

St. Joseph's Seminary
ADMISSIONS POLICY
Revised - November 2018

The admission policy of St. Joseph's Seminary is in accord with the Norms for the Admission of Candidates as set forth in the *Program for Priestly Formation* (PPF) §§42-67, and other relevant sections. Some requirements are particular to St. Joseph's Seminary and are not specifically reflected in the PPF.

1. The Admissions Process for Diocesan Seminarians¹

- 1) The process begins with the vocations director. He conducts the initial interview and invites the candidate to complete the initial questionnaire. He gathers the required documents, i.e. canonical, academic transcripts, health records, letters of recommendation, and visa documents where it applies. He also arranges for the full psychological evaluation of each candidate.
- 2) Upon completion of this initial phase, the vocations director presents the candidate to his local diocesan board of admissions according to the process established in his diocese. This board will review the pertinent documentation, and members will be designated to interview the candidate. If the admissions board recommends the candidate for entrance into a program of priestly formation, the diocesan bishop designates the seminary of his choice.
- 3) If the seminary is St. Joseph's, the candidate meets with the director of admissions for an in-depth interview once he has received all the requisite documentation pertinent to the candidate from the vocation director, including a report on the psychological evaluation of the candidate.
- 4) During this subsequent phase of the admissions process, the director of admissions may at his discretion discuss any of the candidates with the rector of St. Joseph's seminary; he may also request that the candidate be interviewed by one or two other members of the SJS formation team.
- 5) If, upon recommendation of the director of admissions, the rector accepts the candidate into the formation program, he will notify the candidate in writing.
- 6) No candidate will be accepted for admission to the program of priestly formation without having completed the full admissions process.
- 7) If at any point during the admissions process, a determination is made to suspend the process, or in the event the director of admissions recommends against admitting a candidate, and the rector accepts that recommendation, the rector (or in his stead the director of admissions) will communicate this to the candidate's vocation director. The director of admissions will make himself available to meet with the candidate whose application has been rejected to offer an explanation for the determination.

¹ A parallel process will be followed for seminarians presented by Eparchies, religious congregations or societies of apostolic life, with necessary adaptations, at the discretion of the director of admissions.

2. Required Documentation for Admission

Report from vocation/seminarian director
If applicant attended another seminary consent to Release of Documents
If applicant underwent therapy, authorization to transfer evaluations
Letter of recommendation from college seminary rector
Evaluation from college seminary formation advisor
Summary report of psychological evaluation
If applicant attended another seminary, testimonial letter from rector
Copy of the criminal background check report
Canonical questionnaire/diocesan application
Autobiographical statement
Baptismal certificate
Confirmation certificate
Pastor's letter of recommendation
One additional letter of recommendation
Certificate of completion of Safe Environment (*Virtus*) Training
Consent form for in-depth interview with director of admissions
Consent form for use & retention of psychological evaluation(s)
If applicant has served in the military: copy of Honorable Discharge
High school transcript(s)
College transcript(s)
If applicant is an ESL student, TOEFL score data
Medical report

3. Academic Admission Requirements (for the M.Div. Degree)

Bachelor of Arts degree or its equivalent (120 credits in college level studies).

Prior completion of 30 credits in approved Philosophy courses. These courses should cover the four major periods in Philosophy (i.e. Ancient, Medieval, Modern and Contemporary), as well as Logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics, the Philosophy of Nature, Natural Theology, Anthropology and Ethics.

Prior completion of 12 credits of undergraduate Theology, and 6 credits (or their equivalent) of Latin. Additionally, an overview course in Church History is strongly recommended.

For ESL applicants, successful completion of the TOEFL *iBT* with a score of 80 or higher (90 or better recommended). Applicants scoring lower than 80 can be accepted on condition they take remedial English courses during their first academic year at SJS.

4. General Criteria for the Admission of Candidates

As articulated in the Program for Priestly Formation, “human formation happens in a three-fold process of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-gift” (*PPF*, 80). The admissions process is designed—through multiple instruments of evaluation, screening and assessment— to

allow those involved to arrive at a well-founded judgment as to whether the candidate *has already made sufficient progress in this process*, keeping in mind:

In forming a prudent judgment about the suitability of an applicant for priestly formation, the principle of gradualism should be used ... The principle of gradualism recognizes that it would be unrealistic to expect an applicant for admission to be fully mature in all areas. The principle of gradualism, however, does not deny that a minimal level of development is necessary for admission to any level of priestly formation. The minimal qualities necessary for admission are properly understood as thresholds or foundations (PPF, 35-36).

Thresholds for admission require sufficient growth or development in each of the ‘four dimensions’ of formation identified in *Pastores dabo vobis*. Accordingly, *PPF*, 37 offers some example thresholds or benchmarks to be taken into consideration by those involved in the screening of candidates. Suggested below are further elements which the formation team at SJS considers to be some key indicators.

Indicators of sufficient human formation:

- The candidate is free of any serious psychological pathology, and is known to function competently in ordinary human situations;
- He appears to know himself well, conveys a secure and well-established sense of self, and is capable of being transparent and vulnerable;
- He manifests a capacity for healthy interpersonal relationships;
- The candidate appears psychosexually mature in accordance with his chronological age;
- He is capable of empathy and appears to connect well with others;
- He is willing to embrace celibacy, and possesses at least a rudimentary understanding of its value;
- The candidate indicates convincingly that he is heterosexual in orientation, and that any prior experiences of same-sex attraction have been overcome (see below);
- The candidate is attracted to simplicity of life (vs. monetary profit) as a priest;
- He manifests a spirit of service (vs. an attitude of entitlement);
- The candidate is unambiguously open to and desirous of formation;
- He has a history of self-control and good judgment, observed during pre-theology or college level formation.

Indicators of sufficient spiritual formation:

- The candidate belongs to a parish and is well catechized;
- He prays daily and participates at least weekly in the Sunday Eucharist and regularly in the Sacrament of Penance;
- The candidate possesses a familiarity with Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, and other devotions;
- He has received regular spiritual direction for at least two years;
- The candidate is drawn to explore and deepen his spiritual life and share it with others.

Indicators of sufficient intellectual formation:

- Clear and readily comprehensible speech in English;

- The capacity to read academic texts, write a term paper, and complete written examinations in English
- Demonstrable capacity for critical thinking;
- Ability to understand both abstract and practical questions;
- Ability to communicate effectively in both oral and written form;
- The desire to ‘think with the Church’ in matters of faith and morals.

Indicators of sufficient pastoral formation:

- Respect for the value of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy;
- An disposition that is spontaneously ready and eager to serve others;
- Sensitivity to the needs of others and a desire to respond to them;
- Prior involvement in Church Ministry or community service;
- Experience of a seminary assigned apostolate on the college or pre-theology level;
- Openness to working with youth, the aged, the poor, various ethnic groups;
- An anticipation of entering parish ministry (for diocesan applicants);
- A desire to offer the Mass and other sacraments for the sanctification of the faithful;
- Having a fundamental sense of the Church’s mission and a generous willingness and enthusiasm to promote it;
- Knowledge of how the ordained priesthood contributes to the mission;
- A willingness to initiate action and assume a position of leadership for the good of individuals and communities.

Candidates for admission should manifest the *right intention* in pursuing priesthood as corresponds to the Church’s understanding of this vocation and the motivations that should inspire it. It is expected that candidates possessing a genuine vocation will articulate their understanding of it precisely and spontaneously in terms of a “call” or “invitation” which has arisen in the context of their personal experience of, and relationship with, Jesus Christ.

All involved are to keep in mind that it can be more difficult to ascertain the adequacy of an applicant’s motive in cases international applicants who may articulate their motivations differently.

All men accepted into the program of priestly formation at SJS, even if they do not reside in the seminary, are expected to fully participate in all dimensions of formation foreseen in the PPF.² Throughout the formation process, SJS respects the particular charisms and spirituality of religious communities, and adheres as well to the Code of Canon Law for the Eastern Churches.

² Our program is fully informed by the seminal pontifical document *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, and particularly the Program of Priestly Formation of the USCCB. All seminarian-students, will be engaged in a four-fold program of formation, albeit with the adaptation that some seminarians live in house and others live in community outside of SJS. But it is our expectation that all religious community seminarians will nonetheless be assigned a formation advisor whose role is not merely academic advisement. The role of the formation advisor is understood in our formation program to be the same whether the advisee is diocesan or religious. Monthly dialogues will review a candidate’s progress particularly in human formation in addition to spiritual, pastoral and academic formation. The formation advisor will work closely with the religious seminarian’s own religious superior for a mutual exchange of impressions on the candidate’s progress, and especially to receive from the superior periodic reports on the religious seminarian’s pastoral formation (as his pastoral activity normally occurs outside the seminary). Religious seminarians may be invited (or even required) to attend periodic formation workshops in-house at the discretion of the Rector. Thus, the seminary formators should be—on such an understanding for formation—very active participants in the on-going formation of the religious seminarian.

5. Use of Psychology

In accord with the 2015 *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions*³ published by Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, St. Joseph's Seminary adheres to the following.

- 1) Components of the psychological assessment of candidates
 - Clinical interview
 - Psychosocial and Psychosexual interview
 - Intelligence assessment
 - Written report
 - Recommendations
 - Oral feedback session with applicant if he is accepted into the formation program
- 2) Desired qualities of the clinicians who conduct the evaluations
 - Clinicians who conduct the psychological evaluations for candidates to St. Joseph's Seminary are outside consultants who are not part of the formation team of the seminary (see point 5f below).
 - They should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the Catholic tradition, ecclesiastical culture, seminary life and the formation process.
 - They should evince a deep respect for the Catholic priesthood, and embrace an anthropological understanding of the human person that is consonant with perennial Catholic teaching and the magisterium of the Church.
 - The clinician must be capable of interpreting correctly the results of psychological testing in light of the cultural background, race and ethnicity of the applicant.
 - Finally, the clinician should write up a comprehensive report of the psychological evaluation of the candidate that well reflects the specificities of the individual and avoids recourse to "boiler-plate" language in its elaboration.

3) Privacy and confidentiality

The written psychological assessment report remains confidential and access is restricted to the rector, director of admissions, the seminarian's eventual formation advisor, and staff psychologists/psychiatrists of SJS. Except for the aforementioned individuals, neither faculty nor any other members of the staff have access to the report. The report is coded and stored separately from other student files in a locked cabinet in the office of the rector. Beyond admission to SJS, the assessment report will only be viewed by the aforementioned individuals in the presence of the rector in his office.

4) Use of psychological information in the admissions process and in formation

The psychological assessment, consisting of a battery of tests and a clinical interview, is a requirement for admission to the formation program at SJS. Given the legitimate need of the Church to determine that candidates are capable of managing their

³ Available at: <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/cclv-guidelines-psychology-admissions/#14>

lives in a mature and authentic way, assessment psychologists have the right to ask specific questions about an applicant's psychosocial history (e.g., prior relationships; any history of sexual abuse; sexual orientation, etc.). SJS informs the candidate in advance of this inquiry to assure his informed consent.

The psychological assessment report will be part of the data used in evaluating the candidate's fitness for admission. Further consultation should be held with our consulting clinical psychologist and/or our director of psychological services before accepting any candidates who are questionable or not recommended as a result of that assessment.

5) Retention of records

The actual testing materials are retained by the examining clinician, not by SJS. These materials are not shared with any seminary personnel, and they are only shared with the candidate at the discretion of the examining psychiatrist/psychologist. The signed consent form for the psychological assessment is collected by the director of psychological services of SJS.

This written psychological assessment report remains the property of SJS and is not surrendered to the individual applicant/candidate. It is retained for four years after admission (even if the seminarian resigns from the program or is dismissed) and is destroyed at the end of the four-year term (or five-year term in the case of a seminarian who completes a supervised pastoral year), or, as is normally the case, shortly after the seminarian's priestly ordination.

Copies of the report are not released to persons outside the formation program without the individual's written release, and then only to licensed/certified mental health specialists and within restricted guidelines.

If an individual *is not accepted* to the program, the report is immediately destroyed.

6) The Director of Psychological Services of St. Joseph's Seminary

The director of psychological services of St. Joseph's Seminary may serve as an adjunct member of the teaching faculty, but is not himself a member of the formation team, since his relationship with the seminarians is bound by a commitment to professional confidentiality that is entirely distinct from the formators' prudent yet open communication with each other of matters relevant to seminarians that is known in the *external forum*. Engaged in counseling services with any number of the seminarians, the director is understood to be an outside consultant in accord with the stipulations of the *Guidelines* (see point 5b above).

As such, he has purview over, and access to (with the informed consent of the candidates), the evaluations of candidates received as part of the admissions process. His opinion with regard to these evaluations can be elicited at any point during the admissions process. The director will take on the responsibility, in the context of a private consultation, of giving each seminarian newly accepted into the program useful feedback from the individual's written evaluation report that can in turn serve as initial indicators of personality strengths, as well as of those areas of human formation that will require attention and growth.

6. Applicants who experience same-sex attraction

1) St. Joseph's Seminary follows the Program of Priestly Formation where it states: "With regard to the admission of candidates with same-sex experiences and/or inclinations, the guidelines provided by the Holy See must be followed" (PPF, 56). That paragraph refers to the guidelines provided by the Holy See in the November 4, 2005 instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education: *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders* (hereafter *2005 Instruction*).

Particularly pertinent for the admissions process at SJS are the following passages from that Instruction:

[T]he Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or who support the so-called 'gay culture'.

Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem - for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nevertheless, such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate.⁴

The new *Ratio Fundamentalis* reaffirms this same criterion.⁵

2) The formation team of St. Joseph's Seminary understands the expression "clearly overcome" to mean that, in the candidate's everyday life, erotic attraction to males does not come to occupy the mind or exercise any substantial influence over the candidate, or linger in his subjective awareness. In a word, same-sex attraction is not a matter of any real notice (other than possibly an infrequent and passing reaction).

3) For this determination, the director of admissions relies heavily on the judgment of the clinician conducting the candidate's psychological evaluation and, where necessary, the subsequent confirmation of this judgment by SJS psychological services.

4) Since admission to the major seminary would normally indicate the entrance into Holy Orders within three years of admission (i.e. after the completion of III Theology), adherence to the minimum standard set by the Holy See requires that all same-sex attraction must have been overcome before an applicant can be accepted into major seminary. Even if a pastoral year is anticipated for an applicant, thus extending the time before entering Holy Orders, the applicant must meet the same standard as those whose ordination is anticipated within three years of admission. It is better for the candidate and for the seminary community as a whole that such inclinations are overcome before entrance into the theologate.

⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education: *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*. (November 4, 2005), Section 2.

⁵ Cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 199. Additionally, Pope Francis reaffirmed this same criterion on May 21, 2018 when he addressed a gathering of the Italian episcopal conference (CEI): "If you have even the slightest doubt [regarding the candidate's degree of SSA], it's better not to let them enter." The remark made at a close-door session of the CEI was widely reported in the Catholic and secular press.

5) The formation team of St. Joseph's Seminary understands the expression "deep-seated" to mean at least a predominant and generally unwavering same-sex attraction. In the *2005 Instruction*, "deep-seated" tendency is contrasted with "transitory" tendency. Hence, the logical structure of this section suggests that "deep-seated" be taken to mean a persistent, lingering and enduring (if not necessarily permanent) feature of the man's subjective experience.

6) A candidate who presents with SSA (or a man already in formation who manifests his SSA to the formation team) will be required to delay seeking admission to the formation program (or to pause formation already commenced). The director of admissions or the rector himself will endeavor, with prudence and charity, to engage in dialogue with both the candidate and his vocation director, and potentially the candidate's Ordinary, in order to assure that the bishop understands on what grounds we are unable to accept the candidate (and under what conditions we would reconsider him for the formation program), and to encourage the diocese to direct the candidate toward appropriate counseling in order to explore the causes, nature and extent of the SSA.

7) In the event the candidate, after a period of therapy, wishes to reapply for admission, the rector and director of admissions will rely on the professional judgment of his therapist to indicate whether the candidate's SSA was of a transient nature or if it continues to manifest itself as a more stable tendency. In the latter case, the candidate will not be allowed to reapply. In the former case, depending upon the candidate's overall affective maturity, progress in healing from emotional wounds, and other relevant indicators of the presence or absence of a vocation to the priesthood, the candidate will either be allowed to reapply for admission to commence or continue in the formation program, or he will be directed charitably and fraternally to discern new avenues for serving Christ and his Church in the lay state.

7. Special Circumstances

Applicants lacking previous seminary preparation

If a person has no previous preparation in a formation program, then the pre-theology program should extend over a two-year calendar period. Pre-theology programs are designed to address all four pillars of formation, not simply to meet academic requirements (PPF, 60).

Applicants for whom English is not their first language

Applicants must have an adequate command of the English language to begin intellectual formation in a seminary in which English is the language of instruction (PPF, 49).

All applicants to St. Joseph's Seminary must give evidence of having successfully completed (with passing grades) at least two regular undergraduate level (non ESL) courses in English before beginning theology studies. Enrollment at SJS should not constitute the applicant's first experience of regular English language class work.

Older Candidates

Ordinarily candidates over forty-five years of age should not be considered (i.e. forty-five years old upon admission to I Theology). Where there has been a strong record of successful Church ministry, special consideration may be given. References may be required from previous employers.

Candidates of advanced age and experience in ministry, e.g., former religious brothers or permanent deacons, may be considered for a shortened period of formation at the end of First Theology should their academic achievement and general progress permit. Such concessions should be made on an individual basis by the Rector after consultation with the Academic Dean and the full resident priest faculty.

Candidates who have shown a history of numerous employment changes will be asked to explain the reasons for the apparent instability.

Prior bond

Applicants who have fathered children out of wedlock are disqualified from consideration.

Candidates who have received a declaration of nullity from an ecclesiastic tribunal regarding a prior bond of marriage may be considered as candidates provided they do not have children. Acceptance of such a candidate for the priesthood, in fact, will be very rare. Permission should be sought from such men to receive a report from the Tribunal issuing the annulment. A married man whose marriage took place in the Archdiocese of New York or who lived in the metropolitan New York area as a married man will not usually be accepted as a candidate.

Boundary violations

Applicants who have been the object of credible and grave allegations of boundary violations, whether with children or adults, and/or those who report having experienced sexual attraction to minors are disqualified from consideration.

Recent Converts

Candidates who have been recently converted to the Catholic Faith will not be considered for admission to St. Joseph's Seminary prior to completion of the fourth year of Catholic living post-conversion. The director of admissions will look for evidence that, during this period, the candidate has lived a deep commitment to the faith through fidelity to Catholic practice, apostolic activity and appreciation of Catholic culture.

Prior criminal record

Those with criminal records (including men who have previously been imprisoned) may be accepted only if it can reasonably be foreseen that there will be no serious embarrassment or harm to them, the Church or others, and that their psychological profile is satisfactory.

Psychiatric therapy

Candidates in need of, or presently engaged in, psychological or psychiatric therapy in order to be fully functioning will not be accepted into the program until they have come to a successful completion of this process. Evidence of this must be provided in the form of a written report from the therapist. *Therapy* is to be distinguished in this context from the *counseling* which is normally part of seminary formation and may be required at the time of admission or sought at some later date at the recommendation of the Rector and/or Director of Psychological Services. Those previously admitted to a psychiatric facility for treatment or those under a regimen of medication require a very careful evaluation which, in most instances, will necessitate a recent written report from a board certified psychiatrist.

Medication

Candidates who require medication (such as antidepressants) in order to be fully functioning can be accepted into the program upon recommendation of the director of psychological services. Upon initiating the program of formation at SJS, they will be required to share precise information about their medical condition and prescribed medications with their external forum formation advisors.

Candidates reapplying for Admission

Candidates who were dismissed from SJS (or any other seminary formation program) must wait two full calendar years before applying to another major seminary or reapplying for admission to SJS. Only in rare instances will the director of admissions allow these individuals to commence anew the admissions process. Candidates returning from a formal leave of absence may or may not be required to comply with parts or the entirety of the admissions process.

In either case, it may be prudent to require the candidate to be interviewed by director of psychological services who can then either recommend that the candidate undergo a complete, new psychological evaluation, or can provide the director of admissions (with the informed consent of the candidate) with an updated report which includes an evaluation of the candidate's experiences since his last test.

Applicants with Physical Disabilities or Severe Health Issues

With the informed consent of the candidate, a written assessment of the disability should be obtained from appropriate licensed or certified specialists before granting admission. There should also be a letter from the corresponding diocese or religious community stating that the disability does not bar ordination to the priesthood.

The following concerns need to be addressed: Can the applicant not only meet his personal needs but also serve the Church effectively? Are there sufficient possible placements with adequate physical arrangements in rectories of the diocese? Will clergy be willing to receive a handicapped priest who can only offer limited assistance?

Extreme caution should be exercised (e.g., a written report from a board certified specialist) with candidates who suffer from unusual health problems such as epilepsy, degenerative muscular or nervous diseases, etc. When necessary, the director of admissions should request an independent medical diagnosis.

Special consideration must be given to the maturity and self-acceptance of the disabled applicant. There should be serious concern for applicants whose handicaps are progressively degenerative. The ability of a candidate to support and care for himself should be considered. Locomotion in the seminary building is also a factor in admission, as is the anticipated impact upon the morale of the seminary community.

Prior History of Substance Abuse or Alcoholism

Extreme care should be exercised where substance abuse once prevailed. There should be at least a successful two-year recovery period after primary treatment has been effectively received. Appropriate verification will be necessary. Such verification would include testing for diseases attendant to substance abuse.

Further psychic and physical difficulties a person may face because of previous use or dependence should be considered.

With regard to those who suffer from alcoholism, as well as from celiac disease (or the inability to consume wheat), the July 24, 2003 letter of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith differs in some respects from the 1994 statement of the same congregation. While the 1994 norm states that “candidates for the priesthood who are affected by celiac disease or suffer from alcoholism or similar conditions may not be admitted to holy orders,”⁶ the pertinent text of the 2003 letter states: “given the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of a priest, one must proceed with great caution before admitting to Holy Orders those candidates unable to ingest gluten or alcohol without serious harm.”⁷

8. Candidates transferring from another major seminary or program of formation

If applicants have been in a seminary or formation program previously, dioceses, religious institutes or societies, and seminaries must consult all previous institutions about the past record of these applicants as prescribed in the Norms Concerning Applications for Priestly Formation from Those Previously Enrolled in a Formation Program. If such records indicate difficulties, before admitting the applicant, the seminary should proceed cautiously and ascertain whether the problems have been resolved and sufficient positive growth has taken place (PPF, 61).

It is essential that the *Norms Concerning Applications for Priestly Formation from Those Previously Enrolled in a Formation Program* be followed. The norms indicate, among other things:

- Following dismissal from another program or community, two years must elapse before a candidate’s application can be considered (Norm #2);

⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Letter to all Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences concerning the use of low-gluten altar breads and mustum as matter for the celebration of the Eucharist. (June 19, 1995). Available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19950619_pane-senza-glutine_en.html

⁷ Available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030724_pane-senza-glutine_en.html

- The applicant must sign a release (Norm #4);
- All seminaries attended and dioceses and/or communities with which the applicant has been affiliated must be contacted (Norm #5).

The candidate's current vocation director shall be responsible for obtaining all required documentation.

A response must be obtained from the current administration of the seminary or seminaries that an applicant has attended. Experience has demonstrated that letters from former seminary administrators, bishops, vicars general, etc. while having their own value, cannot substitute for a communication from the current seminary administrators.

It cannot be presumed that these procedures were followed when an applicant was accepted into a pre-theology program or into another theologate. If such letters have already been obtained in connection with the applicant's entrance into a pre-theology program, the director of admissions has discretion to accept those letters as fulfilling the requirement. He must have copies of the documentation at the beginning of the admission process; it is not enough to have a verbal assurance that such letters exist. If the applicant has been in several seminaries, statements from the seminary administration of each seminary must be present. It is not enough to have documentation only from the most recent seminary, even if it offers a narrative of the reasons for a departure from a previous formation program.

The letters from former seminaries should be reviewed carefully to determine if the candidate was dismissed, and if so, the grounds for the dismissal. If this is not clear, then further follow up is necessary.

No in-depth admissions interviews will be scheduled for an applicant until communication from current seminary administrators is obtained. The applicant should be given notice at the beginning of the application process that such letters are required.

In the great majority of cases, it is best to "trust the formators". If a man has been dismissed from or refused advancement within in a formation program (as opposed to simply being turned down when making an application), it is very likely that he is unsuitable for the formation program at St. Joseph's Seminary.