

PEER REVIEWS

I. Formative Meaning

Peer review is a practical way of learning together. Rather than working in isolation, formandi help one another improve through respectful observation, honest feedback, and mutual encouragement. It is not an exercise in judging people but in strengthening one another's growth. By giving and receiving constructive feedback, formandi learn humility, openness, responsibility, and collaborative learning.

In Claretian formation, peer review reflects our vocation to live and grow as brothers in mission. Missionaries are formed not only through personal study and prayer but also through dialogue, fraternal correction, and shared discernment. Just as community life invites us to support one another in living the Gospel, peer review teaches us to accompany one another in intellectual, spiritual, pastoral, and human growth. It becomes a practical exercise in "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15), helping one another mature in charity and responsibility.

Peer review also prepares formandi for missionary leadership. Every Claretian will one day collaborate with others, evaluate pastoral initiatives, participate in community discernment, and accompany people in their growth. Learning to offer feedback with respect and to receive it with humility are therefore essential missionary skills. When practised well, peer review forms missionaries who are confident without arrogance, receptive without insecurity, and committed to the common good.

Why Peer Review Matters in Claretian Formation

Peer review helps formandi to:

- cultivate humility by accepting constructive feedback;
- develop honesty and charity in evaluating the work of others;
- improve academic, pastoral, and ministerial competence through revision;
- strengthen fraternity through mutual trust and accountability;
- learn collaborative discernment, an essential dimension of Claretian missionary life.

As St. Paul reminds us, "Encourage one another and build one another up" (1 Thess 5:11). Peer review is one concrete way of living this exhortation within the formation community.

Practical Principle: The goal of peer review is not to discover who is right, but to help one another become better missionaries. Every review should leave the other person clearer, encouraged, and motivated to grow.

II. Key Skills Developed through Peer Reviews

1. Giving Constructive Feedback: Learn to give feedback that is honest, respectful, and specific. The goal is to help others improve by recognizing strengths, identifying areas for growth, and offering practical suggestions.

2. Receiving Feedback with Humility: Develop openness to correction without becoming defensive. Constructive feedback is an opportunity for learning, self-improvement, and deeper personal maturity.

3. Self-Reflection and Revision: Cultivate the habit of reviewing and improving one's own work. Peer review encourages continuous learning rather than seeking perfection in the first attempt.

4. Respect for Diverse Perspectives: Appreciate that people may think, write, and approach problems differently. Listening to diverse viewpoints broadens understanding and strengthens discernment, especially in intercultural missionary communities.

Practical Outcome

After regular peer review, the formandus should be able to:

- give constructive and charitable feedback;
- receive suggestions with openness;
- revise work based on feedback;
- collaborate respectfully with others;
- grow in humility, fraternity, and missionary responsibility.

III. Practical Guidelines for Formandi

Before Giving Feedback

- Read or listen carefully before commenting.
- Understand the purpose of the work.
- Pray for an open and objective attitude.
- Focus on helping your brother grow.

While Giving Feedback

- Begin by highlighting one or two strengths.
- Ask questions before making assumptions.
- Offer clear and practical suggestions.
- Critique the work, never the person.
- Be honest, respectful, and concise.

When Receiving Feedback

- Listen without interrupting or defending yourself.
- Thank the reviewer for the feedback.
- Reflect on recurring observations.
- Decide what improvements to make.
- See feedback as an opportunity for growth.

Checklist for Every Peer Review

Before concluding, ask yourself:

- ☐ Did I recognize the strengths of the work?
- ☐ Did I identify areas that need improvement?
- ☐ Did I give practical suggestions?
- ☐ Was my feedback respectful and charitable?
- ☐ Will my comments help my brother grow?

Practical Tip: Follow the “Strength – Question – Suggestion” approach:

- **Strength:** What is done well?
- **Question:** What needs clarification or deeper reflection?
- **Suggestion:** What practical improvement would strengthen the work?

Remember: The purpose of peer review is not to prove that I am right, but to help my brother become a better Claretian missionary.

IV. Practical Exercises

Exercise	Purpose	Procedure	Time
1. Strength–Question–Suggestion	Learn to give balanced feedback.	Review a peer’s work by identifying one strength, asking one clarifying question, and offering one practical suggestion.	15 min
2. Silent Peer Review	Encourage thoughtful and objective evaluation.	Read the work individually, write comments first, then discuss them as a group.	20 min
3. Role-Based Review	Examine the work from different perspectives.	Each reviewer focuses on one area (clarity, content, pastoral relevance, structure, or practical application).	20–30 min
4. Revision Plan	Translate feedback into action.	After receiving comments, identify three improvements and revise the work accordingly.	15 min
5. Reflection Journal	Foster self-awareness.	Briefly write: <i>What feedback helped me most? What will I improve next time?</i>	10 min
6. Rotating Peer Groups	Learn from different perspectives.	Change review partners regularly to receive diverse insights and avoid fixed patterns.	Ongoing

Suggested Questions for Discussion

After each peer review, discuss:

- What was the strongest aspect of the work?
- What could be clearer or more convincing?
- Which suggestion is most helpful for improvement?
- What did I learn from reviewing another person’s work?
- How has this exercise helped me grow in humility and fraternity?

Good Practices

- ✓ Give feedback promptly.
- ✓ Keep comments clear and concise.
- ✓ Support observations with examples.
- ✓ Encourage improvement rather than perfection.
- ✓ End every review with a positive and hopeful comment.

Remember: Peer review is successful when both the reviewer and the one reviewed grow in knowledge, humility, and missionary fraternity.

V. Accompaniment Strategies for Formators

- 1. Create a Safe Environment:** Foster an atmosphere of trust where formandi feel free to give and receive feedback with honesty, respect, and charity.
- 2. Model Good Feedback:** Demonstrate how to offer balanced feedback by affirming strengths, asking thoughtful questions, and making practical suggestions.
- 3. Guide Emotional Growth:** Help formandi distinguish between criticism of their work and criticism of themselves. Encourage openness, resilience, and a willingness to learn.

4. Identify Growth Patterns: Look for recurring strengths and areas needing improvement across different peer reviews. Use these patterns during personal accompaniment to promote continuous growth.

5. Integrate Peer Review into Formation: Discuss peer review experiences during accompaniment. Invite formandi to reflect:

- What feedback challenged you?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What concrete step will you take to improve?

6. Adapt to the Formation Stage: Adjust the depth of feedback according to the maturity of the formandi. Beginners need encouragement and guidance, while those in advanced stages can engage in more critical and reflective dialogue.

Quick Tips for Formators

- ✓ Set clear expectations before every peer review.
- ✓ Encourage respectful and evidence-based feedback.
- ✓ Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and be heard.
- ✓ Intervene if comments become personal or discouraging.
- ✓ Conclude every session by identifying practical steps for growth.

Accompaniment Reminder: The formator's role is not simply to evaluate the quality of the feedback but to cultivate a culture of fraternity, trust, and shared learning, where every peer review becomes an opportunity for personal, community, and missionary growth.

VI. Common Pitfalls to Address

Pitfall	Better Practice
Focusing only on mistakes	Recognize strengths before suggesting improvements.
Giving vague feedback	Be specific and support comments with examples.
Criticizing the person instead of the work	Discuss ideas, structure, and content—not personality.
Becoming defensive when receiving feedback	Listen carefully, reflect, and consider the suggestions before responding.
Ignoring repeated feedback	Identify recurring observations and make a plan for improvement.
Treating peer review as a formality	Participate seriously, seeing it as an opportunity for mutual growth.
Allowing competition to replace fraternity	Remember that the goal is to help one another grow, not to compare or compete.

Reflection Questions

After each peer review, ask yourself:

- What did I do well in giving or receiving feedback?
- What did I learn about myself?
- Which suggestion will help me grow the most?
- How did this experience strengthen fraternity and mutual trust?

Key Reminder: Peer review is most fruitful when it is guided by truth, charity, humility, and a sincere desire to help one another become better Claretian missionaries.

VII. Claretian Peer Review Guide

A Practical Guide for Fraternal and Formative Feedback

Peer review is an exercise in fraternity, honesty, and mutual growth. Its purpose is not to judge one another but to help each other grow in human maturity, missionary spirit, and Claretian identity. When offered with charity and received with humility, feedback becomes an instrument of personal conversion, community building, and apostolic effectiveness.

Three Golden Rules

1. **Be Honest:** Speak truthfully, clearly, and objectively.
2. **Be Charitable:** Correct the work, not the person. Always respect the dignity of your brother.
3. **Be Specific:** Offer concrete observations and practical suggestions that can be implemented.

Areas for Peer Review

Area	What to Observe	Guiding Question
Community Life	Relationships, responsibility, communication, collaboration, emotional maturity	Does he contribute positively to community life?
Spiritual Life	Prayer, liturgy, integration of faith and daily life	Is there evidence of consistent spiritual growth?
Ministerial Life	Pastoral responsibility, availability, missionary zeal, service	Does he serve generously and responsibly?
Claretian Identity	Love for the Congregation, missionary spirit, participation in community life	Is he growing in Claretian spirituality and missionary identity?

The “Strength – Question – Suggestion” Method

Every review should include these three elements:

Strength

- What is done well?
- Which qualities should be encouraged?

Question

- What needs clarification or deeper reflection?
- What deserves further consideration?

Suggestion

- What practical step would improve the work or foster further growth?

Sample Feedback

Strength	Question	Suggestion
You communicate clearly and relate well with the community.	How could you involve quieter members more actively?	During community meetings, intentionally invite everyone to share their views.

Commitment to Growth

At the end of every peer review, each formandus identifies:

- **One strength** to continue developing.
- **One area** that needs improvement.

- **One concrete action** to practise before the next review.

Prayer Before Peer Review

Lord Jesus,

You call us to grow together in truth and love.

Grant us the humility to receive correction,
the wisdom to offer constructive feedback,
and the charity to encourage one another.

May our words build fraternity, strengthen our missionary vocation,
and help each of us become more faithful disciples in the spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

Amen.

Formative Insight

“We help one another grow in truth, fraternity, and mission.”

Peer review is not merely an academic exercise but a practice of mutual accompaniment. When carried out with honesty, humility, and charity, it strengthens community life, deepens Claretian identity, and prepares missionaries to accompany others with wisdom, compassion, and responsibility.