

# Paper D2

## What is the right size for the Education and Learning Committee?

### Education and Learning Committee

#### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council accepts the revised membership of the Education and Learning Committee and agrees with the transition planning.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	A report from the task group established to review the membership of the Education and Learning Committee, together with their recommendations.
<b>Main points</b>	The recommendation is to: 1. Reduce the size of the committee from 25 to 18; and 2. Update the terms of reference for all the roles.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Education and Learning Committee Way forward, General Assembly, 2020.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The General Secretary, the Clerk of General Assembly and Nominations Committee (Convenor, Secretary and Convenor Elect).

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	A reduction in the costs associated with physical meetings of the committee.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None as the ecumenical representative (from the Methodist Church) remains a key role.

## What is the right size for the Education and Learning Committee?

### 1. Introduction

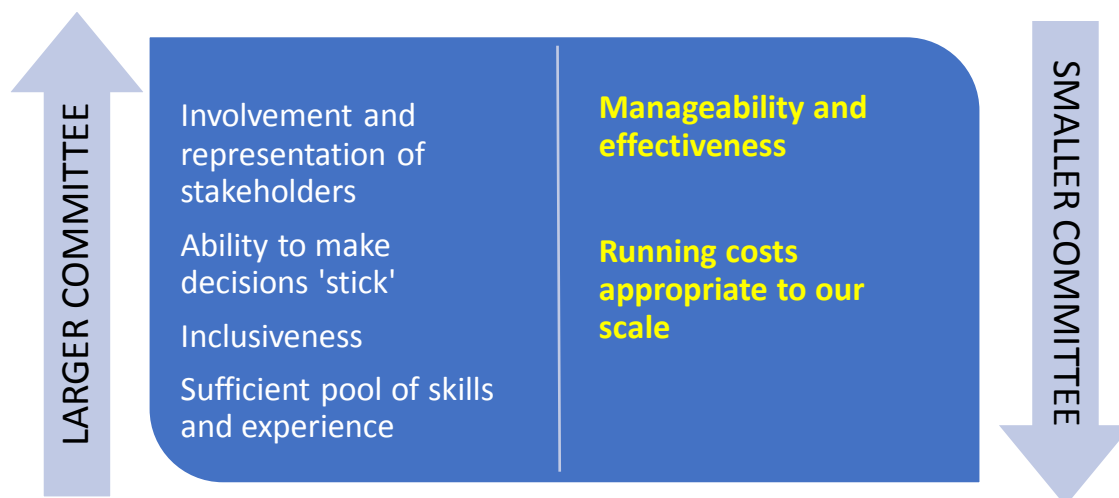
1.1 One of the tasks in the Education and Learning Committee's strategic plan (The Way Forward, agreed by General Assembly in 2020) was to develop proposals for the size and composition of the committee. During the Education and Learning Committee meeting in May 2020, a task group was commissioned to consider the size and make-up of the committee. Chris Atherton, Mary Thomas, Martin Truscott, Sam White and Alan Yates were asked to report back to the committee with proposals as soon as practical. Following discussions in the September 20 and January 21 committee meetings the following proposals were agreed by the committee.

### 2. Trade-offs involved in determining the best size of the committee

2.1 The Education and Learning Committee is tasked by Assembly to enable the URC to be a *church committed to life-long learning where there is integrated education and training offered to the whole people of God*. For the committee to deliver that brief it needs:

- Authority: delegated to us by General Assembly;
- Accountability: for our decisions and actions;
- Involvement: by those we serve (*the whole people of God*); and
- Trust: from the denomination, both from the leaders and the members.

2.2 Achieving these conditions, particularly Involvement and Trust, are made easier the larger the committee is. However, the larger the committee is the more difficult it is to manage and the more resources it consumes. Clearly, there needs to be a trade-off between these opposing influences. The diagram below summarises the key trade-offs involved. The drivers in white all encourage the use of a large committee of 20+ people. The ones in yellow lead us to use a small committee of less than ten people, say. In simple terms, manageability and effectiveness are traded off against involvement and communication.



### 3. Deliberations

3.1 The group were agreed that executive committees (ie committees that make decisions, not simply coordinate other bodies) work best if they have no more than about ten members. Not only are they easier to manage, but the members also get sufficient 'air-time' and

therefore feel fully involved in, and committed to, their decisions. Ten was put forward as a starting point for the discussions.

- 3.2 The committee currently consists of three groups of people:
  1. Ten members recommended by Nominations Committee and appointed by General Assembly (including the secretary and convenor);
  2. Eight committee-invited, non-voting members; and
  3. Seven staff and ex-officio members.
- 3.2 The task group explored the possibility of reducing duplicated roles (such as RCL Principals), on the basis that this retains a level of communication while reducing the size of the committee. However, the three RCLs are significantly different, and they represent one of the major investments made by Education and Learning. The other significant area of duplication on the committee are the six Assembly-nominated members 'without portfolio' (in other words, members who represent Assembly and have no other Education and Learning role). The task group believe that with improved role descriptions the effectiveness of this group of members can be maintained with half their number. The recommended key elements of the role descriptions for Education and Learning Committee members is given in Appendix A.
  - It was decided that *all three RCL Principals* should remain on the committee, with only one being a voting member (as is currently the case).
  - Our recommendation is to *reduce the number of without portfolio members from six to three.*
- 3.3 The use of the term 'without portfolio' should not be viewed as a negative description but is used to signal how their role differs from other Assembly appointed members who represent specific interests, such as the CYDO representative. In the words of the Nominations Convenor:

*They [without portfolio members] are the main voting members, their role and responsibility being to act in the interest of General Assembly, to exercise good judgement and perspective, especially when competing priorities are argued by 'portfolio' members of the committee. While they may not have specified responsibilities within the committee, they are nominated according to their experience in some area of Education and Learning according to the specific needs of the committee at the time. The Nominations Committee makes a point of looking for people with relevant skills and experience.*
- 3.4 In conjunction with this it is recommended that a number of the committee invited roles should be Assembly appointments. These are the *CYDO and EM1 Student representatives*. Being Assembly appointees would confer voting membership on these roles, which indicates their importance.
  - a. Communication with synod leadership teams remains vital so a *Synod Moderator representative* will continue to be invited as a non-voting member.
  - b. Ministries and Education and Learning Committee are working very closely together, and therefore it is wise to continue to invite *the Ministries Secretary* as a non-voting member.
  - c. Similarly, we cherish the relationship we have with *the Methodist Church* and will continue to invite a *representative* as a non-voting member.
- 3.5 It should be noted that with the reduction in members recommended by the Nominations Committee it could make it more difficult for the Nominations Committee to achieve the desired balance of gender, ethnicity etc. To alleviate this issue the Education and Learning Committee will liaise with Nominations to seek the best possible balance when new 'non-portfolio' members are to be identified.

- 3.6 The final area of change is the involvement of staff and ex-officio officers. All of the ex-officio officers (the *General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary Discipleship and the GA Moderators – elect, current and immediate past*) have the right to attend Education and Learning Committee meetings and we will uphold that right.
- 3.7 It has been the practice recently to invite, as non-voting members, the EM2/3 Programme Officer, the Stepwise Programme Officer and the Instructional Designer to the meeting.
- The recommendation, following consultation with the staff, is to only invite them to join for particular agenda items where they have a specific contribution to make. Our experience with video conferencing will enable limited participation to be managed efficiently.
  - *The Education and Learning Secretary's PA* will continue to be invited to the meeting as a minute taker.
- 3.8 The length of service for all Assembly appointed members remains four years, except for:
- The RCL Principal with voting rights whose term will be one year; and
  - The EM1 student whose term will also be one year, with the possibility of being reappointed for a second year if appropriate.

#### 4. Transition

- 4.1 The only transition issue that needs managing is the reduction of the six without-portfolio Assembly appointees down to three. One position is unfilled at present and would be removed if this resolution is agreed. Of the five filled positions one will end in 2021, two in 2022 and two in 2024. The three positions that will come to an end by 2022 will be asked (with no pressure) if they would like to leave the post early. If two or more would like to retire early that will be taken into account in the transition planning. Otherwise, the committee will take its final shape by GA in 2022.

#### 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The table in Appendix B provides a summary of the changes recommended. In total, the membership of the committee will reduce from 25 to 18. We do not anticipate any significant reduction in denominational involvement, communication, expertise or Assembly scrutiny from these changes.
- 5.2 The Education and Learning Committee put forward the following resolution for the consideration of Mission Council:

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council accepts the revised membership of the Education and Learning Committee and agrees with the transition planning.**

## Appendix A: Key elements of the Education and Learning Committee member role description

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The booklet 'They've asked me to be a committee member' ([https://urc.org.uk/images/Churches/Theyve\\_asked\\_me\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_committee\\_member.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/images/Churches/Theyve_asked_me_to_be_a_committee_member.pdf)) provides a full and accurate description of the role and responsibilities of a typical member of our Assembly Committees. The specific additional responsibilities for the Education and Learning Committee are described below.

### 2. Education and Learning Committee member responsibilities

- 2.1 The Education and Learning Committee has a total of seven Assembly appointed members. Four of whom have distinct job or post-related responsibilities:
- RCL Principal representative: only one of the RCL principals is invited to be a voting member, the others are non-voting members;
  - TDO Network representative: whose role includes ensuring the interests and concerns of the teams who are involved with training and development in the synods are considered;
  - CYDO representative: whose role includes ensuring the interests and concerns of the teams who are involved with children and youthwork in the synods are considered;
  - EM1 student representative: whose role includes ensuring the interests and concerns of all EM1 students studying in our RCLs are considered.
- 2.2 Note that the Nominations Committee will be guided in their recommendations for these positions by the networks the positions represent.
- 2.3 The remaining three Assembly appointed members have been classified 'without portfolio'. In other words, they are appointed not because of a present job or position within the URC but are appointed to look after the interests of the United Reformed Church as a whole. These members are expected to:
- Use all their gifts to support the aims of the Education and Learning Committee;
  - To accept collective responsibility for all Education and Learning Committee decisions;
  - To adopt fully the 'blended' working practices of the committee, such as the use of email and video conferencing;
  - To ensure the interests and concerns of the denomination as a whole are considered.

**Appendix B: Summary of the proposed membership changes.**

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP	PROPOSED MEMBERSHIP	NOTES
<b>Assembly appointed members:</b>	<b>Assembly appointed members:</b>	
Convenor	Convenor	
Secretary	Secretary	
RCL Principal representative	RCL Principal representative	Nominated by the RCL Principals
Synod Training & Development Officer	Synod TDO Network representative	Nominated by the TDO+ Network
Six nominated members, 'w/o portfolio'	CYDO representative	Nominated by the C&YW Committee
1 Mrs Adella Pritchard (2022)	EM1 student representative	Nominated by the RCL Principals
2 Revd Martin Truscott (2022)	Three nominated members, 'w/o portfolio'	To ensure the interests of Assembly are met and voices of the wider URC are heard
3 Mr Rudolph Wontumi (2021)	1 ?	
4 Mrs Margaret Marshall (2024)	2 ?	
5 Revd Tim Meachin (2024)	3 ?	
6 Vacant		
<b>Invited (non-voting) members:</b>	<b>Invited (non-voting) members:</b>	
Inter Synod resource sharing task force rep.		Invited for specific agenda items as required
Synod Moderator rep.	Synod Moderator representative	
CYDO rep.		'Converted' into Assembly appointee
The other two RCL Principals	The other two RCL Principals	
EM1 student rep.		'Converted' into Assembly appointee
Ministries secretary	Ministries secretary	
Methodist Church rep.	Methodist Church representative	
<b>Staff members:</b>	<b>Staff members:</b>	
E&L PA & minute taker	E&L PA & minute taker	
EM2 & 3 Programme Officer		Invited for specific agenda item as required
Stepwise Programme Officer		Invited for specific agenda item as required
Stepwise Instructional Designer		Invited for specific agenda item as required
<b>Ex-officio members</b>	<b>Ex-officio members</b>	
General Secretary	General Secretary	
Deputy General Secretary Discipleship	Deputy General Secretary Discipleship	
GA Mods: ususally only one attends)	GA Mods: ususally only one attends)	
<b>TOTAL ATTENDEES = 25</b>	<b>TOTAL ATTENDEES = 18</b>	