

Paper H3

Ministries Committee

Proposed amendments to
the Structure of the United
Reformed Church

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



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Basic Information

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Action required	Approval by Mission Council and referral to synods.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council gives first approval to the following changes to the Structure:</p> <p>Functions of synods: 2(4)(A)(xvi) to consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministry and to candidates for any form of full-time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the ministry, determine their eligibility for a call. ministries of word and sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them, if approved, to the Assembly for decision, and, in partnership with the relevant Resource Centre for Learning, to give oversight pastoral care to such candidates during their training.</p> <p>Functions of Ecumenical United Areas: 2(5)(A)(vi) to consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of word and sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them, if approved, to the synod for decision.</p> <p>Functions of General Assembly: New function [numbering to be determined]: to consider on the recommendation of synods applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of word and sacraments and church related community work to oversee their training and to determine their eligibility for a call.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To make changes to the Structure consequent upon Resolution 40 of General Assembly 2007, and a change consequent upon changes in the process of candidacy for service abroad.
Main points	These changes should have been made in 2007 to implement Resolution 40, but this was overlooked at the time.

Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2007, Resolution 40 – Record pp 51-54, Reports pp 163-6.
Consultation has taken place with...	Clerk to Assembly All synods notified of proposal; three synods responded Mission Committee (regarding the reference to service abroad).

Summary of Impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

Proposed amendments to the Structure of the United Reformed Church

1. Assembly 2007 passed a very lengthy resolution (Resolution 40) relating to the process for interviewing and assessing applicants for recognition as candidates for the ministry, and the oversight of candidates in training. The principles agreed by Assembly have been operated successfully since, and we believe that over the past seven years we have developed robust procedures for ensuring that Synods and Assembly work in close partnership in these matters.
2. Unfortunately, nobody noticed in 2007 that the passing of Resolution 40 required amendments to the Structure of the United Reformed Church. Now that this has been drawn to our attention, we are introducing the required changes for first approval by Mission Council, followed by referral to Synods, and ratification by Assembly in 2016.
3. Alongside the ratification of the changes to the Structure, we will also bring a resolution to Assembly noting the refinements to our procedures which have developed since 2007 and formally reporting the appeals procedure which has been operated since 2008. This will give Assembly its first opportunity for nine years to discuss the procedures for recognition of candidates for ministry and their pastoral care, and will ensure continued Assembly approval for our decision-making and oversight arrangements.
4. We wish to emphasise that this will not result in any changes to the procedures which have operated successfully since 2007. This is simply a 'tidying up' exercise, ensuring that the Structure of the URC provides an accurate account of the functions of the various councils of the church.

5. Clause 2(4)(A)(xvi) currently give Synods responsibility for assessing applicants for full-time service abroad. This clause has not been altered since 1972, although the formation of CWM in 1977 in fact changed the situation. Any applicant for full-time service abroad through the URC would now be referred to the application process of CWM, in which Synods play no formal role, so this wording would be removed as it is no longer necessary.
6. In the light of comments received, we would note that the Structure uses one word and one phrase in a technical way, which varies from ordinary usage:
 - i. the word 'decision' refers to the FINAL decision on candidacy, not the intermediate decisions of church meeting whether to refer an applicant to Synod, or of a synod whether or not to refer an applicant to Assessment Board.
 - ii. The phrase 'candidate for ministry' refers to those whose call has been affirmed by the Church as a whole, and at earlier stages applicants are called 'applicants for recognition as candidates'. This is consistent with ecumenical usage.

We do not propose to change these usages, as to do so would require more extensive re-writing of the Structure than we believe is justified.