

F.2 Word and Service Candidates

Ministers of Word and Service serve at the interface of church and society. As a result, they must understand the dynamic relationships within and between congregational and societal systems and provide leadership in connecting these systems. Internship placements should reflect the range of diaconal purpose and still be specific to the candidate's unique characteristics and specializations. Each internship assignment must also include a significant engagement with a congregational context. With all these pieces, all partners must demonstrate flexibility in choosing and approving internship sites.

An approved internship will normally consist of a minimum of 1,000 documented contact hours. Various ministry experiences may be arranged sequentially and/or concurrently to achieve these hours.

General responsibilities of the partners involved in an internship can be found under the Word and Sacrament Candidates (section F.1). These responsibilities may change based on placement and oversight.

F.2.1 Internship Placement and Oversight

Candidates for the ministry of Word and Service are diverse in their areas of specialization, previous experience, educational requirements, and formation. A wide variety of programs and experiences are used to meet the theological requirements for deacon candidates, including but not limited to: M.A. degree from an ELCA seminary, M.A. degree from a non-ELCA seminary with ELCA seminary affiliation, specific coursework established through a Competencies Assessment Panel Report for Word and Service Candidates, M.Div. degree from an ELCA or non-ELCA seminary, or some other combination of formation and experience.

A candidate for Word and Service ministry is normally enrolled in a theological degree program or is pursuing education that fits into one of the following categories:

1. a degree program with a contextual education component that fully meets the internship requirement for deacons;
2. a degree program with some contextual education that meets part of the requirement for internship (e.g., a part-time congregational experience that meets the congregational requirement for those whose main area of service, and therefore internship, will be outside the congregation);
3. a degree program with no contextual education component of any kind; or
4. in some circumstances, a Competencies Assessment Panel Report for Word and Service Candidates (CAP) that approves a formation path not involving a degree program or affiliation at an ELCA seminary.

For candidates for the ministry of Word and Service, a 1,000-hour internship is a requirement of the candidacy process, even though the internship may or may not be a part of the candidate's degree program. For this reason, arrangements for the placement and supervision of internship may be the responsibility of the candidacy committee and/or the contextual education office of an ELCA seminary.

Tending to the Candidate Plan early in formation will be essential in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the seminary, candidacy committee, and candidate, and in determining when in the formation process internship will take place. Internship placement and supervision is a partnership based on the context and individual situation of the candidate.

Internship Concurrent With Seminary

The ELCA seminary, in conversation with the synod candidacy committee, will ensure placement and supervision of the internship when the candidate anticipates completing internship while enrolled in an academic degree program. The internship may or may not be part of the degree requirements.

Non-concurrent Internship

To show competency in an area of specialization, a candidate may participate in an internship that begins during an academic degree program and is completed in a context-specific site after graduation. For example, the congregational component may be completed during seminary under the oversight of the contextual education director. The specialization component may be completed after graduation. In this case, the synod candidacy committee oversees the organizational component of the internship.

Internship Apart From an Academic Degree Program

When field education is not required or does not meet internship requirements, and when candidates are not enrolled in a degree program or affiliated with an ELCA seminary, the synod candidacy committee will ensure placement and supervision of the internship, as described in the Candidacy Manual (F.2).

When internship follows the completion of an academic degree, the synod candidacy committee may complete a modified form D so that the candidate's gifts and ministry demonstrated during internship may be documented for use during the First Call process.

F.2.2 Internship Committee

While internship may take place in a variety of settings, it must include an internship committee. The committee, composed of four to six people who have a particular interest in the ministry of Word and Service and the candidate's area of specialization, may include representatives of the sites and congregations related to the service of the candidate.