

# Paper D2

Education and learning committee  
Budget augmentation for EM1  
student support

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

## Education and learning committee: Budget augmentation for EM1 student support

### Basic Information

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<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p>1. <b>Mission Council recognises the priority given to the funding of ministers in stipendiary service and students preparing for such service expressed during the discussion of the subsequently withdrawn resolution 16 at General Assembly 2014.</b></p> <p>2. <b>Mission Council resolves that the education and learning budget for 2015 should be increased by up to £130,000 and kept at that level for the foreseeable future to enable the numbers of full-time students to be maintained at current levels.</b></p>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	That Mission Council asks the education and learning committee to prepare plans to cut other areas of its budget in order to protect EM1 student maintenance levels within the current committee budget.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To complete the implementation of resolution 20 of General Assembly in 2012 which reduced the education and learning budget by £200,000.
<b>Main points</b>	Maintaining the levels of support to EM1 students since 2012 has been possible through temporarily underfunding the colleges where EM1 is carried out. This is not a sustainable strategy.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Papers H, H1, H2 for Mission Council May 2013. Resolution 16 for General Assembly 2014.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Resource Centres for Learning, United Reformed Church treasurer, relevant task groups established by the education and learning finance sub-committee, General Assembly 2014.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	The education and learning committee will overspend its budget unless this change is implemented.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No direct impacts.

# Budget augmentation for EM1 student support

## 1. The current situation

1.1 In 2012, General Assembly passed Resolution 20 which made cuts from most of the standing committees of General Assembly. The reduction in the education and learning (E&L) budget was £200,000 from 2012 to 2013 on the 2012 level of £1.8m.

1.2 During a detailed extensive consultation with the stakeholders of the E&L committee in 2011/12 it had been anticipated that there would need to be reshaping of EM1 student support given that it is the largest budget line within the E&L committee's budget. However it was also recognised that this could not be done quickly given the need for candidates to have an idea of the eventual levels of support available to them during the candidating process. Therefore other areas of the E&L budget were reduced first.

1.3 The annual EM3 allowance was reduced from £700 to £350; the number of TLS weekends was cut from 4 to 3 for each year and TLS materials were taken online instead of being printed; the EM2 programme was reshaped to reduce the number of weekends attended by EM2 ministers from 6 to 5 in their usual 3 year period; EM1 student grants were frozen at 2012 levels; and funding was temporarily cut to the three RCLs with reserves i.e. the three Colleges. This latter cut amounted to £76,000.

1.4 Out of the total education and learning budget of £1.6M per annum (2013), EM1 is the largest single element. The committee has not wished to limit the number of students by financial constraints. Therefore under our current system the actual expenditure is determined by student numbers and family circumstances. The education and learning committee's budget for student maintenance and support in the financial year to December 2013 was £496,000. The actual cost was £564,635 i.e. nearly £69,000 higher than anticipated.

1.5 It is untenable to continue to expect the colleges to use their reserves. Westminster College has been subsidising the United Reformed Church for some years through not charging the market rate for accommodation. This was understandable in the days before the 2013/14 redevelopment, but the business plan of the college which has been agreed by the finance committee of the United Reformed Church is based on charging the going rate for the excellent facilities offered to students. Northern College is an independent charity and it could be argued that it should not be using its reserves to enable the United Reformed Church to balance its books. The Scottish College has been using its reserves for its primary purposes for some years, so the underfunding from the United Reformed Church will lead to those reserves dwindling more rapidly than they otherwise would have done.

## 2. The Proposal

2.1 The education and learning committee spent the two years from General Assembly in 2012 preparing a proposal for setting up a new system of funding EM1 student grants. In the process they arrived at a fairer system for assessing student grants which will not change the overall disbursement of £550,000 assigned to student grants but will ensure that this is distributed more fairly to those in greatest need. The committee also developed a proposal for setting up a Ministerial Green Shoots Fund which would have been developed over the coming years.

2.2 There was not enough time at General Assembly 2014 to reach a conclusion on the Ministerial Green Shoots Fund proposal, but it was clear that Assembly was not in favour of it, re-iterating instead its intention that the funding of stipendiary ministry in both preparation and deployment is a core function of the United Reformed Church and should be properly and entirely supported through the ministry and mission fund (M&M).

2.3 This leaves the education and learning committee with a significant dilemma, for Resolution 16 clearly stated that if £130,000 is not found from sources beyond the M&M fund the church will have to reassess its adult education priorities and commitment to whole church learning.

2.4 The anticipated expenditure on EM1 student support is lower for 2014 than it was for 2013. There are known to be an unusually large number of leavers in June 2015. The future level of funding required is unpredictable because of the unknown numbers of candidates exploring their vocation and the wide variation in their personal and household circumstances. So it may be that the overspend of £69,000 in 2013 was an unusual peak and will not recur. But the £76,000 cut from RCL budgets is real and continuing.  $£69,000 + £76,000 = £145,000$ . The education and learning committee has been conservative in estimating that the amount needed to fully support EM1 students and restore full funding to RCLs is £130,000 but that is the upper figure that is likely to be needed.

2.5 The education and learning budget supports the salaries of 18 full-time equivalent (fte) teaching and administrative posts for TLS, Westminster College, Northern College, the Windermere Centre, the Scottish College and the education and learning office. The four Resource Centres for Learning fund the rest of their staffing and running costs from other sources of incomes such as accommodation provision and investments.

### 3. Consequences

3.1 The education and learning committee, in common with other standing committees of General Assembly, is charged with keeping spending within the agreed budget. In order to achieve the current target of £1.6m the alternatives to finding the additional funding for EM1 student support from M&M would be either to discontinue significant aspects of lay development such the TLS programme or the Windermere Centre or to shift the emphasis within training for stipendiary service from full-time to part-time EM1 pathways for people preparing for the ministry of Word and sacraments. The Mission Council meeting in May 2013 was not in favour of EM1 pathways being shaped by financial, rather than educational, principles.