

INTELLECTUAL FORMATION SELF-CAPACITIES

I. Introduction

Intellectual formation is much more than acquiring knowledge or earning academic qualifications. It forms missionaries who can think clearly, judge wisely, and proclaim the Gospel with conviction in today's complex world. While philosophy, theology, Scripture, and the human sciences provide essential knowledge, their ultimate purpose is to shape missionaries whose minds serve the Gospel and the mission of the Church.

Today's missionaries minister in societies marked by rapid cultural change, technological advances, religious pluralism, and complex ethical questions. They meet people with different beliefs, values, and ways of understanding life. In such situations, missionary effectiveness depends not only on what one knows but also on how one thinks. A missionary needs the ability to reflect before acting, discern wisely, continue learning, connect study with pastoral life, and remain patient when facing difficult questions that have no easy answers.

Within the Claretian tradition, intellectual formation is always at the service of mission. Saint Anthony Mary Claret combined a deep love for study with extraordinary pastoral creativity. He constantly learned from Scripture, theology, human experience, and the realities of his time so that he could proclaim the Word of God in ways that people could understand. Likewise, Claretian missionaries today are called to cultivate minds that are open, discerning, and capable of reading the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel.

This module focuses on **five essential intellectual self-capacities** that help missionaries grow in intellectual maturity. These capacities are not reserved for scholars or academics. Every missionary, regardless of his field of ministry or academic background, can gradually develop them through study, prayer, reflection, dialogue, and pastoral experience.

The Five Intellectual Self-Capacities

Self-Capacity	Simply Means...	Helps the Missionary...
Critical Reflection	Thinking deeply before making judgments	Interpret people and situations wisely
Intellectual Discernment	Distinguishing truth from error	Make sound and balanced decisions
Openness to Learning	Remaining curious and teachable	Continue growing throughout life
Integration and Application	Connecting study with ministry	Apply knowledge to real pastoral situations
Tolerance for Ambiguity	Living peacefully with uncertainty	Handle complex situations with patience and wisdom

These five capacities reinforce one another. A missionary who reflects critically learns to discern more wisely. A missionary who remains open to learning grows in understanding. A missionary who integrates knowledge with pastoral experience serves people more effectively. And a missionary who can live patiently with uncertainty is better able to accompany others through the complexities of life and faith.

Reflection

Before continuing, take a few moments to reflect personally or discuss in your formation community:

- Which of these five capacities is currently your greatest strength?

- Which one do you most need to develop?
- What practical step can you take this month to grow in that area?

Formation Insight: The goal of intellectual formation is not simply to produce knowledgeable missionaries, but wise missionaries—men who can read reality through the eyes of Christ, discern God’s action in history, and proclaim the Gospel with clarity, humility, and missionary creativity.

II. Why These Intellectual Self-Capacities Matter

Missionary life today is both inspiring and challenging. Every day, missionaries encounter people from different cultures, generations, educational backgrounds, and religious traditions. They are called to preach the Gospel in a world shaped by rapid technological change, social media, scientific advances, and complex moral questions. In such a context, good intentions alone are not enough. Missionaries need minds that can think clearly, judge wisely, and respond pastorally.

Developing intellectual self-capacities enables missionaries not simply to know more, but to understand more deeply, discern more carefully, and serve more effectively. These capacities help them remain faithful to the Gospel while responding creatively to the realities of today’s world.

Why Every Missionary Needs These Capacities

A missionary who develops these intellectual capacities is better able to:

- Understand people before offering solutions.
- Distinguish Gospel values from popular opinions or ideologies.
- Respond thoughtfully to new pastoral challenges.
- Connect theological knowledge with everyday ministry.
- Accompany people patiently through difficult questions and situations.
- Continue learning throughout life.

Without these capacities, missionaries may fall into several common pitfalls:

- giving quick answers to complex questions;
- relying only on personal opinions or emotions;
- becoming rigid or resistant to new ideas;
- separating academic study from pastoral ministry;
- becoming discouraged when situations remain unresolved.

Intellectual formation therefore helps missionaries become **thoughtful evangelizers rather than mere transmitters of information**.

The Virtues That Support Intellectual Growth

Intellectual self-capacities do not develop automatically through study. They grow through certain attitudes or virtues that shape the way a missionary approaches truth and learning.

1. Intellectual Humility: “I do not know everything, and I can always learn.” An intellectually humble missionary welcomes correction, listens to others, and remains open to deeper understanding.

2. Love of Truth: “I sincerely want to discover what is true.” The missionary seeks truth honestly, even when it challenges personal opinions or preferences.

3. Curiosity: “I want to understand more.” Curiosity motivates the missionary to ask questions, read widely, and learn from people and experiences.

4. Prudence: “I will think before I decide.” Prudence helps missionaries weigh different perspectives carefully before making judgments or taking action.

5. Diligence: “I will keep learning.” Intellectual growth requires perseverance through reading, study, reflection, and dialogue throughout one’s life.

Practical Example

A missionary hears conflicting opinions about the use of artificial intelligence in education and pastoral ministry. An unformed response might be: “Technology is destroying faith.” Or “Everything new is good.”

A missionary with healthy intellectual self-capacities will instead ask:

- What are the facts?
- What benefits does this technology offer?
- What risks should we be aware of?
- What guidance does the Church provide?
- How can it be used responsibly in mission?

Instead of reacting emotionally, he reflects, discerns, and then responds wisely.

Practical Tips for Formators

Formators can nurture these capacities through simple everyday practices.

Do:

- Encourage formandi to ask questions.
- Discuss current events in the light of the Gospel.
- Review pastoral experiences together.
- Recommend good books and articles.
- Appreciate thoughtful questions as much as correct answers.

Avoid:

- Giving immediate answers to every question.
- Discouraging respectful disagreement.
- Rewarding memorization without understanding.
- Treating difficult questions as signs of weak faith.
- Separating study from pastoral life.

Reflection for Formandi

Take a few moments to reflect personally or share in a small group.

1. Which of these five virtues (humility, love of truth, curiosity, prudence, diligence) is strongest in me?
2. Which one needs greater attention?
3. When did I last change my opinion because I discovered a deeper truth?
4. How do I normally react when someone challenges my ideas?
5. What is one concrete step I can take this month to become a better learner?

Formation Insight: The purpose of intellectual formation is not to produce missionaries who have all the answers, but missionaries who know how to seek the truth with humility, discern it with wisdom, and proclaim it with confidence and charity.

III. Self-Capacity 1: Critical Reflection

What Is Critical Reflection?

Critical reflection is the ability to think carefully before making judgments or decisions. It means looking beyond first impressions, asking thoughtful questions, examining facts, and considering different perspectives before arriving at a conclusion. Rather than reacting impulsively, a reflective missionary seeks to understand what is really happening and why.

Critical reflection is not about being critical of people. It is about thinking critically about ideas, situations, and experiences so that our responses are guided by truth, charity, and wisdom. It helps missionaries interpret reality in the light of the Gospel rather than relying only on emotions, assumptions, or popular opinion.

For Claretian missionaries, critical reflection is an essential part of reading the “signs of the times.” It enables us to recognize God’s presence and action in the events, challenges, and hopes of the people we serve.

Why Is Critical Reflection Important?

A missionary who practices critical reflection is able to:

- Understand situations before responding.
- Learn from successes and failures.
- Recognize the deeper causes of problems.
- Make better pastoral decisions.
- Connect life experiences with faith and mission.
- Avoid superficial or emotional reactions.

Without critical reflection, missionaries may:

- Jump to conclusions.
- Accept information without verifying it.
- Misjudge people or situations.
- Repeat opinions without understanding them.
- Miss opportunities for learning and growth.

What Does This Capacity Look Like?

Growing Missionary	Missionary Who Needs Support
Thinks before speaking	Reacts immediately
Asks thoughtful questions	Accepts everything at face value
Learns from experience	Repeats the same mistakes
Seeks evidence before judging	Relies only on opinions or emotions
Welcomes different perspectives	Rejects views that differ from his own

A Practical Example

After a youth programme, a formandus comments:

“Young people today are simply not interested in God.”

Instead of accepting this conclusion, the formator asks:

- What did you observe that led you to this conclusion?
- Did every young person respond in the same way?
- Could there be other reasons for their behaviour?
- What challenges are young people facing today?
- How might Jesus have approached them?

Through these questions, the formandus moves from making a quick judgment to understanding the situation more deeply.

How Can the Formator Foster Critical Reflection?

A formator does not simply provide answers; he teaches formandi how to think. Some practical ways include:

- Review pastoral experiences regularly instead of only evaluating activities.
- Ask open-ended questions rather than yes-or-no questions.
- Encourage discussion instead of one-way teaching.
- Invite formandi to explain the reasons behind their opinions.
- Help them connect Scripture, Church teaching, and lived experience.
- Encourage reading and discussion of current social and pastoral issues.

Practical Formation Activity

The Five-Step Pastoral Reflection

Choose one pastoral experience from the past week.

Step 1 – Observe

- What happened?
- Describe the event objectively.

Step 2 – Reflect

- Why did it happen?
- What emotions, attitudes, relationships, or circumstances influenced the situation?

Step 3 – Illuminate

- What light do Scripture, the Constitutions, or Church teaching shed on this experience?

Step 4 – Respond

- What would be the most appropriate pastoral response?
- What could have been done differently?

Step 5 – Learn

- What have I learned about myself?
- What have I learned about people?
- What will I do differently next time?

This simple method can be used after apostolic ministry, community events, formation meetings, or significant personal experiences.

Conversation Starters for Accompaniment

During personal accompaniment, the formator might ask:

- What surprised you this week?
- What challenged your way of thinking?
- What did you learn from a mistake?
- What did you discover about the people you served?
- What passage of Scripture helped you understand a recent experience?
- If you could relive one pastoral experience this week, what would you do differently?

These questions encourage reflection rather than merely reporting events.

Simple Observation Checklist

The formator may use the following checklist during accompaniment.

Behaviour	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
Thinks before making judgments	☐	☐	☐
Reflects on pastoral experiences	☐	☐	☐
Listens to different viewpoints respectfully	☐	☐	☐
Gives reasons for his opinions	☐	☐	☐
Learns from mistakes	☐	☐	☐
Connects experience with faith	☐	☐	☐

Reflection for Formandi

Take a few moments to reflect.

- Do I usually think before I speak or react?
- How often do I reflect on my pastoral experiences?
- Am I willing to question my own assumptions?
- Do I seek to understand people before judging them?
- What is one situation from this week that deserves deeper reflection?

Formation Insight: Critical reflection transforms experience into wisdom. A missionary who regularly reflects on life, ministry, and the Gospel gradually develops the mind of Christ—seeing beyond appearances, discerning God’s action in daily events, and responding with wisdom, compassion, and missionary creativity.

IV. Self-Capacity 2: Intellectual Discernment

What Is Intellectual Discernment?

Intellectual discernment is the ability to distinguish truth from error, what is essential from what is secondary, and what is helpful from what is misleading. It enables a missionary to evaluate ideas carefully instead of accepting or rejecting them too quickly.

Unlike critical reflection, which asks, “*What is really happening?*”, intellectual discernment asks, “*What is true, good, and consistent with the Gospel?*”

This capacity combines reason, faith, experience, and prayer. It helps missionaries evaluate information, cultural trends, social movements, and theological opinions in the light of Scripture, the Church’s teaching, and sound human judgment.

In a world overflowing with information, opinions, and ideologies, intellectual discernment helps missionaries become seekers of truth rather than followers of popular trends.

Why Is Intellectual Discernment Important?

A missionary with good intellectual discernment is able to:

- Distinguish facts from opinions.
- Evaluate new ideas without fear or prejudice.
- Recognize ideological bias and manipulation.
- Make balanced pastoral judgments.
- Integrate faith and reason in decision-making.
- Guide others wisely through difficult questions.

Without intellectual discernment, missionaries may:

- Accept misinformation as truth.
- Become influenced by ideological or political extremes.
- Confuse personal opinions with Church teaching.
- Give simplistic answers to complex problems.
- Create unnecessary divisions within communities.

What Does This Capacity Look Like?

Growing Missionary	Missionary Who Needs Support
Examines facts carefully	Accepts rumours or social media as truth
Distinguishes opinion from doctrine	Treats every opinion as equally valid
Reflects before judging	Makes quick judgments
Appreciates different viewpoints	Rejects differing opinions without listening
Balances faith and reason	Depends only on emotion or personal preference

Practical Examples

Example 1: Social Media

A formandus reads a sensational social media post claiming that “the Church has completely changed its teaching.” Instead of forwarding the message immediately, he asks:

- Is this information reliable?
- What is the original source?
- What does the official Church teaching actually say?
- Have I verified the facts?

Only after checking reliable sources does he form an opinion.

Example 2: Community Discussion

During a community meeting, members disagree about introducing a new pastoral initiative. Instead of immediately supporting one group, the missionary asks:

- What are the strengths of each proposal?
- What are the real needs of the people?
- Which option better serves our missionary priorities?
- How does this reflect our Claretian charism?

Discernment leads to a thoughtful decision rather than a personal victory.

Example 3: Pastoral Ministry

A young person tells the missionary, “Everyone says morality is relative.” Instead of immediately condemning or agreeing, the missionary explores:

- What does the young person really mean?
- Why is he thinking this way?
- What values are behind this statement?
- How can the Gospel speak to this question?

Discernment begins with listening before teaching.

How Can the Formator Foster Intellectual Discernment?

The formator helps formandi learn **how to evaluate ideas**, not simply **which ideas to accept**. Some practical ways include:

- Discuss current events in the light of the Gospel.
- Encourage reading of Church documents alongside contemporary issues.
- Analyse ethical case studies together.
- Ask formandi to explain the reasons behind their conclusions.
- Invite respectful debate on pastoral questions.
- Teach them how to identify reliable sources of information.
- Encourage consultation before making important judgments.

Practical Formation Activity

The Four Questions of Discernment

Choose a current issue affecting the Church or society. Ask four questions:

- 1. What are the facts?** Separate facts from opinions.
- 2. What values are involved?** Identify the human, ethical, and spiritual values.
- 3. What does the Gospel and the Church teach?** Consult Scripture, Church teaching, and the Claretian tradition.
- 4. What is the most loving and truthful response?** Choose a response that promotes truth, charity, justice, and the common good.

This exercise can be used during formation classes, community meetings, or pastoral reviews.

Conversation Starters for Accompaniment

During personal accompaniment, the formator may ask:

- What ideas have challenged your thinking recently?
- How do you usually decide whether something is true?
- Have you ever changed your opinion after discovering new evidence?
- What difficult question are you currently trying to understand?
- How do faith and reason work together in your decisions?
- Which Church document or Scripture passage has recently helped you understand a current issue?

Simple Observation Checklist

Behaviour	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
Verifies information before accepting it	☐	☐	☐
Distinguishes facts from opinions	☐	☐	☐
Evaluates ideas in the light of the Gospel	☐	☐	☐
Avoids ideological extremes	☐	☐	☐
Listens respectfully to different viewpoints	☐	☐	☐
Gives balanced and well-reasoned judgments	☐	☐	☐

Reflection for Formandi

Reflect prayerfully on the following questions:

- Do I verify information before believing or sharing it?
- Am I influenced more by the Gospel or by popular opinion?

- Can I respectfully disagree with others without becoming defensive?
- Do I seek truth even when it challenges my own views?
- In what area of my life do I most need greater discernment?

Formation Insight: Intellectual discernment enables missionaries to become trustworthy guides in a confusing world. By seeking truth with humility, evaluating ideas with wisdom, and judging situations in the light of the Gospel, they become credible witnesses who help others discover not merely convincing arguments, but the liberating truth of Christ.

V. Self-Capacity 3: Openness to Learning

What Is Openness to Learning?

Openness to learning is the willingness to remain curious, teachable, and ready to grow throughout life. It is the attitude that says, “*There is always more to learn.*” A missionary with this capacity does not assume that he already knows enough. Instead, he remains eager to learn from Scripture, the Church, academic study, pastoral experience, different cultures, and the people he serves.

Openness to learning is rooted in intellectual humility. It recognizes that formation does not end with ordination or final profession. Every encounter, every ministry, every success, and every failure becomes an opportunity to grow.

For a Claretian missionary, lifelong learning is part of missionary conversion. As the world changes, the missionary must continue to deepen his understanding so that he can proclaim the Gospel in ways that are meaningful and credible.

Why Is Openness to Learning Important?

A missionary who is open to learning:

- Continues growing throughout life.
- Adapts to new pastoral situations.
- Learns from different cultures and experiences.
- Welcomes constructive feedback.
- Uses new knowledge to improve ministry.
- Remains intellectually and spiritually alive.

Without openness to learning, missionaries may:

- Resist change unnecessarily.
- Repeat outdated pastoral methods.
- Become defensive when corrected.
- Stop reading and studying.
- Fail to understand new generations or cultures.

What Does This Capacity Look Like?

Growing Missionary	Missionary Who Needs Support
Enjoys learning new things	Believes he already knows enough
Accepts correction graciously	Becomes defensive when corrected
Reads regularly	Stops learning after formal studies
Learns from different cultures	Judges unfamiliar customs quickly
Seeks feedback	Avoids evaluation

Practical Examples

Example 1: Learning a New Language: A missionary is assigned to another country. Instead of relying only on English or expecting others to adapt, he studies the local language, learns common expressions, and becomes interested in the culture. His willingness to learn strengthens relationships and makes his ministry more effective.

Example 2: Learning from Young People: A formator notices that young people communicate differently through digital media. Instead of dismissing social media as a distraction, he asks:

- Why is it important to them?
- How can it be used responsibly?
- Can it become a tool for evangelization?

His openness enables him to accompany young people more effectively.

Example 3: Accepting Feedback: After preaching, a missionary receives constructive feedback that his homily was difficult to follow. Instead of becoming discouraged or defensive, he asks:

- Which parts were unclear?
- How can I communicate more simply?
- What can I improve next time?

Feedback becomes an opportunity for growth rather than a personal criticism.

How Can the Formator Foster Openness to Learning?

The formator helps create a culture where learning is valued and mistakes are seen as opportunities for growth. Some practical ways include:

- Recommend books suited to each formandus' interests and needs.
- Encourage participation in workshops, seminars, and online courses.
- Invite missionaries from different cultures to share their experiences.
- Promote regular reading beyond academic requirements.
- Encourage learning from lay collaborators and the people served.
- Give constructive feedback with encouragement.
- Model lifelong learning through personal example.

A formator who continues learning inspires formandi to do the same.

Practical Formation Activity

The Monthly Learning Plan

At the beginning of each month, every formandus prepares a simple learning plan.

Include:

One Book: Choose a book related to theology, spirituality, psychology, leadership, or pastoral ministry.

One New Skill: For example:

- improve preaching
- learn basic counselling skills
- study a local language

- learn digital evangelization

One New Experience: For example:

- visit another parish
- accompany a social ministry
- attend an interreligious programme
- meet people from another culture

One Reflection: At the end of the month answer:

- What did I learn?
- How has this helped my ministry?
- What do I still need to learn?

Conversation Starters for Accompaniment

The formator may ask:

- What new thing have you learned this month?
- What book has influenced your thinking recently?
- What feedback has helped you grow?
- Who has taught you something valuable recently?
- What new pastoral challenge has stretched you?
- If you could learn one new skill this year, what would it be?

Simple Observation Checklist

Behaviour	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
Reads beyond academic requirements	☐	☐	☐
Welcomes constructive feedback	☐	☐	☐
Shows curiosity about new ideas	☐	☐	☐
Learns from different cultures and people	☐	☐	☐
Adapts to new pastoral situations	☐	☐	☐
Pursues lifelong learning	☐	☐	☐

Practical Ideas for Formation Communities

Learning becomes more enjoyable when it is shared. A formation community can foster openness to learning by introducing simple practices such as:

- **Book of the Month:** One member briefly presents a book that inspired him.
- **Current Affairs Discussion:** Reflect together on one important news event in the light of the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching.
- **Learning from Experience:** After every pastoral activity, spend 20 minutes asking, “What did we learn?”
- **Culture Evenings:** Invite members from different countries to share their culture, history, and spirituality.
- **Guest Encounters:** Invite experts, missionaries, or lay collaborators to speak about their experiences.
- **Learning Journal:** Encourage each formandus to record one new insight every week.

These activities help create a community where learning is seen not as an obligation but as a joyful part of missionary life.

Reflection for Formandi

Take time to pray and reflect.

- Am I still excited about learning?
- How do I react when someone corrects me?
- Do I read only what is required, or do I read out of curiosity?
- What have I learned recently from the people I serve?
- What is one area in which God may be inviting me to continue growing?

Formation Insight: A missionary who stops learning gradually stops growing. Openness to learning keeps the mind young, the heart humble, and the mission fruitful. Like Saint Anthony Mary Claret, we are called to be lifelong disciples who continue learning from God, the Church, the world, and the people entrusted to our care, so that we may proclaim the Gospel with ever greater wisdom and missionary creativity.

VI. Self-Capacity 4: Integration and Application

What Is Integration and Application?

Integration and application is the ability to connect what we learn with how we live and minister. It means bringing together insights from theology, Scripture, philosophy, psychology, the social sciences, and personal experience to understand people better and respond more effectively.

A missionary who has this capacity does not keep knowledge in separate compartments. He sees the connections between faith and life, prayer and action, study and ministry. What he learns in the classroom shapes his pastoral decisions, and what he experiences in ministry deepens his understanding of what he studies.

For Claretian missionaries, this capacity reflects the unity of life. The Gospel is not merely studied—it is lived, proclaimed, and applied to the concrete realities of people and society.

Why Is Integration and Application Important?

A missionary who develops this capacity is able to:

- Relate academic study to everyday ministry.
- Understand people from multiple perspectives.
- Preach in ways that connect Scripture with daily life.
- Make better pastoral decisions.
- Accompany people with greater wisdom and compassion.
- Build bridges between faith and contemporary culture.

Without this capacity, missionaries may:

- Know theology but struggle to apply it pastorally.
- Separate prayer from ministry.
- Treat academic subjects as unrelated disciplines.
- Offer theoretical answers to practical problems.
- Miss the deeper human dimensions of pastoral situations.

What Does This Capacity Look Like?

Growing Missionary	Missionary Who Needs Support
Connects study with ministry	Treats study and ministry as separate
Uses Scripture to interpret life	Quotes Scripture without relating it to life
Integrates different disciplines	Thinks in isolated subjects

Applies learning creatively	Repeats ideas without adapting them
Learns from pastoral experience	Rarely reflects on ministry

Practical Examples

Example 1: Preparing a Homily

A missionary is preparing a homily on the Good Samaritan. Instead of explaining only the biblical text, he asks:

- What forms of suffering exist in our community today?
- What insights does Catholic Social Teaching offer?
- What psychological barriers prevent people from helping others?
- How can this Gospel inspire practical acts of charity?

The result is a homily that is faithful to Scripture and relevant to people's lives.

Example 2: Accompanying a Young Person

A young man struggles with anxiety about his vocation. The missionary integrates:

- **Scripture** — God's call and trust.
- **Theology** — vocation as God's loving initiative.
- **Psychology** — understanding anxiety and emotional development.
- **Personal experience** — listening with empathy.
- **Prayer** — helping him discern God's will.

Instead of offering only advice, he accompanies the person as a whole.

Example 3: Community Conflict

Two confreres experience ongoing tension. Rather than saying simply, "You should forgive each other," the formator integrates:

- Gospel teaching on reconciliation.
- Claretian Constitutions on fraternity.
- Psychology of communication and conflict.
- Knowledge of each person's history.
- Prayer and community dialogue.

The response becomes more comprehensive and more likely to promote genuine reconciliation.

An Integration Framework

Whenever you face a pastoral situation, ask yourself:

Ask...	Draw Upon...
What is happening?	Careful observation
Why is it happening?	Psychology and social sciences
What does the Gospel say?	Scripture and theology
What does our Claretian charism suggest?	Constitutions and missionary spirituality
What should I do?	Pastoral wisdom and discernment

This simple framework helps connect study with ministry.

How Can the Formator Foster Integration?

The formator should consistently help formandi make connections between what they study and what they experience. Some practical ways include:

- Review pastoral experiences after every apostolic activity.
- Ask formandi how classroom learning applies to ministry.
- Encourage interdisciplinary discussions.
- Invite reflection on current social issues using Scripture and Church teaching.
- Help formandi relate community life, prayer, study, and ministry.
- Encourage collaboration with professionals from different fields when appropriate.

Above all, the formator should repeatedly ask: “How does this help you become a better missionary?”

Practical Formation Activity

The Integration Circle

After a pastoral experience, complete the following exercise.

Step 1 – Describe the experience: What happened?

Step 2 – Understand the people: What human, emotional, cultural, or social factors were involved?

Step 3 – Reflect in faith: What light do Scripture, Church teaching, or the Claretian charism offer?

Step 4 – Plan action: What practical pastoral response is appropriate?

Step 5 – Evaluate

- What have I learned?
- How will this influence my future ministry?

This exercise helps transform experiences into pastoral wisdom.

Conversation Starters for Accompaniment

The formator may ask:

- How has your recent study helped your ministry?
- What did your pastoral experience teach you about theology?
- Which Gospel passage has become more meaningful through your ministry?
- What have you learned about people that no classroom could teach?
- How do prayer, study, and ministry enrich one another in your life?
- Which academic subject has most influenced your pastoral work?

Simple Observation Checklist

Behaviour	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
Connects study with ministry	☐	☐	☐
Uses insights from different disciplines	☐	☐	☐
Applies knowledge creatively	☐	☐	☐
Reflects on pastoral experiences	☐	☐	☐
Connects Scripture with daily life	☐	☐	☐
Sees links between prayer, study, and mission	☐	☐	☐

Practical Ideas for Formation Communities

Communities can foster integration through simple practices such as:

- **Pastoral Review Evening:** Reflect together on one apostolic experience using Scripture and pastoral insights.
- **Interdisciplinary Conversations:** Invite specialists in theology, psychology, education, or social work to discuss common pastoral issues.
- **Homily Workshops:** Prepare homilies together, relating biblical texts to current realities.
- **Mission Reflection Groups:** Share how recent ministry experiences have influenced personal prayer and theological understanding.
- **Community Learning Projects:** Study one contemporary issue—such as migration, ecology, artificial intelligence, or safeguarding—from biblical, theological, psychological, and pastoral perspectives.

These activities help formandi realize that every area of knowledge contributes to the one mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

Reflection for Formandi

Spend some time reflecting prayerfully.

- Do I connect my studies with my ministry?
- Which subject has most enriched my pastoral work?
- When I encounter a problem, do I draw upon different sources of wisdom?
- What recent pastoral experience has deepened my understanding of the Gospel?
- In what area do I most need to integrate faith, knowledge, and action?

Formation Insight: Knowledge becomes wisdom when it is integrated with prayer, experience, and missionary service. Like Saint Anthony Mary Claret, the missionary is called not merely to study the Word of God, but to allow it to illuminate every aspect of life and ministry. When study, prayer, community life, and apostolic service come together, intellectual formation becomes a powerful instrument for evangelization.

VII. Self-Capacity 5: Tolerance for Ambiguity

What Is Tolerance for Ambiguity?

Tolerance for ambiguity is the ability to remain calm, patient, and thoughtful when faced with uncertainty, complexity, or questions that do not have immediate answers. It does not mean accepting confusion or believing that there is no truth. Rather, it means recognizing that some pastoral situations require time, prayer, dialogue, and careful discernment before a wise decision can be made.

Missionaries often encounter situations where there is no simple solution. People come with complicated family histories, moral struggles, cultural differences, and personal wounds. A mature missionary resists the temptation to give quick answers simply to reduce uncertainty. Instead, he patiently seeks greater understanding while remaining faithful to the Gospel and the teaching of the Church.

Tolerance for ambiguity is closely linked to hope and trust in the Holy Spirit. It reminds us that God often leads people gradually and that authentic discernment is a process rather than a single moment.

Why Is This Capacity Important?

A missionary who develops this capacity is able to:

- Remain calm in complex situations.
- Listen carefully before making decisions.
- Accompany people patiently through difficult moments.

- Accept that some questions require time and discernment.
- Respect different perspectives while seeking the truth.
- Make balanced pastoral decisions without unnecessary haste.

Without this capacity, missionaries may:

- Rush to quick conclusions.
- Give simplistic answers to complex problems.
- Become anxious when situations remain unresolved.
- Judge people too quickly.
- Create unnecessary conflicts through impatience.

What Does This Capacity Look Like?

Growing Missionary	Missionary Who Needs Support
Remains calm in uncertainty	Becomes anxious when answers are unclear
Listens patiently	Interrupts or gives immediate advice
Accepts complexity	Wants instant solutions
Seeks consultation	Decides alone too quickly
Continues discerning	Believes every issue must be settled immediately

Practical Examples

Example 1: Vocational Discernment

A formandus feels uncertain about his vocation after experiencing a period of spiritual dryness. Instead of saying, “You should leave.” Or “Don’t worry; everything is fine.” the formator asks:

- When did these feelings begin?
- What has changed recently?
- What continues to give you peace?
- What does prayer reveal?
- Shall we continue discerning together over the coming months?

The formator accompanies rather than rushes to a conclusion.

Example 2: Community Conflict

Two confreres disagree over pastoral priorities. Instead of deciding immediately who is right, the superior:

- listens to both;
- gathers the necessary information;
- invites dialogue;
- prays with the community;
- seeks a solution that serves both communion and mission.

Patience prevents unnecessary division.

Example 3: Interreligious Dialogue

A missionary serving in a multicultural setting encounters beliefs and practices very different from his own. Rather than immediately condemning or accepting everything, he asks:

- What values are present here?

- What can I appreciate?
- What questions need further study?
- How can I witness to Christ respectfully and clearly?

This attitude opens the door to authentic dialogue without compromising the faith.

A Simple Discernment Process

When facing a difficult pastoral situation, avoid asking first, “What is the quickest answer?” Instead ask:

- 1. What do I know?** Separate facts from assumptions.
- 2. What do I still need to know?** Identify missing information.
- 3. Who should I consult?** Seek the wisdom of experienced people.
- 4. What does prayer reveal?** Place the situation before the Lord.
- 5. What is the most loving and truthful response?** Choose the response that best serves the person, the community, and the Gospel.

How Can the Formator Foster This Capacity?

The formator helps formandi become comfortable with discernment rather than dependent on quick answers. Some practical ways include:

- Allow time for reflection before making important decisions.
- Discuss complex pastoral cases that have no obvious solution.
- Encourage consultation instead of isolated decision-making.
- Teach that uncertainty is often part of genuine discernment.
- Model patience when accompanying formandi.
- Help them distinguish between urgency and haste.
- Encourage trust in the gradual work of the Holy Spirit.

The formator’s calm presence often teaches more than many explanations.

Practical Formation Activity

Reflecting on a Difficult Case: Choose a real pastoral situation that was not easy to resolve. Discuss together:

- **What happened?** Describe the situation objectively.
- **Why was it difficult?** Identify the different factors involved.
- **What possible responses were available?** Explore several options instead of only one.
- **How did prayer, consultation, and dialogue help?** Reflect on the discernment process.
- **What have we learned?** Identify lessons for future ministry.

This exercise teaches that good pastoral decisions often emerge gradually.

Conversation Starters for Accompaniment

The formator may ask:

- What situation currently leaves you uncertain?
- How do you react when you do not know the answer?
- Are you comfortable asking for advice?
- What difficult pastoral situation has taught you patience?

- How has prayer helped you in making an important decision?
- What have you learned from waiting rather than acting immediately?

Simple Observation Checklist

Behaviour	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
Remains calm when situations are unclear	☐	☐	☐
Listens before giving advice	☐	☐	☐
Considers different perspectives	☐	☐	☐
Consults others before major decisions	☐	☐	☐
Accepts that discernment takes time	☐	☐	☐
Accompanies others patiently	☐	☐	☐

Practical Ideas for Formation Communities

Formation communities can strengthen tolerance for ambiguity through simple practices such as:

- **Pastoral Case Discussions:** Reflect together on situations that have no easy answers.
- **Discernment Groups:** Pray and discuss important community decisions before acting.
- **Community Conversations:** Encourage respectful dialogue where different opinions can be expressed without fear.
- **Shared Reflection on Mistakes:** Discuss decisions that did not go as expected and identify lessons learned.
- **Listening Exercises:** Practice listening without interrupting or immediately offering solutions.

These activities help create a community where patience, dialogue, and discernment become ordinary habits.

Reflection for Formandi

Take time for personal prayer.

- How do I react when I do not have immediate answers?
- Am I comfortable admitting that I do not know?
- Do I seek advice before making important decisions?
- Have I ever rushed to a conclusion that I later regretted?
- Where is God inviting me to grow in patience and trust?

Formation Insight: Not every pastoral question has an immediate answer. Mature missionaries learn to live faithfully within uncertainty, trusting that the Holy Spirit continues to guide those who seek the truth with humility, patience, and prayer. Like Saint Anthony Mary Claret, they remain courageous enough to act when necessary and humble enough to wait when discernment requires more time.

VIII. Practical Formation Practices to Develop Intellectual Self-Capacities

Intellectual capacities do not develop through classroom learning alone. They grow through regular habits of study, reflection, dialogue, and pastoral experience. Even the best formation programme will have little impact if these habits are not practised consistently.

The role of the formator is therefore not simply to teach but to create an environment where learning becomes a way of life. The following practices are simple enough to be used by any formation community, regardless of its academic resources.

Daily Practices

Small daily habits gradually shape the missionary mind.

Practice	Purpose
Read for 20–30 minutes	Develop a habit of lifelong learning. Read Scripture, theology, Church documents, or quality books.
Reflect for 10 minutes	Ask: <i>What did I learn today? How does it affect my life and mission?</i>
Ask one thoughtful question	Cultivate curiosity by asking about something you do not yet understand.
Connect study with ministry	At the end of the day, identify one way your learning relates to your pastoral work.
Pray with what you have learned	Bring your study into prayer, asking God to transform knowledge into wisdom.

Weekly Practices

Weekly activities help transform individual learning into community learning.

Practice	Purpose
Pastoral Review	Reflect together on one ministry experience using the “See–Judge–Act” or pastoral reflection method.
Community Discussion	Discuss one current social or Church issue in the light of the Gospel.
Reading Circle	One member presents a chapter or article, followed by discussion.
Case Study	Analyse a real pastoral situation and explore different responses.
Homily Reflection	Review a recent homily together, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

Monthly Practices

Monthly activities broaden intellectual horizons and encourage integration.

Practice	Purpose
Book Review	Present a book that has enriched personal or pastoral life.
Guest Speaker	Invite a missionary, theologian, psychologist, educator, or lay leader to share expertise.
Interdisciplinary Seminar	Reflect on a topic using theology, philosophy, psychology, and social sciences.
Mission Reflection Day	Review recent apostolic experiences and identify lessons for future ministry.
Learning Plan Review	Evaluate personal learning goals and set new ones for the coming month.

Practical Formation Activities

The following activities require little preparation but can significantly strengthen intellectual formation.

1. Gospel and Today’s News: Choose one important news event. Discuss:

- What happened?
- Why is it important?

- What values are involved?
- What does the Gospel say?
- How should Christians respond?

2. Case Study Discussion: Present a real pastoral situation.

For example: A family has stopped attending church after the death of a child.

Discuss:

- What questions should we ask?
- What might they be experiencing?
- What guidance does the Gospel offer?
- How should we accompany them?

3. “What Did I Learn?” Session

After every apostolic activity, spend fifteen minutes discussing:

- What happened?
- What surprised us?
- What did we learn?
- What should we do differently next time?

This simple exercise develops both critical reflection and integration.

4. Learning from One Another

Each month, one member shares:

- a book,
- an article,
- a podcast,
- or a pastoral experience that has helped him grow.

The aim is not to impress others but to encourage mutual learning.

5. Faith and Culture Evening

A member from another country presents:

- local customs,
- religious practices,
- social values,
- pastoral challenges.

The community reflects together on how the Gospel can be proclaimed within that culture.

The Formator’s Weekly Checklist

At the end of each week, the formator may ask:

- ✓ Did I encourage questions this week?
- ✓ Did I connect study with pastoral life?
- ✓ Did I create opportunities for dialogue?
- ✓ Did I help formandi reflect on their experiences?
- ✓ Did I model curiosity and lifelong learning?

✓ Did I encourage reading beyond academic requirements?

If most answers are “Yes,” the formation environment is likely fostering intellectual growth.

Simple Monthly Review for Formandi

Invite each formandus to complete the following at the end of every month.

This Month...

One new thing I learned:

One book or article that influenced me:

One pastoral experience that taught me something important:

One question I am still exploring:

One area in which I want to grow next month:

This review can become part of the monthly accompaniment conversation.

Practical Tips for Formators

Intellectual formation flourishes when the atmosphere is encouraging rather than intimidating.

Do:

- Encourage questions more than quick answers.
- Praise curiosity and thoughtful reflection.
- Connect every lesson to missionary life.
- Invite respectful dialogue.
- Help formandi learn from mistakes.
- Model humility by continuing to learn yourself.

Avoid:

- Reducing study to examinations.
- Giving ready-made answers to every question.
- Discouraging respectful disagreement.
- Equating memorization with understanding.
- Treating mistakes as failures rather than opportunities for growth.

Reflection for Formators

Take a moment to evaluate your own practice.

- Which of these formation practices are already part of our community life?
- Which ones could we introduce with little effort?
- How can we make intellectual formation more practical and connected to mission?
- In what ways do I model lifelong learning for the formandi?

Formation Insight: Intellectual formation grows through daily habits rather than occasional events. Communities that read together, reflect together, discuss together, and learn from their pastoral experiences gradually form missionaries who think critically, discern wisely, remain open to learning,

integrate knowledge with ministry, and proclaim the Gospel with confidence, humility, and missionary creativity.

IX. Signs of Healthy Intellectual Development

The purpose of intellectual formation is not simply to produce missionaries who know more, but missionaries who think wisely, continue learning, and apply their knowledge in service of the Gospel. Intellectual growth gradually becomes visible in daily attitudes, relationships, pastoral ministry, and decision-making.

The following signs can help formators and formandi recognize healthy intellectual development.

Signs of Healthy Growth

Healthy Intellectual Development	Warning Signs
Thinks before making judgments	Reacts impulsively
Seeks truth with humility	Believes he already knows everything
Continues learning	Stops reading or studying after formal education
Welcomes constructive feedback	Becomes defensive when corrected
Connects study with ministry	Keeps study and ministry separate
Appreciates different viewpoints	Rejects differing opinions without listening
Makes balanced decisions	Gives simplistic answers to complex questions
Learns from experience	Repeats the same mistakes
Reflects prayerfully before acting	Acts without reflection
Integrates faith and reason	Relies only on personal opinion or emotion

Healthy intellectual development is not measured primarily by academic success but by the gradual growth of wisdom, humility, and sound judgment.

Observable Behaviours

A missionary who is growing intellectually usually demonstrates the following behaviours:

In Study

- Reads regularly beyond what is required.
- Asks thoughtful questions.
- Shows curiosity about new ideas.
- Enjoys learning from different disciplines.
- Reflects critically rather than memorizing information.

In Community Life

- Listens respectfully to others.
- Welcomes constructive feedback.
- Participates thoughtfully in discussions.
- Appreciates different cultural perspectives.
- Helps create an atmosphere of dialogue and learning.

In Pastoral Ministry

- Reflects on pastoral experiences.
- Connects Scripture with everyday life.
- Makes balanced pastoral decisions.
- Consults others when necessary.
- Learns from successes and failures.

In Personal Life

- Continues learning throughout life.
- Remains intellectually humble.
- Prays with what he studies.
- Accepts uncertainty with patience.
- Seeks wisdom rather than simply accumulating information.

Questions for Ongoing Self-Evaluation

Formandi can review their intellectual growth every few months by asking:

Critical Reflection

- Do I think more deeply before making judgments?
- Am I learning from my experiences?

Intellectual Discernment

- Do I distinguish facts from opinions?
- Am I becoming less influenced by popular trends and more guided by the Gospel?

Openness to Learning

- Am I still curious?
- What new knowledge or skill have I acquired recently?

Integration and Application

- Does my study influence my ministry?
- Does my ministry deepen my understanding of the Gospel?

Tolerance for Ambiguity

- Am I becoming more patient with difficult questions?
- Do I remain calm when answers are not immediately clear?

Practical Review During Accompaniment

Every three or six months, the formator and formandus can discuss questions such as:

- What have you learned about yourself this semester?
- Which intellectual capacity has grown the most?
- Which one still needs attention?
- What experiences have contributed most to your growth?
- What practical goals would you like to set for the next few months?

These conversations help transform evaluation into accompaniment rather than mere assessment.

A Simple Growth Scale

The following scale can help both formators and formandi identify progress.

Level	Description
1. Beginning	Needs frequent guidance and encouragement.
2. Developing	Shows growth but is still inconsistent.
3. Growing	Demonstrates the capacity in most situations.
4. Mature	Uses the capacity naturally and consistently.
5. Mentor	Models the capacity and helps others develop it.

The goal is not perfection but continuous growth.

Practical Tips for Formators

When observing intellectual development, focus less on academic achievement and more on evidence of growth. Look for:

- ✓ greater curiosity than before
- ✓ better questions rather than quicker answers
- ✓ increased openness to dialogue
- ✓ improved pastoral judgment
- ✓ deeper integration of prayer, study, and ministry
- ✓ willingness to learn from mistakes

Avoid judging intellectual maturity solely by:

- X examination results
- X academic degrees
- X fluency in discussion
- X ability to quote books or Church documents

These are valuable, but they do not necessarily indicate wisdom or missionary maturity.

Reflection

Take a few moments to reflect.

For Formandi

- Which signs of healthy intellectual growth do I see in myself?
- Which warning signs occasionally appear in my life?
- What practical step can I take this month to continue growing?

For Formators

- Which signs of growth have I noticed in this formandus?
- Where does he need encouragement rather than correction?
- How can I better accompany his intellectual development over the coming months?

Formation Insight: Healthy intellectual formation is not measured by how much a missionary knows, but by how he thinks, learns, discerns, and serves. As knowledge is gradually transformed into wisdom, the missionary becomes a credible witness who proclaims the Gospel with clarity, humility, and compassion. Like Saint Anthony Mary Claret, he continues to learn throughout life, allowing every study, every pastoral experience, and every encounter to deepen his love for God and his service to God's people.

X. Common Obstacles to Intellectual Growth

Every missionary desires to grow intellectually, but growth is not automatic. Certain attitudes and habits can gradually weaken intellectual formation if they are not recognized and addressed. The role of the formator is not simply to correct these obstacles but to help formandi transform them into opportunities for growth.

The following are some of the most common obstacles encountered during formation.

1. Intellectual Pride

What is it? Intellectual pride is the attitude of believing that one already knows enough and therefore has little to learn from others. It often leads to arrogance, resistance to correction, and a lack of genuine dialogue.

What does it look like?

- Frequently interrupts others.
- Rarely accepts correction.
- Looks down on those with less education.
- Uses knowledge to impress rather than to serve.
- Believes his opinion is always correct.

How can the formator help?

- Model intellectual humility.
- Encourage collaborative learning.
- Invite formandi to appreciate the gifts of others.
- Praise openness to learning rather than academic brilliance.
- Remind them that knowledge is meant for service, not prestige.

2. Superficial Learning

What is it? Superficial learning focuses on memorizing information without understanding its meaning or application.

What does it look like?

- Memorizes answers without reflection.
- Reads only for examinations.
- Cannot relate theory to ministry.
- Quickly forgets what was studied.
- Avoids deeper questions.

How can the formator help?

- Ask “Why?” and “How?” rather than only “What?”
- Encourage reflection after every class.
- Use case studies instead of factual recall alone.
- Connect academic topics with pastoral experiences.
- Invite formandi to explain ideas in their own words.

3. Ideological Rigidity

What is it? Ideological rigidity occurs when a person becomes attached to one way of thinking and refuses to consider other perspectives. This is different from fidelity to Church teaching. Fidelity is rooted in truth and charity; rigidity often arises from fear, insecurity, or unwillingness to engage in dialogue.

What does it look like?

- Sees every issue in black-and-white terms.
- Rejects differing opinions without listening.
- Labels people quickly.
- Confuses personal preferences with Church teaching.
- Avoids respectful discussion.

How can the formator help?

- Encourage respectful dialogue.
- Present balanced viewpoints.
- Study Church documents in their full context.
- Help formandi distinguish doctrine from personal opinion.
- Teach them to appreciate complexity without losing fidelity to the Gospel.

4. Fear of Making Mistakes

What is it? Some formandi hesitate to ask questions or express ideas because they fear giving the wrong answer. Fear gradually limits intellectual growth.

What does it look like?

- Rarely participates in discussions.
- Avoids asking questions.
- Waits for others to answer.
- Hesitates to try new pastoral approaches.
- Prefers silence rather than risking a mistake.

How can the formator help?

- Create a safe learning environment.
- Appreciate honest questions.
- Treat mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Encourage gradual participation.
- Give constructive rather than discouraging feedback.

5. Lack of Intellectual Curiosity

What is it? Curiosity is the engine of learning. Without it, study becomes a duty instead of a joy.

What does it look like?

- Reads only what is required.
- Shows little interest in current events.
- Rarely asks questions.
- Avoids new experiences.
- Is satisfied with minimal effort.

How can the formator help?

- Recommend inspiring books.
- Encourage participation in seminars and workshops.
- Discuss current issues regularly.
- Invite formandi to explore topics of personal interest.
- Share your own enthusiasm for learning.

6. Fragmented Thinking

What is it? Fragmented thinking occurs when academic subjects remain isolated from one another and from pastoral life. Theology, Scripture, psychology, philosophy, and ministry are treated as separate worlds instead of complementary ways of understanding the human person and God's mission.

What does it look like?

- Cannot connect study with ministry.
- Gives theoretical answers to practical problems.
- Sees academic subjects as unrelated.
- Struggles to apply learning in pastoral situations.

How can the formator help?

- Frequently ask, “*How does this apply to your ministry?*”
- Organize interdisciplinary discussions.
- Encourage theological reflection after pastoral experiences.
- Integrate classroom learning with apostolic work.
- Model connections between faith, reason, and life.

7. Intellectual Complacency

What is it? Intellectual complacency is the belief that learning ends after ordination, final profession, or obtaining a degree. Missionaries who stop learning gradually lose their ability to respond creatively to new pastoral challenges.

What does it look like?

- Stops reading after formal studies.
- Uses outdated pastoral methods.
- Resists new knowledge.
- Avoids continuing formation.
- Shows little interest in contemporary issues.

How can the formator help?

- Promote lifelong learning.
- Encourage annual personal study goals.
- Introduce recent Church documents and pastoral developments.
- Invite missionaries to share what they are currently learning.
- Celebrate growth rather than academic achievement.

Practical Review

At the end of each semester, invite formandi to complete this exercise.

Which obstacle affects me most?

- ☐ Intellectual pride
- ☐ Superficial learning
- ☐ Ideological rigidity
- ☐ Fear of making mistakes
- ☐ Lack of curiosity
- ☐ Fragmented thinking
- ☐ Intellectual complacency

Why?

What practical step will I take?

Who can help me?

Tips for Formators

When you notice an obstacle:

Do:

- Explore the underlying causes before correcting the behaviour.
- Encourage honest conversation.
- Give concrete examples.
- Celebrate even small improvements.
- Accompany patiently.

Avoid:

- Public criticism.
- Labelling the person.
- Comparing one formandus with another.
- Assuming lack of intelligence when the issue may be fear or insecurity.
- Expecting immediate change.

Remember that intellectual growth, like spiritual growth, is gradual and requires trust, encouragement, and perseverance.

Reflection

For Formandi

- Which obstacle most affects my intellectual growth?
- What habits reinforce this obstacle?
- What concrete change can I begin this week?

For Formators

- Which obstacles do I observe most frequently in my formation community?
- How can I address them through accompaniment rather than mere correction?
- Am I modelling the intellectual attitudes that I hope to cultivate in the formandi?

Formation Insight: The greatest obstacles to intellectual growth are often not a lack of ability but attitudes that close the mind to learning. Missionaries who cultivate humility, curiosity, perseverance, and openness gradually overcome these obstacles and become lifelong disciples, always ready to learn, discern, and serve the Gospel with wisdom and creativity.

XI. The Role of the Formator in Developing Intellectual Self-Capacities

Intellectual formation is much more than helping formandi pass examinations or complete academic programmes. It is about forming missionaries who can think critically, discern wisely, continue learning, and apply knowledge in service of the Gospel. While study provides the content, it is the formator who helps shape the attitudes and habits that transform knowledge into wisdom.

The formator is therefore not expected to be an expert in every academic discipline. Rather, he is called to be a guide who encourages reflection, stimulates curiosity, models lifelong learning, and accompanies formandi as they grow intellectually. His greatest contribution is often not the answers he gives but the questions he asks.

Five Essential Responsibilities of the Formator

1. Encourage Thoughtful Questions

Healthy intellectual growth begins with curiosity. Formandi should feel free to ask questions, express doubts respectfully, and explore difficult issues without fear of ridicule.

The formator should create an atmosphere where questions are welcomed as opportunities for deeper understanding rather than signs of weak faith.

Practical ways to do this

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Encourage respectful discussion.
- Welcome different viewpoints.
- Help formandi distinguish sincere questioning from unnecessary argument.
- Praise good questions as much as good answers.

Example: Instead of asking, “What is the correct answer?” ask, “How did you arrive at that conclusion?”

2. Connect Study with Mission

Academic study should never remain isolated from missionary life. The formator should regularly help formandi ask:

- How does this help me preach the Gospel?
- How does this improve my pastoral ministry?
- How does this deepen my relationship with Christ?

Simple connections like these gradually transform study from an academic requirement into a missionary resource.

Practical ways to do this

- Review apostolic experiences after ministry.
- Connect classroom topics with current pastoral situations.
- Invite formandi to apply theological ideas in real-life contexts.
- Encourage reflection after retreats, parish work, and community experiences.

3. Model Lifelong Learning

Perhaps the strongest lesson a formator gives is his own example.

A formator who continues reading, attends workshops, listens to others, and remains intellectually humble teaches more effectively than one who simply instructs.

Formandi quickly notice whether their formator enjoys learning or merely teaches from habit.

Practical ways to do this

- Share books that have influenced you.
- Discuss recent Church documents.
- Speak about what you are currently learning.
- Attend formation programmes yourself.
- Admit when you do not know something and show how you would find the answer.

Humility is often the best teacher.

4. Foster Reflection Rather Than Memorization

Formation is not about producing missionaries who can repeat information but missionaries who can interpret reality wisely. Instead of asking only, “What did you study?” also ask,

- What challenged you?
- What surprised you?
- What have you learned about yourself?
- How will this influence your ministry?

Reflection transforms information into wisdom.

Practical ways to do this

- Encourage reflective journals.
- Review pastoral experiences regularly.
- Discuss case studies.
- Invite personal application after every major topic.
- End classes with one practical takeaway.

5. Accompany Growth Patiently

Intellectual development takes time. Every formandus grows at a different pace. Some ask many questions. Others need encouragement. Some learn quickly through reading. Others learn best through experience.

The formator respects these differences while patiently helping each person develop his potential.

Practical ways to do this

- Give regular encouragement.
- Offer constructive feedback privately.
- Set realistic learning goals.
- Celebrate progress, however small.
- Encourage perseverance rather than perfection.

Five Mistakes Formators Should Avoid

1. Giving Answers Too Quickly: If the formator answers every question immediately, formandi never learn how to think for themselves. Instead, ask, “What do you think?”

2. Discouraging Honest Questions: Questions are often the beginning of deeper faith. Avoid interpreting every difficult question as a lack of commitment.

3. Equating Knowledge with Wisdom: A formandus may perform well academically but still struggle with judgment, discernment, or pastoral application. Formation should evaluate both knowledge and maturity.

4. Correcting Without Encouraging: Frequent criticism without encouragement discourages learning. Correction should always be accompanied by hope and practical guidance.

5. Neglecting Personal Example: Formandi learn as much from the formator’s attitudes as from his teaching. If the formator:

- listens respectfully,
- reads regularly,

- admits mistakes,
- welcomes dialogue,
- continues learning, the community naturally develops the same attitudes.

Practical Accompaniment Questions

During monthly accompaniment, the formator may ask:

About Critical Reflection

- What pastoral experience has taught you the most this month?
- What assumptions have you questioned recently?

About Intellectual Discernment

- What difficult issue have you been trying to understand?
- How did you arrive at your conclusion?

About Openness to Learning

- What new knowledge or skill have you acquired?
- What feedback has helped you grow?

About Integration

- How has your study influenced your ministry?
- What has ministry taught you about your studies?

About Tolerance for Ambiguity

- What situation currently requires patience and discernment?
- How are you allowing God to guide you through it?

A Monthly Checklist for Formators

At the end of each month, ask yourself:

Question	Yes	Partly	No
Did I encourage thoughtful questions?	☐	☐	☐
Did I connect study with missionary life?	☐	☐	☐
Did I help formandi reflect on their experiences?	☐	☐	☐
Did I recommend worthwhile reading or learning opportunities?	☐	☐	☐
Did I accompany each formandus according to his needs?	☐	☐	☐
Did I model intellectual humility and curiosity?	☐	☐	☐

This simple review helps ensure that intellectual formation remains intentional and practical.

Reflection

For Formators

Take a few moments to reflect prayerfully.

- Which of these five responsibilities do I carry out well?
- Which one needs greater attention?
- How do I encourage independent thinking rather than dependence on my answers?
- Does my own life reflect the attitude of a lifelong learner?
- What one concrete change can I make this month to improve my accompaniment?

For Formation Communities

As a community, ask:

- Do we value learning as much as we value ministry?

- Are our meetings places of genuine dialogue?
- How can we create a stronger culture of study, reflection, and shared learning?

Formation Insight: The formator's primary task is not simply to teach what to think, but to help missionaries learn how to think with the mind of Christ. By fostering curiosity, reflection, discernment, humility, and lifelong learning, the formator accompanies the gradual transformation of knowledge into wisdom, preparing Claretian missionaries to proclaim the Gospel with intelligence, compassion, and missionary creativity.

XII. Conclusion

Intellectual formation is an essential dimension of Claretian missionary formation. It is not simply about acquiring knowledge but about developing a way of thinking that is guided by faith, enriched by study, and directed toward the service of God's people. Missionaries are called not only to proclaim the Gospel but also to understand the world in which they proclaim it, reading the signs of the times with wisdom, discernment, and hope.

Throughout this module, we have explored five intellectual self-capacities that support this journey of growth:

- **Critical Reflection** helps missionaries think deeply before acting.
- **Intellectual Discernment** enables them to distinguish truth from error and make sound judgments.
- **Openness to Learning** keeps them intellectually alive and committed to lifelong growth.
- **Integration and Application** connects study with prayer, community life, and pastoral ministry.
- **Tolerance for Ambiguity** teaches patience, humility, and trust when facing complex situations.

These capacities do not develop overnight. They grow gradually through prayer, disciplined study, pastoral experience, community dialogue, and personal accompaniment. Every question honestly asked, every book thoughtfully read, every pastoral experience carefully reflected upon, and every act of humble learning contributes to the formation of a missionary mind.

For Saint Anthony Mary Claret, study was never an end in itself. He constantly sought knowledge so that he could proclaim the Gospel more effectively and respond to the needs of the people of his time. His life reminds us that intellectual formation is inseparable from missionary zeal. Knowledge that does not lead to service remains incomplete; study that does not deepen love for Christ and his people falls short of its purpose.

For this reason, formators should not see themselves merely as teachers but as companions in the search for truth. Their task is to cultivate communities where curiosity is welcomed, dialogue is encouraged, reflection is habitual, and learning continues throughout life. Such communities prepare missionaries who are not only well informed but also wise, discerning, and pastorally effective.

Likewise, formandi should view intellectual formation not as an academic obligation but as an integral part of their vocational response. Every opportunity to learn is also an opportunity to grow in love for God, deepen their understanding of humanity, and become more effective servants of the Gospel.

Key Takeaways

At the end of this module, every Claretian missionary should strive to:

- Think critically before making judgments.
- Discern wisely in the light of the Gospel and the Church's teaching.
- Remain a lifelong learner.

- Integrate study, prayer, community life, and ministry.
- Accompany people patiently through life's complexities.
- Use knowledge not for personal recognition but for missionary service.

Final Reflection

Before concluding this module, spend a few moments in personal prayer.

Reflect on these questions:

- Which intellectual self-capacity has grown most in me?
- Which one still needs greater attention?
- How has God used study and experience to shape my missionary vocation?
- In what concrete way can I become a more reflective, discerning, and missionary thinker?
- How can I use my intellectual gifts more generously in the service of the Church and the Congregation?

You may wish to conclude by praying with the words of Psalm 119:105: *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

Ask the Holy Spirit, the source of all wisdom, to enlighten your mind, strengthen your judgment, and guide your missionary service, so that everything you learn may become a means of loving God more deeply and serving his people more faithfully.

Formation Insight: A Claretian missionary is not called merely to know the truth but to seek it humbly, discern it wisely, live it faithfully, and proclaim it courageously. Intellectual formation therefore shapes not only informed minds but missionary disciples whose study becomes prayer, whose knowledge becomes wisdom, and whose wisdom becomes generous service in the proclamation of the Gospel.

Appendix A

Formator's Practical Observation Guide

Evaluating Intellectual Self-Capacities

Purpose: This observation guide is designed to help formators accompany the intellectual growth of formandi in a simple and practical way. It is **not an academic grading tool**, but an aid for formative dialogue and ongoing accompaniment. Rather than asking, *"How much does he know?"*, this guide asks:

- How does he think?
- How does he learn?
- How does he make decisions?
- How does he connect study with missionary life?

The observations may be drawn from:

- classroom participation;
- community life;
- pastoral ministry;
- personal accompaniment;
- written reflections;
- group discussions;
- apostolic experiences.

Rating Scale

Rating	Meaning
1 – Beginning	Rarely demonstrates the behaviour; requires close guidance.
2 – Developing	Shows the behaviour occasionally but inconsistently.
3 – Growing	Demonstrates the behaviour regularly with some guidance.
4 – Mature	Demonstrates the behaviour consistently and independently.
5 – Exemplary	Models the behaviour and positively influences others.

1. Critical Reflection

Observable Behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Thinks before making judgments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reflects on pastoral experiences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asks thoughtful questions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learns from mistakes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Connects experience with faith	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Observation Notes

Strengths

Areas for Growth

2. Intellectual Discernment

Observable Behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Verifies information before accepting it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Distinguishes facts from opinions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Evaluates ideas in the light of the Gospel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Avoids ideological extremes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Makes balanced pastoral judgments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Observation Notes

3. Openness to Learning

Observable Behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Shows curiosity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Welcomes constructive feedback	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reads beyond academic requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learns from people and cultures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Demonstrates a desire for lifelong learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Observation Notes

4. Integration and Application

Observable Behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Connects study with ministry	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Uses knowledge from different disciplines	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Applies learning in pastoral situations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reflects on ministry in the light of faith	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Integrates prayer, study, and mission	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Observation Notes

5. Tolerance for Ambiguity

Observable Behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Remains calm in uncertainty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Listens patiently before responding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Considers different viewpoints	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seeks consultation when needed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accompanies others patiently	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Observation Notes

Overall Summary

Areas of Strength

Which intellectual capacities are clearly developing?

Areas Requiring Attention

Which capacities need further accompaniment?

Suggested Formation Strategies

Tick those appropriate.

- ☐ More reflective journaling
- ☐ Guided pastoral review
- ☐ Reading plan
- ☐ Participation in a study group
- ☐ Interdisciplinary discussions
- ☐ Greater pastoral exposure
- ☐ Mentoring by an experienced missionary
- ☐ Homily preparation workshops
- ☐ Theology–life integration exercises
- ☐ Intercultural learning experiences
- ☐ Regular accompaniment conversations
- ☐ Other:

Goals for the Next Three Months

Goal 1

Action

Goal 2

Action

Goal 3

Action

Final Encouragement: Intellectual formation is a lifelong journey. The purpose of this guide is not to judge the formandus but to accompany his gradual growth toward the mind of Christ. Every sincere question, every thoughtful reflection, every pastoral experience, and every effort to seek the truth contributes to forming a missionary who proclaims the Gospel with wisdom, humility, and missionary creativity.

Appendix B

Monthly Accompaniment Guide

Conversation Starters for Intellectual Formation

Purpose: This guide helps formators conduct meaningful monthly accompaniment conversations that promote intellectual growth. It is not meant to be a formal interview or examination, but a relaxed and prayerful dialogue that encourages the formandus to reflect on his learning, ministry, and personal development.

The questions are intended to stimulate self-awareness rather than produce “correct” answers. Formators may choose only a few questions according to the needs of the individual.

1. Critical Reflection

Looking Back

- What pastoral experience has challenged you most this month?
- What surprised you during your ministry?
- What did you learn from a recent success?
- What did you learn from a recent mistake?
- Is there a situation you now understand differently than before?

Looking Ahead

- How can you become more reflective before making decisions?
- What practical step will help you learn more from your experiences?

2. Intellectual Discernment

Looking Back

- What difficult issue have you been trying to understand?
- Have you encountered conflicting opinions recently?
- How did you decide what was true or most appropriate?
- Did you verify information before accepting it?
- What helped you make a balanced decision?

Looking Ahead

- In what area do you need greater discernment?
- Which Church document or spiritual reading could help you deepen your understanding?

3. Openness to Learning

Looking Back

- What new thing did you learn this month?
- Which book, article, or conference influenced you?
- What feedback helped you improve?
- What did you learn from the people you served?
- What have you learned from community life?

Looking Ahead

- What new skill would you like to develop?
- What book or topic would you like to study next?

4. Integration and Application

Looking Back

- How has your study helped your ministry recently?
- Which pastoral experience helped you understand your studies better?
- Have you connected Scripture with your daily ministry?
- How has prayer influenced your pastoral decisions?
- What has ministry taught you about people?

Looking Ahead

- How can you better integrate prayer, study, and ministry?
- Which academic subject would you like to apply more consciously in your apostolate?

5. Tolerance for Ambiguity

Looking Back

- What situation has required patience this month?
- Have you faced a question without an immediate answer?
- How did you respond?
- Did you seek advice before making an important decision?
- What helped you remain peaceful?

Looking Ahead

- How can you become more patient in difficult situations?
- What helps you trust God's guidance when answers are not yet clear?

Overall Intellectual Growth

Toward the end of the conversation, the formator may ask:

- Looking back over the past month, where have you grown the most?
- Which intellectual capacity still needs attention?
- What has God been teaching you recently?
- What has given you the greatest joy in learning?
- What has been your greatest intellectual challenge?

Setting Growth Goals

Conclude the accompaniment by agreeing on one or two concrete goals for the coming month.

Goal 1

Area for Growth

Concrete Action

How will I know I am growing?

Goal 2**Area for Growth**

Concrete Action

How will I know I am growing?

Suggested Monthly Practices

The formator may encourage one or more of the following:

- ☐ Read one good book.
- ☐ Write a weekly reflection.
- ☐ Participate actively in community discussions.
- ☐ Prepare one theological reflection.
- ☐ Discuss one current issue in the light of the Gospel.
- ☐ Learn from someone of another culture.
- ☐ Review one pastoral experience each week.
- ☐ Attend an online lecture or workshop.
- ☐ Improve one academic or pastoral skill.
- ☐ Memorize and pray with one Scripture passage that inspires intellectual growth.

Prayer Before Concluding the Meeting

The accompaniment may conclude with a simple prayer.

Lord Jesus,

You are the Wisdom of the Father and the Teacher of all who seek the truth. Open our minds to understand your Word, deepen our hearts in humility, and guide our decisions with the light of your Spirit. Help us to remain lifelong learners, joyful seekers of truth, and generous missionaries who place our knowledge at the service of your people. May Saint Anthony Mary Claret inspire us to unite study, prayer, and mission in the service of the Gospel.

Amen.

Final Note for Formators: The most fruitful accompaniment conversations are not those in which the formator speaks the most, but those in which the formandus discovers his own growth through honest reflection. Listen attentively, ask thoughtful questions, affirm genuine progress, and gently challenge areas that need development. Intellectual formation, like spiritual formation, is a gradual work of grace, sustained by patient accompaniment, sincere dialogue, and trust in the Holy Spirit.