⁶⁷</i>
	Sept 30- Oct 1	
	October 7-8	
3	October 14-15	<i>Weekend Three (Friday-Saturday in Maynooth)</i>
	October 21-22	
	October 28-29	
	November 4-5	
4	November 11-12	<i>Weekend Four (Friday - Saturday in Diocese/Centre)</i>
	November 18-19	
	November 25-26	
5	December 2-3	<i>Weekend Five (Friday-Saturday in Maynooth)</i>
	December 9-10	
Christmas & New Year	December 16-17	Christmas Holidays
	December 23-24	
	December 30 – 31	
	January 6-7	
	January 13-14	
	January 20-21	
6	January 27-28	<i>Weekend Six (Friday-Saturday in Maynooth)</i>
	February 3-4	
	February 10-11	
	February 17-18	
7	February 24-25	<i>Weekend Seven (Friday - Saturday in Diocese/Centre)</i>
	March 3-4	
	March 10-11	
	March 17-18	St Patrick's Day Break
8	March 24-25	<i>Weekend Eight (Friday-Saturday in Maynooth)</i>
	March 31- April 1	
Easter	April 7-8	Easter Holidays
	April 14-15	
9	April 21-22	<i>Weekend Nine (Friday-Saturday in Maynooth)</i>
	April 28-29	
	May 5-6	
	May 12-13	
10	May 19-20	<i>Weekend Ten (Friday - Saturday in Diocese/Centre)</i>
	May 26-27	
	June 2-3	
	June 9-10	
11	June 16-17	<i>Weekend Eleven (Friday - Saturday in Diocese/Centre)</i>

⁶ In addition to these scheduled residential six weekends in Maynooth, there are also accompanying livestreamed classes each Wednesday throughout the academic year (1-2hrs) and supported by online material and resources.

⁷ Note that while the dates of the weekends in Maynooth are fixed, the weekends in the Diocese / Regional Centres are flexible in terms of scheduling by the individual Diocese / Regional Centres. Additional weekends should also be scheduled to include opportunities for Retreat and Reflection and the reception of ministries.

Pastoral Placement Programme

In addition to the Maynooth 'Diploma in Diaconate Studies' and the five Structured Formation Weekends at the Diocesan / Regional Level, the candidates will also undertake various pastoral placements across the three years of the Candidacy Formation Programme.

Engagement in a wide diversity of pastoral placements will give the candidate greater awareness of the needs and mission of the diocesan Church and will assist him in the discernment and development of his own talents and gifts. Pastoral placements provide opportunities for theological reflection and integration of knowledge and pastoral service.

The major part of the pastoral formation programme will take place in the parish, under the formal guidance and direction of a named priest/mentor.⁸ The Pastoral Placement will be tailored to the individual and will take account of the instituted ministries received. Provision will be made for structured reflection upon and evaluation of pastoral action and experience.⁹

To ensure progression in the pastoral skills of the candidates during these pastoral placements, the candidate should progress from opportunities to observe and accompany clergy in liturgical celebration and pastoral care to assisting clergy in such situations and finally exhibiting personal initiative and leadership in the exercise of celebrating liturgy and engaging in pastoral ministry.

Level 1 Experiences - Observation and Accompaniment of Local Clergy in Liturgical and Pastoral Experiences

Level 2 Experiences - Assisting Local Clergy with Liturgical and Pastoral Experiences

Level 3 Experiences - Exhibiting Initiative and Leadership in Celebrating Liturgy and Handling Pastoral Experiences

As the candidate progresses from Year 1 to Year 3, pastoral placements should be chosen to provide opportunities to engage with liturgical and pastoral experiences at these different levels.

In addition to the mentorship received by the Parish Priest / Pastoral Tutor, candidates will have the opportunity to receive individual formation guidance from their respective Diocesan Formation Tutors and 'Individual Pastoral Supervision' from a professionally qualified pastoral supervisor during the course of each Diocesan / Regional Centre Formation Weekend.

⁸ The Parish Priest / Tutor will provide ongoing support, mentoring and guidance to the candidate. The Parish Priest / Mentor will provide a formal annual report on the candidate.

⁹ The candidate should have the opportunity to receive 'individual pastoral supervision' from a professionally qualified supervisor during the course of each Diocesan / Regional Centre Structured Formation Weekends.