

THE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS AND CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS

THE ENQUIRY STAGE

Meeting with Minister or Interim Moderator

Informal and exploratory

Meeting with Synod Moderator/or Moderator's deputy

Informal and informative. However, the Moderator has a responsibility to check that the potential candidate fulfils the basic age, membership and educational criteria agreed by General Assembly. If a candidate does not meet any or all of the criteria the Moderator should discuss what steps could be taken in order for the candidate to satisfy the criteria or what other forms of service the candidate might be encouraged to offer to the Church.

Enquirers Event

At any point during this stage of the process the potential candidate should be encouraged to attend an Enquirers Event.

This pre-assessment phase needs to be undertaken carefully and unhurriedly and may take two or more years. The need to fulfil the pre-assessment criteria should not prevent prospective candidates from enquiring about the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work and beginning to explore their sense of calling.

Support and co-operation from the local Church, and Synod should begin from the time of the initial enquiry. The pre-assessment phase is a time of growth which can be encouraged in several ways e.g. Synods can arrange opportunities for prospective candidates to "shadow" one or more ministers.

However, the Synod Moderator/or Moderator's deputy is responsible for checking and confirming that the pre-Assessment Criteria have been satisfied before the formal assessment process begins with the Church Meeting commendation and report.

Once the pre-assessment criteria have been met, the Synod Moderator/or Moderator's deputy will pass the enquirer's name to the Candidating Secretary. The Candidating Secretary will then send the application form and other paperwork to the enquirer. It is at this point that the formal candidating process begins.

THE FORMAL ASSESSMENT STAGE

The formal assessment process will proceed as follows: Church Meeting decision, Synod decision, the Assessment Board which makes the final decisions about forwarding a candidate for training and the method of training taken after Assessment Conference interviews.

Church Meeting Interview

Produces a decision of a Council of the Church. If the decision is not to recommend the candidate will not proceed to the next stage.

Synod Interviews

Produce a decision of a Council of the Church. If the decision is not to recommend the candidate will not proceed to the next stage.

Therefore, any candidate who goes on to the Assessment Conference goes sponsored by the Synod. The structures of each Synod will doubtless determine how the Synod interviews are to be conducted. Synods have taken over the responsibilities which once lay with District Councils even though these may be devolved to a more local area grouping of churches.

This means that the Synods will need to oversee arrangements for an assessed service and any appropriate placement work or 'shadowing' for candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. Visits to established CRCW posts and workers will need to be arranged for candidates for Church Related Community Work. Candidates will also be expected to attend both a Church Meeting and a Synod meeting and to write a reflection on both.

The Synod also will need to collect local knowledge and opinion of the candidate, which is set in a wider context than that of the local church alone, to help in reaching an informed decision. This may be done by arranging for an interview in a local grouping of churches which will then send a report to the Synod prior to the Synod interview itself.

The Synod interview should also identify whether there are determining factors in each candidate's situation, personal or otherwise, which the interviewers would want the Education and Learning Board to take into account in selecting the resource centre and training programme. This information should be sent to the Education and Learning Board via the Ministries office along with the report and decision on the candidate for the Assessment Board.

After the Synod interview the Synod should ensure that the candidates who have not been accepted for training receive appropriate support. This may include an element of mentoring if the candidate has been advised to reapply after completing some further, wider exploration of the United Reformed Church

Before the Assessment Board Conference

Once the candidate's application form has been passed onto the Assessment Board by the Synod Candidating Secretary candidates will hear from the Ministries Office with details of the Assessment Conference and advising the candidate that they need to undergo psychometric testing with the Ministries preferred provider.

Assessment Board Conference

At the end of this Conference two decisions will have been made on behalf of the United Reformed Church, recognising that the Assessment Board has a mandate to do its work from General Assembly.

The first decision taken by the Assessment Board will be whether the candidate may or may not go forward for training.

If there is a positive recommendation it will be accompanied by a second decision taken by the Education and Learning Board as to the Resource Centre through which the candidate (now a student) will be trained. The Education and Learning Board will also outline the nature of that training.

The Education and Learning Board interviews the candidate during the weekend of the Assessment Conference but plays no part in the decisions reached by the Assessment Board.

No candidate will be informed immediately of the decisions of the Assessment and Education and Learning Boards. Arrangements need to be made with the Secretary for Ministries for a meeting between representatives of the Synod Ministries Committee and the Assessment Board to discuss any implications of the decision reached regarding the candidate. This will take place within two weeks after the Assessment Conference and the candidate will be informed of the decision as soon as possible after that meeting, preferably on the same day.

An offer of training is subject to satisfactory completion of the necessary medical and psychological screening agreed by Mission Council in May 2011.

Any appeal against the Assessment Board decision will be made by the candidate using the Assessment Board Appeal process and on the basis that the approved procedure has not been followed.

Candidates are free to reapply after two years.

AFTER CANDIDATING

During training

The Synods will be asked to continue to exercise the pastoral care of the candidates as is presently the case. This should not present a conflict since no candidate will have been sent to the Assessment Conference who does not have the prior support of the Synod. It will be for the Synod to decide whether the pastoral care of any particular student should remain with the original sponsoring Synod or be transferred to the Synod within which the student receives training. To a large extent this will depend on whether a student relocates to be near the Resource Centre for Learning.

Synods will also continue to attend the annual progress meetings with the training institution. However, copies of these reports should be sent to the Assembly Ministries/Education and Learning Committees which have responsibilities on behalf of the whole Church. This will enable the committees to evaluate, and learn from, the decisions that have been taken and raise their awareness of any concerns which may emerge.

The readiness for ordination or commissioning should also involve all who have been involved in the assessment and training process. This includes the following but also see Procedure for Awarding College Leaving Certificates/Completion of Studies. A leaving certificate lasts for three years from the date of granting:

- the Resource Centre for Learning
 - ✘ Exam board approves the student's academic marks and the RCL is satisfied that the student has completed their studies to a satisfactory level;
 - ✘ the final annual review panel meets and agrees that the RCL should grant the leaving certificate;
 - ✘ the RCL informs both the sending and receiving Synod that a leaving certificate has been granted;
 - ✘ the RCL sends the final college report to Education and Learning and Ministries Committees for approval along with a copy of the letters to the sending and receiving Synods.
- Education and Learning Committees receives the student's final report from the RCL for approval.
- The Secretary for Ministries, on behalf of the Assessment Board of the Ministries Committee, receives the student's final report from the RCL for approval and commends the student for ordination or commissioning to the receiving Synod Moderator.

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Date of last revision: November 2020*