

GUIDELINES FOR SYNOD MODERATORS

Your role is to be involved in the pastoral care of the student and of the candidate who is not commended.

You may be the first person, after the local Minister, to discuss a prospective candidate's sense of call. This stage may still be part of the enquiry.

The procedures vary from Synod to Synod. It may be that after the initial interview you cease to be involved until the final Synod interview. However, since candidates and their Ministers may choose to get in touch with you at any point in the process it is important that the working relationship and agreement about procedure between the Moderator and the Synod Candidating Secretary is known and obvious to all.

The following notes provide some general guidance:

It is important that initial discussions offer reflective judgement about the enquirer's vocation. If you or others have doubts or concerns about faith, understanding of the United Reformed Church, educational potential, or personality these need to be addressed before the formal candidating begins. Far more hurt is caused by perceived rejection later in the process.

For this reason, it is important at the outset to know that an enquirer satisfies the pre-assessment criteria (see - 'Candidating and Pre-Assessment for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community 2020'). If there are problems, lack of educational qualifications or less than two years membership of the United Reformed Church in particular, a course of action that will overcome such problems needs to be agreed. All concerned need to be clear about the length of time such a course of action will take and therefore the possible length of any candidating and assessment process.

At this point, if there appear to be any unusual circumstances presented by the enquirer, a conversation with the Secretary for Ministries may be useful.

Enquirers and their own Ministers should be encouraged to see the pre-assessment criteria in a positive light. If there is to be a delay before formal candidating begins it should be seen not as a setback or discouragement but as a period of spiritual and personal growth.

The local Minister's attitude to and role in the pre-assessment stage is important. It may be your task to support the Minister if a member of their congregation cannot proceed to candidating immediately.

It may be that an enquirer approaches you at first because of personal difficulties with a local Minister or church. Such a situation will be complex and delicate but the Church as a whole needs

to offer an opportunity for vocations to be tested which are not hampered by individual animosities and as Moderator it may be your task to find the way through such a circumstance.

Since General Assembly 2007, the formal assessment process has proceeded as follows: Church Meeting decision, Synod decision, the Assessment Board makes the final decisions about forwarding a candidate for training and the Education and Learning Board decides the method of training. These decisions are taken after the Assessment Conference interviews and candidates will be informed of the decisions within two weeks of the Conference. The process can be halted at either the Church Meeting or Synod interview stages

- if you act as Candidating officer please also read the guidelines for the Synod Candidating officer

Checklist ~

- The initial interview. Check that the potential candidate:
 - has been a member of the United Reformed Church for at least two years prior to candidating;
 - conforms to age criteria set by the General Assembly;
 - can give evidence that they are able to undertake the academic aspects of ministerial training. (The minimum requirements will be those agreed from time to time by General Assembly on the advice of the Education and Learning Committee See 'Candidating and assessment for the ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work – pre-assessment criteria.)
 - understands the assessment process.
- where there is a Synod Candidating Secretary hand the process to them
 - Where there are problems with regard to the basic pre-assessment criteria agree a programme for the satisfaction of these with the potential candidate in collaboration with the Synod Candidating Secretary.
 - Ensure the candidate understands the different roles the Moderator and Synod Candidating Secretary will play in their candidature.
- Ensure the candidate's Minister understands and supports the process and has arranged to accompany the candidate to a meeting of Synod.
- Ensure there are support mechanisms in place for:
 - the candidate,
 - the candidate's family or those giving close support.
- Ensure there are mechanisms in place for identifying other forms of ministry if the candidate is not accepted for training for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work.
- Ensure the interviewers appointed by Synod have received training for the task.

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