

CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY NETWORK

Accreditation Handbook

A Guide for Applicants

"Promoting Excellence in Soul Care Ministries"

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CONTENTS

1. Welcome to CSN Accreditation
 2. Why Accreditation Matters
 3. Accreditation Streams
 4. Eligibility Requirements
 5. The Application Process
 6. Your Reflective Statement
 7. The Accreditation Interview
 8. How Applications Are Assessed
 9. Decision Outcomes
 10. Appeals
 11. Maintaining Your Accreditation
 12. Re-Accreditation
 13. Frequently Asked Questions
 14. Policies
- Appendix: Application Checklist

1. WELCOME TO CSN ACCREDITATION

Thank you for considering accreditation with the Carmelite Spirituality Network. This handbook will guide you through the process, explain what we're looking for, and help you prepare your application.

CSN accreditation is a mark of quality that tells the world you have been thoroughly formed, are committed to ethical practice, and belong to a community of practitioners rooted in the 800-year Carmelite tradition.

We want this process to be rigorous but supportive. If you have questions at any stage, please contact our Accreditation Coordinator:

Email: accreditation@csn.org.uk

What CSN Accreditation Means

When you become CSN-accredited, you:

- Join a community of practitioners committed to excellence in soul care
- Are listed in our public Directory, connecting you with those seeking accompaniment
- Commit to the CSN Covenant and Code of Ethics
- Access ongoing formation through Enriching Ministry Days, retreats, and resources
- Receive peer support and accountability
- Carry a credential rooted in the trusted Carmelite tradition

2. WHY ACCREDITATION MATTERS

Spiritual direction and ministry companionship are sacred ministries. Those who seek accompaniment are often in vulnerable places — wrestling with prayer, discerning vocation, processing grief, or navigating the dark night. They deserve guides who are properly formed, ethically grounded, and accountable.

Protection

Accreditation protects those seeking ministry. It assures them that you have completed substantial formation, that you adhere to a code of ethics, and that you are accountable to a professional body.

Credibility

Accreditation demonstrates your commitment to excellence. It tells clergy, parishes, retreat centres, and individuals that you have been vetted and can be trusted.

Community

Accreditation connects you to a network of peers. You are not practising in isolation but belong to a community that supports, challenges, and accompanies you.

Growth

Accreditation requires ongoing development. Through CPD, ministry accompaniment, and re-accreditation, you commit to lifelong growth in competence and holiness.

3. ACCREDITATION STREAMS

CSN offers accreditation in two distinct streams:

3.1 Spiritual Accompaniment

For: Spiritual directors, retreat facilitators, prayer guides

This stream is for those who accompany individuals or groups in their spiritual lives — helping them attend to God's presence, grow in prayer, and respond to their vocational call.

Ministry includes:

- One-to-one spiritual direction
- Group spiritual direction
- Retreat facilitation
- Prayer guidance and discernment accompaniment

3.2 Ministry Companionship

For: Pastoral supervisors, ministry mentors, reflective practice facilitators

This stream is for those who support others in ministry — providing a reflective space for processing challenges and joys, ensuring accountability, and promoting sustainable practice.

Ministry includes:

- Individual accompaniment of clergy, lay ministers, chaplains
- Group ministry accompaniment
- Reflective practice facilitation
- Ministry review and development

3.3 Dual Accreditation

You may apply for accreditation in both streams if you meet the requirements for each. The applications are assessed separately.

4. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Spiritual Accompaniment

Requirement	Minimum Standard
Formation	Recognised programme of at least 300 contact hours, or equivalent
Supervised Practice	At least 100 hours during or after formation
Current Practice	Actively offering spiritual direction (minimum 3 directees)
Ongoing Ministry Accompaniment	Currently receiving ministry accompaniment (minimum monthly)
Personal Direction	Currently receiving your own spiritual direction
References	Two references (ministry companion + formation provider or peer)
Safeguarding	Current DBS/police check and safeguarding training (within 3 years)
Ethics	Signed commitment to CSN Covenant and Code of Ethics

4.2 Ministry Companionship

Requirement	Minimum Standard
Formation	Recognised programme of at least 150 contact hours, or equivalent
Ministry Experience	At least 5 years in pastoral, chaplaincy, or religious leadership
Supervised Practice	At least 50 hours of supervised ministry companionship practice
Current Practice	Actively offering ministry companionship (minimum 2 companions)
Ministry Accompaniment	Currently receiving ministry accompaniment (minimum bi-monthly)
References	Two references (ministry companion + ministry context or peer)
Safeguarding	Current DBS/police check and safeguarding training (within 3 years)
Ethics	Signed commitment to CSN Covenant and Code of Ethics

4.3 Recognised Formation Programmes

CSN recognises programmes that meet our standards. Currently recognised:

- **Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality (CACs)** — Spiritual Direction Programme

If your programme is not listed, you may still apply. Provide full documentation and the Panel will assess equivalence.

5. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The process typically takes 8-12 weeks from submission to decision.

Step 1: Initial Enquiry

Contact the Accreditation Coordinator to discuss your eligibility and receive the application pack.

Email: accreditation@csn.org.uk

Step 2: Prepare Your Application

Gather the following:

1. Completed Application Form
2. Curriculum Vitae or Ministry History
3. Formation Documentation (certificates, transcripts)
4. Reflective Statement (1,500-2,000 words or equivalent) — see Section 6
5. Ministry Companion's Report (using CSN template)
6. Two References (using CSN template)
7. Evidence of DBS check, police check, or equivalent background check
8. Evidence of safeguarding training
9. Signed Covenant and Code of Ethics
10. Membership fee: £150 (payable in full or by instalment by arrangement with the Accreditation Coordinator)

Step 3: Submit Your Application

Submit everything by email to accreditation@csn.org.uk or via our online portal.

Step 4: Administrative Review

The Accreditation Coordinator will check your application is complete. If anything is missing, you'll be contacted within 10 working days.

Step 5: Panel Review

Two Panel members will independently review your documentation and score your application against our criteria.

Step 6: Interview

You will be invited to a 30-45 minute interview via Zoom with a Panel member. This is a conversation, not an interrogation — see Section 7 for what to expect.

Step 7: Panel Decision

The full Panel reviews documentation, interview recording, and scores, then makes a decision. You will be notified in writing within 10 working days.

6. YOUR REFLECTIVE STATEMENT

The Reflective Statement is your opportunity to tell us who you are as a practitioner. In 1,500-2,000 words (or equivalent), address the following:

6.1 Presentation Format

While we typically receive written reflective statements, we welcome alternative formats that may better suit your gifts and circumstances. You may submit your reflection as:

- **Written statement** — 1,500-2,000 words
- **Video presentation** — 10-15 minutes
- **PowerPoint or slide presentation** — with accompanying audio or notes
- **Other creative format** — please discuss with the Accreditation Coordinator first

Whatever format you choose, please ensure you address all the prompts below.

6.2 Your Formation Journey

How has your formation shaped you? What programmes, experiences, and people have been influential? How did you discern this calling?

6.3 Your Approach to Practice

How do you understand your role as a spiritual director or ministry companion? What is your theological and practical approach? How do you typically work with those you accompany?

6.4 Engagement with Carmelite Spirituality

How does the Carmelite tradition inform your practice? If you come from another tradition, how do you engage with Carmelite spirituality? What Carmelite insights shape your ministry?

6.5 Accountability and Growth

How do you ensure accountability in your practice? Describe your ministry accompaniment arrangements. What are your current areas for development? How do you care for your own spiritual life?

6.6 The CSN Covenant

Choose one or two covenant principles (Spiritual Integrity, Human Flourishing, Dignity of Persons, Spiritual Friendship, Spiritual Charism, Accountability, Ministerial Competence) and reflect on how they shape your ministry.

Tips for Preparing

- Be authentic — we want to hear your voice, not textbook answers
- Be specific — use examples from your practice (anonymised)
- Be reflective — show us you think critically about your ministry
- Be honest — acknowledge areas for growth as well as strengths

7. THE ACCREDITATION INTERVIEW

Every applicant is interviewed. This is an essential part of our process — spiritual direction is relational, and we need to meet you, not just read about you.

7.1 Format

- **Duration:** 30-45 minutes
- **Method:** Video call (Zoom)
- **Interviewer:** One Panel member
- **Recording:** The interview is recorded and shared with other Panel members for review

7.2 What to Expect

The interview is a professional conversation, not an interrogation. We want to:

- Get to know you as a person and practitioner
- Explore themes from your Reflective Statement
- Understand how you think about your ministry
- Clarify any questions from your documentation
- Assess your alignment with CSN values

7.3 Sample Questions

You might be asked questions like:

- *"Tell us about your journey into spiritual direction."*
- *"Describe a session that was particularly challenging. How did you handle it?"*
- *"How do you discern when someone might benefit from psychological or emotional support rather than spiritual direction?"*
- *"What does the Carmelite tradition offer your practice?"*
- *"What do you typically bring to ministry accompaniment?"*
- *"How do you care for your own spiritual life?"*
- *"What would you do if a directee disclosed a safeguarding concern?"*

7.4 Preparation

Before your interview:

- Re-read your Reflective Statement
- Think about examples from your practice (anonymised)
- Review the CSN Covenant and Code of Ethics
- Prepare questions you'd like to ask us
- Test your technology and find a quiet space

7.5 After the Interview

The recording is shared with other Panel members, who add their observations and scores. The full Panel then meets to make a decision. You will hear the outcome within 2-3 weeks of your interview.

8. HOW APPLICATIONS ARE ASSESSED

Applications are assessed against the CSN Core Competencies (see Section 14) and the following criteria:

Formation & Training

- Has the applicant completed substantial, recognised formation?
- Does the formation include theological, psychological, and practical elements?
- Has the applicant engaged in supervised practice?

Competence & Practice

- Does the applicant demonstrate understanding of the spiritual direction relationship?
- Can they articulate their approach and its theological grounding?
- Is there evidence of reflective practice and self-awareness?
- Do references and ministry companion affirm competence?

Accountability & Ethics

- Is the applicant in appropriate ministry accompaniment?
- Do they understand boundaries and ethical practice?
- Is there evidence of safeguarding awareness?
- Do they embrace the CSN Covenant?

Carmelite Engagement

- Does the applicant show meaningful engagement with Carmelite spirituality?
- Can they articulate how this tradition shapes their practice?

Note: We welcome practitioners from other traditions who are drawn to Carmelite spirituality. Deep existing knowledge is not required, but openness and genuine interest are.

Interview Presentation

- Does the applicant communicate clearly and reflectively?
- Do they demonstrate the relational qualities needed for this ministry?
- Are they aligned with CSN values and culture?

9. DECISION OUTCOMES

After the Panel meets, you will receive one of three outcomes:

Accredited

Congratulations! You will receive:

- A formal letter confirming accreditation
- Your CSN certificate
- Listing in the public Directory
- Membership of CSN as an Accredited Member
- Access to member benefits (events, resources, community)

Deferred

Your application shows promise but doesn't yet meet all requirements. You will receive:

- A letter explaining what is needed
- Specific conditions to fulfil (e.g., additional ministry accompaniment hours, further formation)
- A timeframe for re-submission (typically 6-12 months)
- Support from the Accreditation Coordinator

Deferral is not rejection — it's an invitation to continue your journey toward accreditation.

Not Accredited

Your application does not currently meet CSN standards. You will receive:

- A letter explaining the reasons
- Guidance on what would need to change before re-applying
- Information about the appeals process

You may re-apply after 12 months if circumstances have changed significantly.

10. APPEALS

If you believe the decision was unfair or that the process was not followed correctly, you may appeal.

Grounds for Appeal

Appeals may be made on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularity (the process was not followed correctly)
- New evidence (significant information not available at the time of application)
- Bias or conflict of interest (a Panel member should have recused themselves)

Note: Disagreement with the Panel's professional judgement is not grounds for appeal.

Process

11. Submit your appeal in writing to the President within 21 days of the decision
12. State clearly the grounds for appeal and provide supporting evidence
13. An Appeals Panel (two trustees not involved in the original decision) will review
14. You may be invited to make representations
15. The Appeals Panel decision is final

Contact

Appeals to: president@csn.org.uk

11. MAINTAINING YOUR ACCREDITATION

CSN accreditation is valid for three years. During this time, you must:

Continuing Professional Development

- Complete at least 20 hours of CPD annually
- This may include: CSN Enriching Ministry Days, retreats, conferences, reading, peer groups, training
- Log your CPD and be prepared to provide evidence at re-accreditation

Ongoing Ministry Accompaniment

- Maintain regular ministry accompaniment (monthly for spiritual directors, bi-monthly for ministry companions)
- Your ministry companion need not be CSN-accredited but should be appropriately qualified

Personal Spiritual Direction

- Continue receiving your own spiritual direction

Safeguarding

- Keep your DBS/police check current
- Complete refresher safeguarding training as required

Membership

- Remain a member in good standing
- Pay your annual membership fee
- Abide by the Covenant and Code of Ethics

Notify Changes

Inform CSN if:

- Your contact details change
- Your ministry accompaniment arrangements change
- You face any complaint or concern related to your practice
- You are subject to any disciplinary process elsewhere

12. RE-ACCREDITATION

Accreditation must be renewed every three years.

Process

Six months before your accreditation expires, you will be invited to apply for re-accreditation. This involves:

16. Completed Re-Accreditation Form
17. Updated Ministry Companion's Report
18. CPD Log for the past three years
19. Brief Reflective Update (500 words) on your development
20. Re-accreditation fee: £50 (payable in full or by instalment)

Assessment

Re-accreditation is normally granted if you have:

- Maintained ministry accompaniment and CPD requirements
- Remained in good standing with no upheld complaints
- Continued active practice

An interview is not normally required for re-accreditation unless concerns are identified.

Lapsed Accreditation

If your accreditation lapses (you don't re-apply within 6 months of expiry), you must apply again as a new applicant, including interview.

13. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long does the process take?

Typically 8-12 weeks from submission to decision, depending on Panel meeting schedules.

What if my formation programme isn't on your recognised list?

You may still apply. Provide full documentation and the Panel will assess whether it meets our standards.

I trained many years ago. Is my formation still valid?

Yes, provided you have remained in practice with ongoing ministry accompaniment and CPD. Your Reflective Statement should address how you've continued to develop.

Do I need to be Catholic?

No. CSN welcomes practitioners from all Christian traditions who are drawn to Carmelite spirituality and can commit to our Covenant.

What if I can't afford the fee?

Contact the Accreditation Coordinator in confidence. We can discuss fee waivers or payment by instalment.

Can I submit my Reflective Statement as a video?

Yes. We welcome alternative formats including video presentations (10-15 minutes), PowerPoint with audio/notes, or other creative formats. Please ensure you address all the required prompts.

I'm based outside the UK. What about background checks?

Applicants outside the UK should provide a police certificate or equivalent background check from their country of residence. US applicants can use Selection.com. See our DBS Policy for details.

Is the interview recorded?

Yes. The recording is shared with Panel members for review and is stored securely. It is not published or shared beyond the Panel.

What happens if I have difficulty in the interview?

The interview is one part of the assessment. A difficult interview doesn't automatically mean rejection — the Panel considers the whole application. If there are concerns, you may be offered deferral with support.

How long does accreditation last?

Three years, after which you must apply for re-accreditation.

Can my accreditation be revoked?

Yes, if you breach the Code of Ethics, fail to maintain requirements, or bring CSN into disrepute. There is a formal process with opportunity to respond.

14. POLICIES

CSN operates under a comprehensive set of policies that govern our work and ensure the safety and wellbeing of all those involved in spiritual accompaniment and ministry companionship. As an accredited member, you are expected to familiarise yourself with these policies and to abide by them.

All policies are available on the CSN website and in the member area. Key policies include:

Foundational Documents

- **CSN Covenant** — The seven principles that guide our community and practice
- **CSN Code of Ethics** — The ethical commitments all accredited practitioners make
- **CSN Core Competencies** — The knowledge, skills, and attributes expected of practitioners

Safeguarding & Recruitment

- **CSN Safeguarding Policy Statement** — Our commitment to the protection of all
- **CSN DBS Policy** — Requirements for background checks (UK, US, and international)
- **CSN Safer Recruitment Policy** — How we recruit staff and accredit practitioners safely
- **CSN Equal Opportunities Policy** — Our commitment to fairness and non-discrimination

Data & Privacy

- **CSN Privacy Policy** — How we collect, use, and protect personal data
- **CSN Cookie Policy** — How we use cookies on our website

Directory & Practice

- **CSN Directory Integrity Policy** — Standards for authentic representation and accountability

By signing the Covenant and Code of Ethics as part of your application, you confirm that you have read and understood these policies and agree to abide by them.

APPENDIX: APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Before submitting, ensure you have:

- Completed Application Form
- Curriculum Vitae / Ministry History
- Formation certificates and transcripts
- Reflective Statement (1,500-2,000 words, or video/PowerPoint equivalent)
- Ministry Companion's Report (CSN template)
- Reference 1 (CSN template)
- Reference 2 (CSN template)
- Copy of DBS certificate / police check / letter of endorsement
- Evidence of safeguarding training (within past 3 years)
- Signed Covenant and Code of Ethics commitment
- Membership fee: £150 (in full or by instalment)

Submit to: accreditation@csn.org.uk

— END OF HANDBOOK —