

PROCEDURE FOR THE ISSUE OF CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY TO A MINISTER OF ANOTHER CHURCH AND ENTRY OF THAT MINISTER ONTO THE ROLL OF MINISTERS OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

The General Assembly in 1991 agreed to the issue of Certificates of Eligibility to ministers of other Churches so that they might be introduced to a pastorate in the URC and if called enter the list of Ministers of the URC. The issue of such certificates is the responsibility of the Accreditation Committee of the Ministries Committee.

The procedure for such a course of action shall be:

1. From time to time the ministries committee will decide on the number of certificates to be issued in any given year or period, as part of the responsibility to monitor minister numbers.
2. Applications are considered by the Accreditation Committee of the Ministries Committee which is authorised to issue Certificates of Eligibility. Such certificates mean that the individual minister is able to seek a call to a pastorate or appointment within the United Reformed Church. It does not guarantee that a call to a pastorate or appointment will be made, but it allows for that possibility to be explored.
3. Initial enquiries shall be directed to the Secretary for Ministries who will send the minister an application form. On receipt of the completed form the Secretary for Ministries will confirm that the applicant's own Church is a member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Council for World Mission or the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
4. In considering applications the following criteria will be considered:
 - Experience in local pastorate ministry (minimum 5 years) in a leadership role
 - Under the age of 57 (the granting of a certificate is intentionally long-term – 10 years)
 - Intercultural competence
 - Understanding/experience of working in multi-church pastorates
 - Readiness and willingness to serve in any part of the UK
5. Applicants from outside of the European Economic Area need to understand that if the United Reformed Church gives them a Certificate of Eligibility THIS DOES NOT GUARANTEE that the UK government will give permission to live and work in the UK. The government operates a points- based system for issuing visas. Various factors are considered, one of

which is the level of English language skills. Currently, for example, applicants need the equivalent to level B2 of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is possible that requirements in this area may alter in order to comply with any changes required by Her Majesty's government.

At the time of writing we are not yet clear what the regulations will be for those who come from countries in the European Economic Area other than the UK. Eligibility can be checked at <https://www.gov.uk/tier-2-minister-of-religion-visa/eligibility>.

6. If an applicant does not have the right of abode and employment within the United Kingdom and is called to a church please note that it will be the applicant's responsibility to ensure that permission to live and work in the United Kingdom is obtained from the Home Office, through a United Kingdom Consulate, although support with your application will be given to you.
7. The Secretary for Ministries will inform all applicants as to whether or not they have been shortlisted, and for those applicants who are shortlisted will also:
 - a) write to the applicant's referees,
 - b) confirm that previous training was equivalent to that required of Ministers of Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church;
 - c) confirm that the applicant understands the financial provision given by the URC;
 - d) ascertain that the applicant is in good standing with their own church;
 - e) if the applicant is a member of a church in membership of the Council for World Mission, ascertain whether the partner church supports the application.

In the case of b & c above any concerns will not necessarily preclude the application being considered, however the interview group will need to be aware of any complicating factors in assessing the application.

8. References shall be taken up before shortlisting and a letter of good standing shall be sought from the applicant's parent denomination. If the shortlisted applicant is in the United Kingdom, then an interview with the applicant will be arranged.
9. In the case of those outside the UK, the minister will be encouraged to visit the UK for interview at his/her own expense, or a Skype or equivalent interview will be arranged.

10. If a call, and concurrence to that call is given, the minister, on induction to the pastorate, will be entered onto the list of Ministers of the United Reformed Church after serving a probationary period of one year from induction.
11. If, after the issuing of a Certificate, an applicant introduces restrictions on their availability, including geographic constraints, the Accreditation Sub-Committee reserves the right to withdraw the Certificate.
12. Following interview, the Accreditation Committee shall consider the completed applications and may then issue a Certificate of Eligibility subject to satisfactory references and confirmation that applicants are in good standing with their parent denomination.
13. Certificates of Eligibility are valid for three years. During that time, the Synod Moderators are able to introduce the name of the holder of the certificate to vacant pastorates. N. B. the normal procedure for filling a vacancy and issuing a call applies. Further paperwork will need to be completed at this point.
14. Ministers who are issued with a Certificate of Eligibility and receive and accept a call to a pastorate or post, will serve a probationary period of one year from induction. During this probationary period, s/he will be remunerated under the provisions of the Plan for Partnership. On successful completion of this probationary period the minister's name will be added to the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church. In other words, he or she becomes one of our ministers by transfer.
15. If a call, and concurrence to that call is given, the minister, on induction to the pastorate, will be entered onto the list of Ministers of the United Reformed Church after serving a probationary period of one year from induction.
16. If a minister is based outside the UK and receives a call to a pastorate the United Reformed Church will, if necessary, assist with reasonable costs incurred to relocate to the pastorate within the UK from port of entry.
17. If, after the issuing of a Certificate, an applicant introduces restrictions on their availability, including geographic constraints, the Accreditation Committee reserves the right to withdraw the Certificate.
18. If after three years no call has been issued the certificate will lapse.

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