



The Church of Scotland

Faith Nurture Forum – Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Student Policy

Time off from Study

1. Introduction

The Faith Nurture Forum of the Church of Scotland (Faith Nurture Forum) recognises that from time to time, students will need to take time off from studies to fulfil other commitments, appointments or obligations. This policy provides advice and guidance to students who require time off during the course of their studies with Faith Nurture Forum.

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy covers all Faith Nurture Forum students regardless of the stage of their studies. However, it will primarily apply to students whilst on placement.

3. Policy Statement

Faith Nurture Forum recognises that student attendance and participation are imperative to successful completion of studies.

However, it is recognised that circumstances may arise which prevent students from attending and participating. In such circumstances it may be appropriate for students to consider time off from study to resolve the issues that are affecting their attendance and participation.

Before requesting time off from study, a student is required to seek advice from a Faith Nurture Forum Training Officer to both discuss with them the reason for requesting the leave, and to ensure this is the best course of action available to them.

This policy does not cover absence through sickness or illness and the Sickness Absence Policy should be adhered to.

4. Circumstances leading to Time off from Study

All requests are considered on an individual basis. The following are examples of circumstances which may be acceptable circumstances for time off to be granted. This list is not definitive and even if a circumstance is listed, it does not mean that a request for time off will be approved:

- Attendance at a medical appointment (GP, Dentist, Outpatient Hospital Appointments etc.)
- Significant illness of a close family member;
- The death of a close family member or friend;
- Extreme family or financial circumstances which have had a significant impact on a student;

- Military service including students who are undertaking military service as reservists;
- Time off to immediately deal with emergency domestic situations e.g. an ill child, a broken heating boiler.

5. Period of Time Off

The period of time off for students will vary significantly dependent on the circumstances for which the leave is required. Faith Nurture Forum trusts students to use their own understanding of the circumstance to apply for the appropriate duration. However, as a general guide:

- Attendance at a medical appointment (GP, Dentist, Outpatient Hospital Appointments etc.).

Students will be expected to, where possible, make appointments out with their normal placement/study hours, however, it is accepted that this is not always possible. Students are asked to make the appointment as close to the start or end of the day as possible in order to minimise disruption.

- Significant illness of a close family member;

Faith Nurture Forum understand that this can be a very difficult time, both emotionally and practically. The student can approach a member of the Training team or the Pastoral Support team at any time to discuss temporary modifications to any arrangements for placement/study. The absence may be to support their family member, to accompany them to medical appointments or to visit them in hospital. In these circumstances, Faith Nurture Forum understands that it is very often to predict the support required and will endeavour to be as flexible as possible.

- The death of a close family member or friend;

Time off for the death of a close family member or friend is entirely discretionary, however, as a general guide, around 7-10 days as a maximum are accepted. Each individual is different, and students are encouraged to speak to a Training Officer or Pastoral Support team member for guidance, and any other support that Faith Nurture Forum may be able to offer.

- Extreme family or financial circumstances which have had a significant impact on a student;

Students are encouraged to speak to Faith Nurture Forum under these circumstances, no guidance is given in terms of days, as it could be as little as one day, or a few weeks.

- Military service including students who are undertaking military service as reservists;

The Church of Scotland has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and has committed to supporting the Armed Forces Community. Where students are reservists and are called for service, the Faith Nurture Forum will ensure that this process, and their return to studying, is as straightforward as possible.

- Time off to immediately deal with emergency domestic situations e.g. an ill child, a broken heating boiler.

Normally one or two days are sufficient to deal with domestic emergency situations, students are expected to make longer term arrangements as soon as possible.

6. Requesting Time off from Study

A formal request for time off from study should be submitted in writing to a Training Officer in the first instance who may discuss this, dependent on the duration, with the Education and Training Secretary prior to approval. The Training Officer will then notify the student as soon as possible and work with them to make arrangements, if required. If the requirement for time off is in response to an emergency situation, and it is not possible for the student to give advance notice, then the student should contact the Training Officer as soon as possible after the emergency arises.

With the exception of time off for reserve military service, Faith Nurture Forum reserves the right to reject any request for time off however, a full explanation will be provided to the student.

7. Communication with Students during Time off

If students take time off during their studies, Faith Nurture Forum will, at periodic intervals, communicate with students via their email account to provide relevant information. In addition, Faith Nurture Forum will also communicate with students approximately six weeks in advance of their return to studies to make arrangements to return following the period of interruption.

Students will be required to confirm their intention to return one month before the expected return date. If a student does not confirm intention to return and subsequently re-register, they will be withdrawn from the programme.

8. Financial Implications

In most circumstances no change to financial arrangements will be made. However, if the absence is for an extended time, the Faith Nurture Forum reserves the right in all cases to pause, or withhold, any grant or stipendiary payments.

9. Monitoring and Review

The impact of this policy will be monitored and the policy is subject to amendments as necessary. This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

Date First Published:	September 2018
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Frequency of Review:	2 years
Approved by:	E&S Committee