



Franciscan University's Catechetical Institute

www.FranciscanAtHome.com

A new and rapidly growing collection of excellent Catholic ministry workshops that offers unrivaled formation to those engaged in forming others...

Generously Affordable

A parish or school's annual subscription gives unlimited access to all the individuals who sign up under their parish or school at no additional cost to them.

Completely Accessible

Any and all teachers, catechists, RCIA teams, parish leaders, and parents will have unlimited access to these unique online workshops in the comfort of their own homes or in a group setting.

Deeply Diverse

Hundreds of workshops in all ministry fields are being developed for this platform, to allow a diocese to thoroughly train and spiritually nurture any person involved in passing on the faith.

Super Flexible

Dioceses, parishes, and schools can use this vast collection of formation workshops in many ways:

- ✓ As part of a ministry certification process
- ✓ As ongoing formation or continuing education
- ✓ As enrichment for any role of passing on the faith to others, especially volunteers
- ✓ As a substantive and engaging means to help parents grow in their vocation
- ✓ As in-depth content for group discussions
- ✓ As a means to develop parish evangelization, social outreach, and RCIA teams

By the numbers . . .

Over **70** dioceses are partnered with us,
growing by **2** new partners per month.

The Institute is just **3** years old and
already **150+** dioceses from **27**
nations have reached out to us for help,
including **70%** of U.S. dioceses,

over **1500** parishes and schools,
and over **10,000** people in
ministry learning from our
workshops and being mentored
by **1000+** mentors.

FRANCISCAN AT HOME

Online learning at your convenience



What people are saying...

Franciscan University has been on the vanguard of forming generations of priests, religious and lay faithful in service to the Church and world. It has provided passionate and robust intellectual formation for the People of God for many decades now. Franciscan University has, and continues to be, a gift to the Church. Thus, I wish to affirm my support of the Catechetical Institute and assure those who are interested in taking advantages of this online resource that I fully endorse this catechetical effort.

– Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted, Diocese of Phoenix, AZ



This was my first time entering an online course/workshop and it surpassed my expectations. I expected it to be a lot more demanding and over the top too difficult for me to understand but it wasn't so. Thank you for making it accessible to me.

– Virginia R., Holy Spirit Parish, Diocese of Oakland, CA



I love taking online courses because I can do it at my own pace, in a quiet room and at my convenient time. Also, for us parents that work, go to school and have children, workshops online is what I can handle at this time. Thank you!

– Hilda B., Saint Isidore Parish, Diocese of Sacramento, CA



I am not only working through the workshops I am loving the workshops! I have learned so much and been so inspired by what I have learned so far. I'm looking forward to the elective courses that are possible. Thank you for finding this program and making it possible at such a small charge for the parishes. I am most grateful.

– Gwen C., Sacred Heart Parish, Diocese of Venice, FL



I came home and started a workshop that I couldn't fault! Part of my job is to pick out the problems in software (bugs, bad user experience, etc.) and I can be very critical! But there was nothing I could honestly fault. It is a brilliant online learning environment. The one thing I did believe I would disagree with is "a personal encounter" with the mentors and presenters. I have never seen that implemented successfully in my seven years in software. However, I feel it has been done very successfully here. I've gotten to know you more through your sharing of experiences, struggles and your testimony. You shared in an honest, humble and trusting way in the workshops.

– Julianne C., Youth 2000 Leader, Ireland

**How
Can
We
Serve
You?**

We are very hopeful of such a collaboration in light of the excellent online support a formation for leaders engaged in a variety of ministries currently provided by the Catechetical Institute. Our diocesan formation staff and I envision this partnership as having great potential to supplement and enhance the ongoing leadership formation efforts in our geographically large diocese. We especially appreciate your emphasis on building in a mentoring process for catechists and other parish leaders who seek to grow in their faith and serve their communities.

– Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger, Diocese of Tucson, AZ

Actually, the overall experience EXCEEDED my expectations. I can't wait for the next workshop!

– Susan J., St. Joseph Parish, Diocese of Venice, FL

Our plan to grow...

We currently have 20 ministry tracks being designed, with over hundreds formation workshops in total to be filmed, and over 300 filmed thus far. The post-production on those workshops involves much time and care to make them *beautifully engaging and effective formation tools*.

Tracks in development...

1. Catechist Track
2. Four Pillar of the Catechism Track
3. Youth Ministry Track
4. RCIA Track
5. Parish Catechetical Leader Track
6. Catholic Schools Track
7. Hispanic Faith & Family Track
8. Ministry of Parenting Track
9. Pastoral Accompaniment Track
10. Young Adults Track
11. First Proclamation Track
12. African-Amer. Faith & Family Track
13. Special Needs Track
14. Culture of Life Track
15. Diocesan Officials Track
16. Priestly Renewal Track
17. Sports Ministry Track
18. Music Ministry Track
19. Collegial Outreach Track
20. Franciscan Spirituality Track

Your role is critical...

Front lines. Mentoring will enable you to much more effectively serve souls and focus your ministry more on *building people* rather than just running programs. How to get started?

Warmly Introduce Yourself

In your first email to a learner introduce yourself directly, warmly and simply, avoiding stiffness or over-formality. Ask yourself: What can I do to be genuinely approachable to this person?

Ask Good Questions

Open-ended questions are best for getting to know others because they enable creative, self-revealing responses. What do you hope to gain from the Catechetical Institute workshops? Ask yourself: What can I do to discover what this person most needs and what I can do to help?

Respond with Empathy

Being empathic does not signal agreement (that is being sympathetic) but that you closely consider where the learner is coming from, what their perspective is. Ask yourself: How can I aim to create a warm relational space and trust with this person?

Manage Yourself

Any encounter with another person is an opportunity to help them achieve their ultimate end in Christ or instead to somehow impede them from reaching this destiny. Ask yourself: Am I aware of my own need to grow in how I communicate and listen? Do I have a tendency to be curt? Do I tend to gloss over problems? Am I responding to the person, or to a problem?



How to successfully, fruitfully mentor others



*Half of holiness is
choosing the right
companions.*

~ St. John Bosco

All conversion is local...

Formation in the faith is always first and foremost God's attentive presence to the *individual*. From this principle arises the vital importance of mentorship, and for that guidance to be proximal and personal: a mentoring accompaniment.

The overarching priority of the Catechetical Institute is to commit the effort necessary to form those who form others, rather than replace them with distant experts or high production value video and audio resources. Evangelization and catechesis can thus remain appropriately situated with those who can be in authentic ministerial relationships in the field. To accomplish this, all the online workshops designed by CI critically rely upon mentorship. By doing this, we seek to encourage dioceses in the direction of mentored formation and person-to-person engagement.

While this means greater time committed by both learners and mentors, there are clear advantages: for learners, that they become better ministers, with better results than less-attentive formation methods could ever achieve, and that they are enabled to take more creative ownership of their call to serve and form souls. For mentors and diocesan officials, these workshops help them to grow substantially in their own formation skills and ministerial competence, to discover an effective mechanism for accountability and excellence, and to find themselves ever more deeply in relationships with those they are called to lead and form.

**Here are some workshops on
FranciscanAtHome.com
that will greatly help you...**

We encourage you to take these great workshops to grow in your pastoral accompaniment skills:

- ◆ The Vocation of the Catechist
- ◆ Catechetical Mentorship
- ◆ Being Guided & Guiding Souls
- ◆ Personal Vocation and the Mentoring Relationship
- ◆ Building the Mentoring Relationship: Asking Good Questions
- ◆ Building the Mentoring Relationship: Empathic Listening
- ◆ Mentoring in Ministry

Got questions?

Here's some of the most common questions we're asked by mentors:

- ◆ What is the difference between teaching and mentoring?
- ◆ How often should I reach out to a learner?
- ◆ How should I handle tough ministry questions?
- ◆ What if a question seems more appropriate for spiritual director?
- ◆ How many people is good to mentor at a time?
- ◆ What is the normal time commitment for a mentor?

Answers to these and many other questions can be found at:

FranciscanAtHome.com/faq

We've also included video tutorials and other resources on this page to better help you serve your mentees!

Got a tech problem? Contact us at:

ci@franciscan.edu

**As yourself: What does it
mean to live sacrificially to
build up those we lead?**

We are all aware of the loneliness of *many* people in ministry – the isolation of the catechist in a classroom, or parents in a culture of indifference, or of priests working on their own. The mentoring role is to support, reinforce, refer back, and refer on to other workshops. Don't become second teacher. Help them to use the teacher well, to trust the teacher, use the sources, not to see you so much as an expert on all things, but instead more of a sounding-board and friend. Mentors seek to listen, to take a sincere interest in another soul, enjoy achievements, believe in what they do, support their mission, and help them through difficult patches. We find good points to affirm in their work, countering the tendency to make our points refer only to problems and shortcomings! We can always find some genuine good points in a workshop. By identifying and noting genuine strengths, we affirm people in things they may not otherwise recognize or repeat. This consolidates the good and cultivates virtues. If we did just this, we would be doing something very worthwhile. Don't waste the power of acknowledging the good!

Trust the workshop tasks and help learners to trust them as useful and helpful for formation. Remember you are there for personal long-term support. This "slow evangelization" avoids giving in to the illusion of rapid formation. Progress will be over a period, a sequence of workshops. Hopefully you will have the person for at least a dozen workshops. Mentoring needs to focus especially on building confidence by encouragement not so much correction. Always think, where can I be of most assistance in supporting this person? Above all, we pray, asking the Holy Spirit to show you how to assist well.

A guide for using our online workshops with a group . . .

Being effective

Launched three years ago, our online platform, www.FranciscanAtHome.com has drawn the interest of over 150 dioceses!

In seeing the many creative ways our workshops are being used by parishes and schools, we have noted that group settings are often as much or more effective than solely individual use of this formation.

So, to encourage this way of using our workshops, we've provided here a set of best practices for how to do so . . .

A great variety of formation

We currently we have 20 ministry tracks being designed, with over 800 formation workshops in total to be filmed, and over 300 filmed thus far.

Our online platform is three years old, and the post-production on our workshops involves much time and care to make them beautifully *engaging* and *effective* formation tools. We appreciate your patience as we build this wonderful work to form those who form others.

Our tracks in development

1. Catechist Track
2. Four Pillar of the Catechism Track
3. Youth Ministry Track
4. RCIA Track
5. Parish Catechetical Leader Track
6. Catholic Schools Track
7. Hispanic Faith & Family Track
8. Ministry of Parenting Track
9. Pastoral Accompaniment Track
10. Young Adults Track
11. First Proclamation Track
12. African-Amer. Faith & Family Track
13. Special Needs Track
14. Culture of Life Track
15. Diocesan Officials Track
16. Priestly Renewal Track
17. Sports Ministry Track
18. Music Ministry Track
19. Collegial Outreach Track
20. Franciscan Spirituality Track

**“Where
two or more
are gathered...”
~ Matthew 18:20**

Step One: Join us!

- ✓ Registration with the Catechetical Institute takes place through www.FranciscanAtHome.com either with an institution subscription (parish or school) or as individual subscriptions.
- ✓ The Catechetical Institute has a user-friendly PDF designed to help people easily get into the site for free, once their parish or school has a subscription. If you do not have this PDF, feel free to request it via email: ci@franciscan.edu.

Quick start group guide

- ✦ Discuss which adult groups could best benefit from the workshops led in collaborative learning sessions, such as: parish or school staff, catechists across all age levels, godparents/sponsors, parents, liturgical ministries, youth leaders, RCIA teams, young adult groups, etc.
- ✦ Choose a track (collection of workshops) or just a specific workshop.
- ✦ Determine a time frame (monthly, bi-weekly, weekly, etc.), session length, and what goal is to be accomplished at each gathering, such as the number of segments that can reasonably be discussed in the time available.
- ✦ Advertise to your target group, introducing CI, the relevant workshop topics, and the structure. Invite participants to bring their device (laptop or tablet, etc.), including a digital photo, to the first meeting, especially if you'll have them register online at that point.
- ✦ Ensure that the meeting location has WIFI or a cable connection to the internet, and that the room can project the workshops clearly enough for everyone.
- ✦ Assign a facilitator for the workshop. The facilitator does not teach. The CI workshop presenters teach. The facilitator keeps the discussion from being dominated by a single person, while guiding the discussion to be collaborative.
- ✦ The facilitator should be conversant with the videos and tasks in order to plan which texts can be simply read out-loud from the screen and which may need to be printed, such as the key instructions for the tasks. Consider which tasks are best explained, begun, and perhaps encouraged to be continued at home.
- ✦ Facilitators could be trained CI mentors, diocesan officials, or parish/school leaders.

"Catechesis is closely linked with the responsible activity of the Church and of Christians in the world. A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith and is endeavoring to consolidate that faith by catechesis needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same step."

~ Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community, 69

Tips for successful gatherings

- ✓ Introduce a specific track to the group and explore the different workshops in that track.
- ✓ Introduce the online presenters using the biographical videos found in each workshop.
- ✓ Begin a specific workshop and go through the segments according to the time available.
- ✓ Segments and tasks can be viewed and discussed as a group or participants may use their devices to type and save, or simply complete tasks on paper.
- ✓ Have Bibles and Catechisms available for those less familiar with using such texts electronically.
- ✓ Consider printing sheets of key texts as well as the handout available for downloading at the beginning of each workshop. Prior to watching the video, it may be helpful to ask participants to mark the pages in the Catechism or Bible that will be referenced.
- ✓ A large group could be divided into smaller groups for the tasks with a "reporter" for each group.
- ✓ Workshop segments and tasks not completed could be resumed and completed by participants on their own at their convenience, perhaps within a specific time frame. However, it's important to emphasize that the community aspect of the group is essential: "where two or more are gathered..." (Mt 18:20).
- ✓ Set aside time for group prayer and/or silent reflection at the conclusion of the session (a simple prayer, a sharing of intercessory intentions, or perhaps adoration, rosary, chaplet, a litany, etc.).
- ✓ It may be helpful to create a calendar for the parish, showing when certain workshops will be offered.

Considerations for hospitality

- ✦ Assign or invite participants to set up and serve appropriate snacks and beverages, and set up tables and chairs for each workshop.
- ✦ Low volume Catholic meditative music could be played in the background as people enter in order to set the mood and complement the beauty that is the cornerstone of the workshops.
- ✦ Have Bibles and Catechisms to purchase or borrow.
- ✦ Any Church documents referred to in the workshops could be displayed at the gathering (*Catechesi Tradendae*, *General Directory for Catechesis*, etc.).
- ✦ Have extra pens, pencils, and paper available.
- ✦ Consider using name tags, and taking the time for introductions of the facilitator and participants.

Questions related to those mentoring through the Catechetical Institute's workshops

In addition to the questions and answers below, please note that posted on this page is a collection of brief video tutorials and a set of PDFs to assist you with various needs. Please always feel free to reach out to us at CI@franciscan.edu or 740-283-6754.

What does the Catechetical Institute mean by a mentoring approach?

Formation in the faith is always first and foremost God's attentive presence to the *individual*. From this principle arises the vital importance of mentorship, and for that guidance to be proximal and personal: a mentoring accompaniment. The overarching priority of the Catechetical Institute is to commit the effort necessary to form those who form others, rather than replace them with distant experts or high production value video and audio resources. Evangelization and catechesis can thus remain appropriately situated with those who can be in authentic ministerial relationships in the field. To accomplish this, all the online workshops designed by CI critically rely upon mentorship. By doing this, we seek to encourage dioceses in the direction of mentored formation and person-to-person engagement.

While this means greater time committed by both learners and mentors, there are clear advantages: for learners, that they become better ministers, with better results than less-attentive formation methods could ever achieve, and that they are enabled to take more creative ownership of their call to serve and form souls. For mentors and diocesan officials, these workshops help them to grow substantially in their own formation skills and ministerial competence, to discover an effective mechanism for accountability and excellence, and to find themselves ever more deeply in relationships with those they are called to lead and form.

As mentors we truly have the privilege of walking with each learner, each a unique reflection of God, each called by Him to a distinctive mission for building up his Kingdom. "Christ provides for our growth: to make us grow toward him, our head, he provides in his Body, the Church, the gifts and assistance by which we help one another along the way of salvation" (CCC 794).

What is the difference between teaching and mentoring?

Most people who are mentors are also teachers in some capacity in their parish or school. When you are in a "mentoring mode" think about more as a relationship of "walking with" than "teaching at" – a proverbial arm around the shoulder – a ministry of encouragement rather than seeking to inform. We are all aware of the loneliness of many people in ministry – the isolation of the catechist in a classroom, or parents in a culture of indifference, or of priests working on their own. The mentoring role is to support, reinforce, refer back, and refer on to other workshops. Don't become second teacher. Help them to use the teacher well, to trust the teacher, use the sources, not to see you so much as an expert on all things, but instead more of a sounding-board and friend.

Mentors seek to listen, to take a sincere interest in another soul, enjoy achievements, believe in what they do, support their mission, and help them through difficult patches. We find good points to affirm in their work, countering the tendency to make our points refer only to problems and shortcomings! We can always find some genuine good points in a workshop. By identifying and noting genuine strengths, we affirm people in things they may not otherwise recognize or repeat. This consolidates the good and cultivates virtues. If we did just this, we would be doing something very worthwhile. Don't waste the power of acknowledging the good!

Trust the workshop tasks and help learners to trust them as useful and helpful for formation. Remember you are there for personal long-term support. This "slow evangelization" avoids giving in to the illusion of rapid formation. Progress will be over a period, a sequence of workshops. Hopefully you will have the person for at least a dozen workshops. Mentoring needs to focus especially on building confidence by encouragement not so much correction. Always think, where can I be of most assistance in supporting this person? Above all, we pray, asking the Holy Spirit to show you how to assist well.

What is the normal time commitment for mentors working with those taking the Catechetical Institute's workshops?

This will vary over time and will generally reduce as experience is gained with mentoring, but an estimate would be about an hour each month per person being mentored. So, if you have twelve mentees, for example, that would translate to about twelve hours a month.

For a catechetical leader mentoring people in his or her own parish or school, this might be a very different estimate, since mentoring would often occur in a group setting rather than always one-on-one, and some individuals may need little personal time and others (such as new teachers) may receive more attention. Generally, for those mentoring within their own parish or school community, we suggest doing so in whatever way is most natural for you to be in relationships with the people you lead, and most suits your available time and desire to cultivate certain people.

Many local mentors in these circumstances do not answer workshops task-for-task online, but instead talk with people more directly, meet as needed in person or chat on the phone, and sometimes choose to mentor a group rather than single individuals (such as an RCIA team going through workshops together, or a groups of school teachers, etc.). When we assist dioceses in training mentors (normally the existing body of catechetical and school leaders in that diocese) we help them see how to make the mentoring role work with their goals for building up their people, and not to be a burden or an "extra" role, but instead a deeply helpful means to grow the people they lead towards excellence in ministry.

Relative to all the tracks the Institute intends to create, how will I know what I'm qualified to mentor?

This will be determined for each mentor; the initial judgment is based primarily on your experience and level of catechetical understanding of any given ministry field. As time goes on, mentors can venture into other workshops and tracks, and thereby potentially gain sufficient practical understanding to serve more and more areas of the Institute's work. In general, it is not necessary for a mentor to go through every workshop prior to mentoring someone else in that content; a mentor can simply experience it in the course of serving the first learner that goes through a given workshop.

Are there any ways to the Catechetical Institute helps train or assist mentors?

We offer CI Formation Days many times a year, usually at the request of partner dioceses. Though we accommodate to a diocese's available timeframe, this on-site training is normally a full day in length, beginning at breakfast and ending prior to dinner. This kind of event is usually done as an in-service offering targeting all faith formation leaders and catechetical leaders in the diocese. It creates substantial positive momentum, generates many excellent questions from which the whole group benefits, and also serves to give a diocese a shot in the arm on person-to-person discipleship. This day is excellent for anyone wishing to understand how to mentor well or how to encourage others to do so.

We also have a set of outstanding workshops on FranciscanAtHome.com that will greatly help any mentor grow in his or her pastoral accompaniment skills:

- The Vocation of the Catechist
- Catechetical Mentorship
- Being Guided and Guiding Souls
- Personal Vocation and the Mentoring Relationship
- Building the Mentoring Relationship: Asking Good Questions
- Building the Mentoring Relationship: Empathic Listening
- Mentoring in Ministry

These workshops are available for free to any mentor on the system. Some dioceses require them, some simply recommend or encourage them.

How are mentors normally assigned?

For those requesting a mentor through the Catechetical Institute's monthly subscription, assignments are made by the Institute staff based on availability and for the ministry area in which a learner wishes to take workshops. For those seeking mentorship through a diocese, the diocesan offices would normally match mentors to learners, or delegate that decision to parish or school leadership.

How many people is good to mentor at a time?

Generally, we have found that for someone in full-time ministry (such as diocesan official, parish catechetical leader, youth minister, or school principal), it is completely doable to mentor between 10-40 people. This is especially the case if the mentor is serving people only within his or her own parish or school community, since the mentoring role is integrated with the normal duty of cultivating and caring for those he or she is already seeking to lead towards greater excellence in ministry.

What's a good way to start a mentoring relationship?

A mentor gets an email notification when a learner has been assigned, and that learner appears on the mentor's dashboard under the section "learners you are mentoring." In your first email to the learner introduce yourself directly, warmly and simply, avoiding stiffness or over-formality. Make it clear from the beginning what your response timeline will look like – we strongly encourage all mentors to be forthcoming about when they will respond to the learner. Some mentors like to respond task-for-task; some prefer to wait until a whole workshop is completed, and then respond; some prefer to converse only via email; some prefer to respond via phone conversations or video chats. In local mentoring relationships within the same parish or school, face-to-face meetings as needed may be more natural. Especially where teams are involved (such as RCIA teams or youth ministry volunteers or a group of teachers in a school), it may work better to mentor the group together and watch all or some portions of a workshop as a group. In sum, whatever the context and form of your communication with learners, the bottom-line is to please be *very clear* at the begin *how* you intend to respond to a learner's efforts and work.

Here's a simple suggested text for a mentor who is planning to review workshops with learners after learners finish a whole workshop rather than answering task-for-task (that's the mentor's choice):

"Dear ---, I look forward to serving as your mentor through the workshops of this track! I'm so glad you've started this path of formation. Please note, I won't be responding to you task-for-task through, but instead I will wait for you to complete a whole workshop, and then I will reach out to you to set up a time to discuss that whole workshop via phone or video chat. I very much look forward to being of service to you, and I hope the workshops are of help in your ministry work! I'd be happy to answer any questions I can as you get started – don't hesitate to reach out. Please know that I'll be praying for you by name, and that I'm thankful for this chance to walk alongside you in this way."

For further interactions early on, ask yourself: What can I do to be genuinely approachable to this person? Consider asking a few good questions. Open-ended questions are best for getting to know others because they enable creative, self-revealing responses. What do you hope to gain from the Catechetical Institute workshops? Ask yourself: What can I do to discover what this person most needs and what I can do to help?

How are mentors evaluated? Can a mentor be changed?

Once a mentor is actively serving those taking workshops, the mentoring experience is evaluated by each mentee as part of the final step in concluding each workshop. If a learner feels that his or her mentor is not helpful or not a good match, a request to change to a new mentor can be submitted would normally be honored and can be done by a diocesan official or by the Catechetical Institute staff.

What is a normal response time to a learner's work? What do I do if a learner wants to do more workshops than one per month?

If you are doing task-for-task responses as opposed to talking with a learner at the end of whole workshop, you would normally respond within a week, which should help prevent the work submitted by a single learner from being too overwhelming. Learners who are being mentored are not allowed to expect a mentor to increase his or her response time to faster than a than a seven-day period. A mentor can decide to respond more quickly (and this is certainly encouraged), but this is not assumed to be the norm. In any case, as a mentor simply be sure to communicate clearly with the learner about when and how you plan to respond. Especially if there are any unexpected delays – just to keep the learner informed so that they know that they are not forgotten!

How do I determine whether a learner's workshop should be approved to be considered completed?

Each mentor needs to judge whether a workshop has more or less passed muster. In the vast majority of cases, a learner would not need to redo any work, but simply need to be encouraged in any weaker areas and then allowed to move forward. When a workshop is completed and sent to a mentor for final review, normally a mentor should read all the task answers, and then reach out to the learner and set a time to meet via phone, video chat, or in person. Of course, some mentors will instead respond with helpful thoughts and encouragement via email only, and this is fine.

The means of response (calling, video chat, emailing, in-person) should fit the natural way in which a mentor wishes to interact with that learner and that mentor's sense of what he or she can manage in terms of time. In whatever manner, it is important that some positive, encouraging interaction occur between a mentor and a learner prior to hitting "approve." It is normal to wait to hit "approve" until after an interaction of this kind has occurred. Seeing that final email from the learner come through stating that a workshop is complete is the normal prompt to reach out and set a time to talk.

Most mentors usually don't make use of the "needs work" option, but instead communicate any concerns or corrective elements in the course of a conversation or an email chain with a learner – we've found that it is more gentle and pastoral that way. For those mentors who opt to communicate with learners solely via email, the "needs work" option is the preface to a typed explanation and a clearly noted way to move forward in a positive manner. We always want to avoid discouraging a learner or giving the impression of being "graded" in a penal sense.

How does a learner earn a certificate for a track or a part of a track?

For earning certificates for a given track, the workshops that need to be completed are listed online as the structure of that track, readily viewable, often arranged in one or more columns. Normally, a diocese or an independent institution (usually apostolates or religious orders) provides its own mentors and its own certification approval. FranciscanAtHome.com is capable of generating custom certificates with a diocese's or independent institution's logo and signatures.

If a learner is seeking a certificate from Franciscan University for a given track, that person needs to go through the \$12.99 per month individual subscriptions (or come to the annual summer St. John Conference Bosco) and then we'll assign a CI-trained mentor, which is the requisite for an FUS certificate. Normally, a learner can receive a certificate for each column of workshops done in a track, under a mentored guidance, and having that mentor approve each workshop once all tasks are completed.

What if a learner wants to speak in person, on the phone, or by video?

Relationships with learners in this context are in written form unless of course you are in the same parish or a diocesan gathering of learners allows for other forms of mentorship. In general, we encourage whatever form of communication is most natural and promotes the best presence to the individual learner. Many mentors who work at-distance prefer video chatting over typing responses or phone calls. Local mentoring would generally be more often in-person in the normal course of how those individuals relate in the parish or school community.

If a learner strongly feels that he or she cannot express a certain thing in writing, he or she is welcome to make an audio or video recording and upload that file to their response box (which the system is designed to accommodate). The answer boxes for the tasks are also able to interact with most common talk-to-text apps.

How often should I reach out to a learner if the person is not regularly doing workshops? If a learner has been dormant for a while, how should I reach out?

Don't worry too much about learners who have periods of inactivity – some people focus in dense periods of time on the workshops and then take a break, particularly Catholic school teachers, who often have time only in the summer or other off periods to progress on workshops. We'd suggest sending them a "hello, how are you doing" email if they've been inactive for more than three or four months, such as:

"I hope you are doing well. Since I haven't heard from you in little while in regard to workshops on FranciscanAtHome.com, I wanted to touch base with you. I pray that God will grant you all of the necessary graces that you need at this time. May the Christ fill your heart with true peace, hope and joy. At this time, I just encourage you to continue to grow in your faith through Franciscan at Home workshops. The Lord is inviting you to a time of growth in your understanding of our Catholic faith and in your spiritual life. He thirsts for you and wants to fill you with many graces! I pray that you may find consolation in the workshops and cling to Him evermore.

If you have any special prayer requests, please let me know! I am praying for you by name as you continue your journey with the Catechetical Institute. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions. May our good Lord bless and keep you! It is a privilege and joy to serve you as your mentor in these workshops.”

What if a question seems more appropriate for spiritual director?

The workshops, regardless of topic, are all designed to foster a learner’s spiritual growth and to offer gentle challenge in following Christ and His Church more fully. Though in most cases a mentor can very fruitfully act as a general guide to spiritual growth in the context of how the workshop tasks point learners forward, sometimes issues arise that may need guidance from a person more deeply trained in spiritual formation. It is most certainly ok to let a learner know if you feel as a mentor that you’ve arrived at such a conclusion for a given interaction. In such cases, a learner’s parish priest or another local figure should be suggested as a first point of reference. You are also welcome to seek advice from your diocesan administrator, or by emailing the Catechetical Institute.

How should I handle tough ministry questions or what if I get a learner submitting inappropriate information as task submissions, or questionable or heretical material, or not completing satisfactory work?

Beyond isolated issues with an occasional task response, which should be handled generously by asking for clarification, if as a mentor you see a pattern in a troubling direction, you are welcome to seek advice from your diocesan administrator, or by emailing the Catechetical Institute. As far as the functional manner for a learner to re-submit a task to a mentor, he or she can re-enter a workshop at any point, go to a particular task in question, type new elements into the answer, and then hit the blue button below that task to send it to the mentor again.

A mentor could also just take the task response that he or she originally received and continue the request for corrections or changes as part of an email chain stemming from that original submission. In this case, the workshop may be “pending” approval as long as it takes for a mentor to be ok with what has been re-submitted, and when the mentor is happy that the email chain has reached a useful conclusion for that task, the mentor can then approve the workshop from his or her dashboard.

In general, we’d suggest trying to avoid as much as possible a re-do of work (though sometimes it’s unavoidable). Rather what we generally advise in as many cases as possible is for a mentor to express his or her concerns and/or what might be a suggested way to answer a task, and then ask the learner to tell you what they think, and then let the learner move on, knowing that over time the learner will almost always grow in understanding.

Should I correct the learner’s English grammar?

A mentor should not correct their mentee’s grammar, except in the following cases:

If a learner has misspelled a technical term, such as a name or a key concept, it’s good to teach him or her to the proper way to do so. Don’t correct English unless it is crucial to ministry – such as “Pascal Mystery” rather than “Paschal Mystery.” It’s important to maintain an encouraging and pastoral tone when you correct a word or phrase, saying something like: “this phrase is a tricky one to spell, and easy to get wrong, but here’s the correct wording...”

What if I cannot understand what the learner has submitted?

It is possible that you will receive work that is poorly written enough that you cannot readily respond. Because of the broad nature of the learner audience, coming from a variety of language learning, economic, and educational backgrounds, it is important first to keep in mind that difficulties in writing do not automatically disqualify a person from ministry. Many strong and saintly catechists have also been illiterate, or nearly so. Yet at the same time, you must be able to understand what has been written, to provide feedback about the work. If you are consistently finding a learner’s responses to be too confusing to allow for a clear comment or answer, then seek advice from your diocesan administrator, or by emailing the Catechetical Institute.

Can a person have more than one mentor?

Yes. The reason is usually because a learner is working on two tracks at once. Some workshops are cross-listed between tracks, and for such workshops there can be an approval from either of mentor (more or less whoever gets to it first). The reason it works like this is that a learner can enter any of several tracks, and the mentors may need to be different for each track (since for example the person acting as a mentor for a youth ministry track might not be a good mentor for a track that focuses on RCIA), so the mentoring assignment always is track-associated.

What if the learner wants to submit in a language besides English?

If you as the mentor are fluent in the language, including the catechetical vocabulary, then this is fine to accept submissions in a language besides English. If you are not fluent, or if you are not familiar with the requisite catechetical vocabulary, then this is not possible. You as the mentor are still able to and encouraged to respond in English.

What if a diocese wants to view the learner’s submission?

Learners and mentors should be aware that anything they write is always viewable by Catechetical Institute staff or by a diocesan administrator. From the mentor’s point of view, anything at all which is submitted to you is only for your eyes as a mentor on this learning system. It can’t be shared, spoken about, or discussed with anyone else who does not have administrator access to this system or a critical reason to know. If you have a question or situation that arises in this regard, please contact the Catechetical Institute or your diocese.

What if I have any concerns about potential child protection reporting issues in a learner's responses?

If you have received a learner's task response that concerns you in this area (such as the learner detailing a youth ministry interaction that raises red flags for you), please feel free to contact the Catechetical Institute or your diocesan administrator to discuss it. If a genuine concern exists, expect that it may become necessary to report the issue. Generally, this would involve following the child protection guidelines in force in the diocese in which you reside.

Are mentors paid?

Those mentors who have gone through the Catechetical Institute's training process and have been accepted to serve those taking our workshops are paid an annual fee based on the number of mentees they assist. Normally CI mentors are engaged by learners subscribing for \$12.99 per month. This allows CI to pay our mentors.

Mentors working directly for dioceses are normally not paid, since using these workshops in a diocesan setting is most often done by the existing parish catechetical and school leaders serving as mentors for their own people in their own community. In such situations, mentoring people through these workshops is not really an "extra" role, but simply a means to be more effective and more relational in their existing role of building up and caring for the people they lead.

If a technical problem occurs within a workshop, with my log-in process, my account, or other parts of the site, who do I contact? For online system glitches and similar issues, please email the Catechetical Institute at CI@franciscan.edu or call 740-283-6754.

If I am interested in mentoring for the Catechetical Institute, or for my diocese, who do I contact?

It is preferable for a person desiring to serve as a mentor to first contact your diocese. Local mentoring is a better option for formation than at-distance mentoring. If your diocese partners with the Catechetical Institute, then please contact the diocesan office relevant to your ministry area. For those seeking to serve the Catechetical Institute directly, please contact us by email: CI@franciscan.edu