

GUIDELINES FOR SYNOD CANDIDATING SECRETARIES

As the Synod Candidating Secretary you have a key role to play throughout the assessment process, ensuring that assessment is a collaborative exercise undertaken by the councils of the Church. It will be for each Synod to decide whether the responsibilities noted as Synod responsibilities will be assigned to the Synod Candidating Secretary or to some other person within the Synod in collaboration with the Candidating Secretary.

The Synod Candidating Secretary will be responsible for ensuring that:

- candidates, and all involved with them, understand the process of candidating and assessment.
- candidates are given accurate information about age of entry and funding of training.
- Synod have appointed someone to talk through the financial implications of a period of training with a candidate or the candidate has been referred to the Secretary for Education and Learning.
- the Synod has a trained panel of interviewers and the Synod committee responsible for interviewing candidates fully understands the responsibilities of the Synod under the Assessment procedure agreed by General Assembly 2007. This means that Synod must ensure that:
 - a) not only is there a Synod interview which will make a decision as to whether a candidate goes to an Assessment Conference or not, but that there is normally a prior interview arranged within the local grouping of churches relating to the candidate's home church which provides local knowledge about the candidate to the main Synod interviewers. (If a local interview is not conducted the synod need to make alternative arrangements to ensure local knowledge is obtained.)
 - b) the Synod makes certain there is an assessed service and any 'shadowing' or mentoring for Ministry of Word and Sacraments candidates if that was their practice before July 2007.
 - c) the Synod, in consultation with the URC's CRCW Development Worker, arranges for Church Related Community Work candidates to visit established CRCW posts and Workers.

At the point when an enquirer makes the decision to continue to test a call and begin to candidate, the Synod Candidating Secretary initiates a series of conversations/interviews:

- The candidate may not satisfy all the pre-assessment criteria (the requirements - Pre-Assessment Criteria – see 'Candidating and Assessment for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers – pre-assessment criteria'). If so, a programme needs to be agreed so that these criteria may be fulfilled before the formal candidating begins.
- The Secretary for Ministries needs to be advised at an early stage of prospective candidates, the length of time they will take to reach the formal candidating stage and therefore the likely date of attendance at an Assessment Conference.
- The timetable of the individual candidate's assessment needs to be agreed, however far in advance, so there is co-ordination between the Church Meeting, Synod and Assessment Conference interviews. Candidates need to be kept informed of the dates of interviews. Candidates need to know that they are definitely booked into an Assessment Conference at least four weeks in advance in order to make personal arrangements about work, family and travel.
- The Secretary for Ministries needs to be informed when formal candidating begins. The Synod Candidating Secretary should try to ensure that the candidate's papers reach the Secretary for Ministries by the published deadline (normally not later than ten weeks before an Assessment Conference).
- Arrangements need to be made with the Secretary for Ministries for a meeting between representatives of the Synod Ministries Committee and the Assessment Board following the Assessment Conference to discuss any implications of the decision reached regarding the candidate.

Checklist ~

1. Before the application form is given, check that:
 - the candidate has been in membership of the United Reformed Church for at least two years prior to candidating,
 - the candidate conforms to the age criteria set by the General Assembly,
 - and that there is evidence the candidate is able to undertake the academic aspects of ministerial training and has the minimum educational qualifications. (If there is any uncertainty as to whether a candidate satisfies the criteria the Secretary for Education and Learning should be contacted as soon as possible to obtain clarification).

If the potential candidate does not satisfy these requirements agree a programme in order that they may do so. Do not let the individual proceed until this is completed. You should consult with the Secretary for Ministries and the Secretary for Education and Learning.

2. 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

3. When the pre-assessment criteria are fulfilled the candidate is given the application form check that:
 - The Synod Ministries Committee or equivalent has been informed of a potential candidate.
 - Arrangements have been made for:
 - ✓ a service and sermon to be assessed. This is not required for those candidating for Church Related Community Work ministry;
 - ✓ the candidate to attend a Church meeting and Synod meeting;
 - ✓ and for any other exercises to be set up e.g. shadowing of a minister;
 - ✓ in the case of CRCW candidates a visit to an established post has been arranged;
 - ✓ the Secretary for Ministries has been informed of a potential candidate;
 - ✓ a provisional date for attendance at an Assessment Conference has been agreed;
 - ✓ a provisional date for a Synod interview has been arranged;
 - ✓ provision has been made for a meeting between the Synod interviewers and representatives of the Assessment Board.

4. Check that
 - the candidate has filled in an application form;
 - the candidate is aware of the arrangements regarding medical and psychological checks prior to beginning training and ordained/commissioned ministry;
 - the candidate has the necessary educational qualifications;
 - the candidate has completed the form relating to disclosure of criminal convictions and court orders;
 - for a candidate for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments there is a written report, on at least one service conducted and one sermon preached, by assessors appointed by Synod;
 - the candidate for Church Related Community work has prepared a 10 minute presentation for the Assessment Conference;
 - the candidate has attended Church Meeting and a Synod meeting and supplied a reflective account of the meetings;
 - the references, including the Minister's reference have been obtained;
 - a Church meeting report and commendation has been obtained;
 - the family or those close to the candidate and offering support have been visited;
 - the Synod decision and report has been obtained;

All the candidate's papers are sent to the Secretary for Ministries at least by the published deadline (usually at least 10 weeks before the Assessment Conference). Please do NOT send them as one PDF document.

5. After the Assessment Conference, check that:

- a copy of the Assessment and Education and Learning Boards' decisions have been lodged with the Synod.

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