



PONTIFICIA  
UNIVERSITÀ  
GREGORIANA

Center for  
Child Protection

Centro per la protezione dei minori  
Centre for Child Protection  
Centro de protección de menores  
Zentrum für Kinderschutz  
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## The CCP Diploma in Safeguarding of Minors - Curriculum

### 1. The Diploma in Safeguarding for Minors as Part of the Mission of the CCP

The Centre for Child Protection (CCP) is part of the Institute of Psychology, which belongs to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. The overall objective of the CCP is the academic and professional promotion of safeguarding through education, formation programmes, conferences, communication, and research. The Diploma in Safeguarding of Minors is one of the educational programmes offered by the CCP. It is a one-semester, on-site course geared towards training safeguarding professionals who reach Level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)<sup>1</sup>.

At the CCP safeguarding is understood as the theoretical reflection and practical measures taken to promote the welfare of children, adolescents and all who need special protection from harm.

**The following guiding principles are at the basis of all the work and courses at the CCP:**

#### 1. **Victims first**

We base our reflection, commitment, and actions on listening to victims and survivors and learning from them.

#### 2. **Christian view of the human person**

We value every human being as created in God's image and act correspondingly.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (ed.), Learning Opportunities and Qualifications Europe. For information about courses, work-based learning and qualifications, see: <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/content/descriptors-page> (retrieved 4/23/16).

### 3. Spirituality

We envisage safeguarding as a spiritual matter that directs us in our theological reflection and a faith-based response.

### 4. Cultural sensitivity

We honour the variety of cultures, engage in a critical dialogue, and facilitate the culturally sound adaptation and implementation of safeguarding measures.

### 5. Multidisciplinarity

We look at safeguarding simultaneously from the perspective of various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, canon and civil law, theology, etc.

## 2. The Diploma Students and the Graduates' Competencies

Students accepted for the diploma hold at least a bachelor's (1<sup>st</sup> cycle university) degree. Recommended by an ecclesiastical or civil authority, they are – during the course – trained for future work in the field of safeguarding.

The students come from countries all over the world. Some are native speakers of English; others have acquired at least an intermediate level of proficiency. Some are religious or priests, others lay people. They also differ with regard to their relation to the Catholic Church as an institution and their personal theological and spiritual background. Some have just finished their bachelor's; others hold doctoral degrees or have had ample work experiences inside or outside the field of safeguarding. Whereas some have their professional background in theology or (canon and civil) law, others have degrees in psychology, psychotherapy, education, medicine, etc. These vastly different learning histories lead to different resources the students can draw on, and different motivations, aims and expectations with regard to the Diploma in Safeguarding of Minors. After the completion of the course they are going to promote safeguarding in their home countries in a great variety of areas, usually linked to their basic education or professional experience.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Teachers might serve schools and other educational facilities, psychotherapists specialize in initial encounters or the therapeutic care of victims, canon lawyers lead diocesan preliminary investigations, etc.

During their semester in Rome, students acquire comprehensive, specialized, factual and theoretical knowledge within the field of safeguarding. The aim of the diploma is thus a thorough basic introduction to the many issues at stake as well as to their interrelatedness, while equipping the students with the competences needed for further augmenting their skills after the completion of the course. In addition, students gain the necessary awareness of the boundaries of their knowledge, taking into account their previous studies and fields of expertise, as well as the new areas and disciplines they learn about.

All successful graduates develop a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills needed in the field of safeguarding, which allows them to solve the challenges they will encounter in their safeguarding activities and deal with them in creative ways. Diploma students will develop the competences needed to:

- recognize signs of abuse in victims and of risks in perpetrators
- assist and support victims of abuse and secondary victims
- reflect on and communicate the spiritual and theological implications of abuse
- engage spirituality in furthering safeguarding goals and measures
- create safeguarding networks in their regions, countries, local churches, religious communities, and other circles of influence
- assist church leaders in appropriately handling allegations
- identify the instruments for adequate intervention
- adapt and support implementation of context-specific guidelines for safeguarding
- carry out safeguarding formation courses in schools, parishes, formation houses, etc.

These competences will allow them to collaborate successfully in the field of safeguarding in dioceses, religious congregations, educational work, etc. They will be assistants in the field of safeguarding (in seminaries, formation houses, dioceses, educational and pastoral works, etc.) who are capable of exercising management and supervision with regard to safeguarding works related to their primary education. In these areas or places, they can

handle unpredictable change, serve as organizational development agents, and review, develop, and sustain their own performance and that of others.

### 3. The Pedagogical Framework: Methodology, Didactics and Course Structure

The pedagogical framework and, thus, the course structure of the Diploma in Safeguarding of Minors take into account both the diverse student population and the various areas within the field of safeguarding that the graduates will later work in. Both framework and structure ensure that everyone gains sound basic knowledge in essential areas of safeguarding but also allow for personal specialization.

The pedagogical concept consists of a student-centred approach aimed at providing students with a learning environment that continually challenges them to take their next step towards the lasting acquisition of knowledge, skills and necessary attitudes. They are thus enabled to gain, develop, and strengthen the competences needed in the field of safeguarding, i.e. knowledge, methodological and social skills, personal, volitional and emotional competences as well as spiritual ones. The programme is geared towards the development of the entire person<sup>3</sup> and presupposes the students' willingness to take responsibility for their own learning as well as to engage in personal reflection, feedback processes, supervision, practical workshops, and faith sharing. This student-centred approach also fosters the contextualization of the contents, as students are constantly invited to reflect on whether and how certain contents, skills, attitudes might or might not be applicable in their own culture and field of work.

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<sup>3</sup> This follows official church imperatives, as for example expressed in Pope Benedict's (2009) encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*: "In reality, institutions by themselves are not enough, because integral human development is primarily a vocation, and therefore it involves a free assumption of responsibility in solidarity on the part of everyone." (CV 11)

The diploma course is a full-time and all-day programme. It is designed to allow for individualization and differentiation within the heterogenous group of learners.<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of each new unit, the students are made aware of the respective objectives and the desired competencies. Assisted by teachers through materials, input and feedback, students plan, research, and carry out the mandatory as well as some of the elective tasks. Learning experiences are enhanced by the input of distinguished guest speakers, three weeks of practical workshops on some core issues, and access to the well-stocked library of the Gregorian University, including electronic resources. Students are constantly invited to relate the contents of the course to their own cultural reality and therefore learn to critically assess both. They are thus enabled to apply their knowledge to the unique situations they will encounter after their return to their home countries. A key formation tool in this course is an individualized learning portfolio that fosters self-reflection and feedback from peers and teachers who guide their learning processes. The learning portfolio allows students to customize their safeguarding formation to the needs of the ministry that awaits them in their home country. Supervision, pragmatic tasks, and spiritual elements assist the students' holistic growth.

The learning portfolio is also the basis for the grades students receive as it documents both learning processes and results. Students are continuously graded on their efforts (learning process and class participation), their results (completion of tasks), and the level of their personal and professional reflection.

#### 4. Diploma Units – Competences and Contents

The following units are taught during the diploma semester. Outlined below are the required time, the desired competences, and the contents included for each unit. Some of

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<sup>4</sup> Whereas a psychologist might already be well aware of possible signs of abuse, other professionals need to spend time on this topic. A native speaker of Spanish might need a bit longer to understand a text and prefer to read Vatican documents in his or her own language. A shy student will be challenged by a task that requires a presentation; another one might have to work on his or her research skills.

the content is mandatory for all students; some is elective so that students can choose the topics that fit their educational and future needs in the best way possible. Within the course of the programme, three weeks are offered in a workshop format that allows the students to practically build and test their competences in these areas.

### 1. Childhood (1 week)

- Students compare their own childhood to their peers' experiences and the way children in their cultures grow up today.
  - They become aware of elements of their own upbringing with regard to language, customs and traditions, values, norms, religion, gender, community, and recent changes.
  - They confront their own views with those of others.
- Students evaluate the various cultural concepts of childhood with regard to:
  - the universal rights of children
  - the theology of childhood
  - developmental psychology
  - the vulnerability of children
  - legal aspects.

### 2. Sexuality and (un)healthy relationships (1 week)

- Students compare various cultural attitudes towards sexuality with regard to:
  - sexual education
  - gender roles
  - changes due to media influence and the internet.
- Students analyse healthy styles of relationships with regard to:
  - closeness and distance
  - theological and spiritual aspects
  - emotional factors.
- Students become personally aware of their own sexual and relational histories.

- Students become aware of how their own sexual and relational histories have influenced their lifestyle choices.

### 3. Victims and survivors (4 weeks)

#### Week 1:

- Students identify various forms of maltreatment and their consequences.
  - They describe various forms of maltreatment.
  - They recognize the impact of abuse on the lives of the victims by becoming aware of and more sensitized to:
    - victims' experiences
    - possible consequences of abuse
    - barriers to disclosure.
  - They recognize the possible signs and indicators of abuse.
  - They explain the specific dangers of cyber abuse.

#### Week 2:

- Students become aware of how the reality of abuse affects:
  - victims
  - secondary victims
  - safeguarding personnel
  - church
  - society.
- They empathize with victims.
- They confront the reality of (clerical) abuse with their own spirituality and images of the church.
- They reflect on the theological implications.
- They reflect on proper self-care with regard to:
  - emotion regulation

- compassion fatigue.

### Week 3:

- Students react properly when confronted with abuse.
  - They critically assess their own attitudes, fears, resistances, etc.
  - They critically assess risk and protective factors in their own cultures.
  - They describe the guidelines and processes in canon and civil law.
  - They become aware of available forms of assistance and therapy for victims.
  - They practise how to pastorally accompany victims and secondary victims.

### Week 4:

- Students react properly when confronted with abuse – Part II (elective topics to choose from).
  - a. They deal appropriately with major changes in minors.
  - b. They confront risk and protective factors in their own field of work.
  - c. They carry out preliminary investigations.
  - d. They create specific ways to pastorally care for victims and secondary victims.
  - e. They reflect on the specific vulnerability imposed by:
    - disability
    - migration
    - war
    - etc.
  - f. They analyse how to promote cybersecurity in their own work field.

## 4. Perpetrators (2 weeks)

### Week 1:

- Students explain the dynamics of offending.
  - They explain the different types of perpetrators (with special attention to clerical offenders).
  - They recognize the signs and indicators of potential offenders.
  - They explain the internal and external processes that enable abuse such as:

- cognitive distortions
- grooming techniques
- overcoming of hurdles and inhibitors.
- They name the dynamics of online offenders.
- Students identify the causes of abuse with regard to:
  - individual aspects
  - cultural aspects
  - societal aspects.
- Students become aware of their own feelings and attitudes with regard to clerical offenders.
- Students become aware of the challenges talking to perpetrators poses.

## Week 2:

- Students name options for therapy and care for offenders with regard to:
  - proper accompaniment of alleged offenders
  - therapeutic options
  - pastoral care
  - aftercare.
- Students explain legal and canonical implications.
  - They explain the norms of canon law.
  - They investigate the laws in their own countries.
- Students reflect on the theological implications.
  - They discuss issues related to confession.
  - They reflect on theological topics such as:
    - justice
    - mercy
    - forgiveness
    - salvation.

- They become aware of how the existence of clerical sexual abuse affects them personally.

## 5. Institutions (2 weeks)

### Week 1:

- Students analyse the mistakes made in the church in the past and the proper remedies.
  - They realize that sexual abuse happens in all parts of the world.
  - They recognize false attitudes towards victims and explain the appropriate ones.
  - They recognize failures in dealing with (potential) abusers and explain the adequate responses.
  - They realize the negative effects of inadequate institutional responses and explain proper reactions.
  - They realize the negative effects of a lack of transparency or inadequate collaboration with the media and reflect appropriate and honest communication.
- Students describe how institutional structures and dynamics can contribute to abuse or prevent it by reflecting on:
  - structure
  - dynamics
  - institutional culture
  - roles
  - leadership.

### Week 2:

- Students analyse the positive and negative structural elements of their dioceses and congregations.

- Students identify necessary changes in order to make the institutional church or their congregations a safer place.
- Students critically assess theological convictions and interpretations that contribute to abuse or help prevent it.
  - They identify how the theology of priesthood might contribute to or prevent abuse.
  - They reflect on ecclesiological and sacramental issues in the face of abuse.

## 6. Preventive measures (2 weeks)

### Week 1:

- Students confront various approaches to prevention.
  - They describe various approaches towards prevention.
  - They explain what makes them effective.
  - They analyse existing prevention programmes in the various cultures and work fields with regard to their effectiveness.
- Students analyse risk and protective factors in church related institutions such as (elective topics to choose from):
  - a. schools
  - b. residential facilities (boarding schools, children's homes, etc.)
  - c. hospitals
  - d. houses of formation
  - e. parishes
  - f. universities
  - g. communities
  - h. any of the above with respect to disabled minors and adults
  - i. etc.

### Week 2:

- (Drawing on all the knowledge gained so far,) students develop a prevention project or strategy for a church-related institution.

- a. They develop a culturally sensitive prevention plan for a specific school, hospital, residential home, etc.
- b. They develop a culturally sensitive human formation workshop for a seminary etc.
- c. They develop culturally sensitive codes of conduct for parishes, communities, etc.
- d. etc.

## Practical weeks:

### Week 1: Healthy chastity

- Students reflect on how to live a chaste life in a positive way.
- Students reflect on:
  - healthy relationships/friendships
  - psychosexual maturity
  - adequate integration of sexual desires/fantasies
  - issues related to masturbation/pornography.

### Week 2: Listening to victims

- Students practise how to listen to victims well by:
  - believing victims
  - reacting in an adequate way.
- Students practise how to document disclosure situations.

### Week 3: Conducting formation sessions

- Students reflect on various target groups and develop adequate objectives.
- Students practise how to choose the contents well (with regard to the specific target group).
- Students practise how to select appropriate forms of presentation and other methods.
- Students practise conducting formation sessions.