

Paper A2

Terms of Reference for the Ministries Committee and its sub-committees

Business Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd John Bradbury john.bradbury@urc.org.uk The Revd Mary Thomas dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith nicola.furley-smith@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 3 General Assembly adopts the Terms of Reference for the new Ministries Committee and its sub-committees. Resolution 4 General Assembly delegates authority to take any necessary urgent decisions on behalf of the Ministries Committee to the two previous Committee Convenors (Education and Learning and Ministries) along with the DGS (Ministries), until the new Ministries Committee is established in late autumn 2025.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Under the new structure of the Offices of the General Assembly, the Terms of Reference agreed at GA 2024 have been updated to reflect the remit of the new committee.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	A5 Terms of Reference for Ministries Committee GA 2024.
Consultation has taken place with...	N/A

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

Committee	Ministries.
Convenor	Appointed by General Assembly following the nominations safer recruitment process (to be included in the numbers below in committee makeup).
Secretary	The Deputy General Secretary (Ministries).
Members	<p>Five members with experience of the ministries and a range of learning and serving opportunities across the church, including eldership, lay preaching, training and development, children and youth (four lay and one ordained);</p> <p>A Synod Moderator;</p> <p>Convener of the Accreditations sub-committee;</p> <p>Convener of the Assessment Board;</p> <p>An RCL Principal representing College Connective;</p> <p>A URC Youth representative;</p> <p>A representative from the successor to the Transitional Forum (or its successor: Ministries and Learning Forum);</p> <p>Head of Ministries Learning and Development.</p>
In attendance when required (to cover their areas of expertise)	<p>Convener of MoM sub-committee;</p> <p>Convener of Retired Minister' Housing sub-committee (or its successor);</p> <p>Relevant staff members.</p>
Length of term	Initial terms of four years which may be extended for a further term.
Minute Secretary	PA to the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries).
Frequency of meetings	Five times per year (36 hours). January, April, June, September, November (four online and one in person).
Subgroups/sub-committees	The committee has the authority to create sub-committees from time to time to forward its's work. Where those sub-committees carry out delegated tasks from the functions of the General Assembly, the Assembly itself shall delegate them through adopting terms of reference or resolution. Otherwise, the committee shall determine the

	structure of its sub-committees as necessary. As of Assembly July 2025, the sub-committees are: Assessment Board; Accreditations (CRCW and SCM) sub-committee; Maintenance of the Ministries sub-committee; Retired Ministers' Housing sub-committee; Ministries and Learning Forum; Lay Preaching Advocates Network.
Accountability and reporting duties	General Assembly.
Terms of Reference review	Every four years.

The committee is responsible for the formally accredited ministries of the Church, as determined by the General Assembly from time to time. Currently, they are Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Work, Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers and Eldership. Through its main committee and sub-committees, it is concerned with facilitating the ministry of the whole people of God in the United Reformed Church through working to promote the policies of the church; advocating ministry in its widest sense; supporting ministry in its varied forms; facilitating the formation, training and learning for accredited ministries of the church.

The committee is intentionally committed to taking seriously the place of safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion, Net Zero and being an anti-racist church in all we discuss and decide and listening to all voices.

Responsibilities

The Ministries Committee carries the General Assembly's responsibility and care for the formally accredited ministries of the United Reformed Church, currently: Ministry of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Work, Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching, Locally Recognised Worship Leading, Pioneering both lay and special category, and Eldership.

This responsibility includes all life long learning for the accredited ministries of the church named above, including funding and other educational elements.

1. The committee, along with Synods, has concern for the well-being of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers, Locally Recognised Worship Leaders, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers, Special Category Pioneers and Elders, including supervision where appropriate, appraisal, self-evaluation and counselling.
2. The committee has concern for those in chaplaincies in industry, healthcare, higher and further education, prisons and in the armed forces and 'special category' ministry and how their service relates to the URC through the councils of the church.
3. It has a number of interlinked and interdependent areas, and works closely with the Faith in Action Committee, the CYDO+ team, the Synod Training and Development+ Network, the College Connective and the Transitional Forum (Ministries and Learning Forum).

4. The committee has oversight of the Ministries budget.
5. The committee has oversight of the Assessment Board and all relevant sub-committees.
6. The committee's particular responsibilities are:
 - 6.1 Advocacy, recruitment, selection and training of candidates for Ministry of the Word and Sacraments (MWS) and Church Related Community Worker (CRCWs) in co-operation with the Synods.
 - 6.2 Relations with Resources Centres for Learning, Synods and external bodies which train MWS and CRCWs, both stipendiary and non stipendiary, Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers, Locally Recognised Worship Leaders, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers, Special Category Pioneers and Elders on behalf of the URC.
 - 6.3 Oversight along with Synods of the EM2 and EM3 processes, policies and funding.
 - 6.4 Development and revision of policies and processes to support the ministries of the church.
 - 6.5 Development and revision of policies and processes to support the ministries of the church.
 - 6.6 Development and revision of policies and processes and management of the statistics related to deployment.
 - 6.7 Development of new ministries to support the life and mission of the church.
 - 6.8 Oversight of lifelong learning for the accredited ministries of the church ensuring they are accessible, inclusive, integrated and involve cooperation and collaboration across the whole denomination; it has delegated authority from General Assembly under functions v vi vii as laid down in the *Structure* of the United Reformed Church in *The Manual*.
 - 6.9 Work with other committees to ensure best practice in relation to Ministries of the church.
 - 6.10 Work with the other departments to ensure best practice in relation to Ministries of the church.
 - 6.11 Any other pieces of work deemed necessary by the church.

Assessment board

The Assessment Board has delegated authority from General Assembly for assessing candidates for ministry under function xxix of the General Assembly. As such, it has its own Appeals Process. The functions of the Assessment Board are to:

1. Oversee the candidating process for Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers on behalf of the United Reformed Church.

2. Oversee Assessment Conferences each year, normally in March and November.
3. Hear any appeals to the Assessment Conference discernment decisions using the Assessment Board Appeals Process.
4. Oversee Education for Ministry Phase 1 training on behalf of the URC.
5. Hear concerns from the RCLs concerning students and, where necessary, implements the Amber Light Policy Stage 2 process to make decisions about the continuation of training for students.
6. Instigate any Occupational Health Assessments for students in EM as advised by the RCL.
7. Administer Assessment Board Training to which all new assessors must attend before they can begin as an assessor including ASD awareness training.
8. Continually review processes to ensure best practice at all stages of candidating including Synod and Assessment Conferences, advising Synods of changes to the process as necessary.
9. Advise Ministries of the accreditation of students in training through the Accreditation (CRCW and SCM) sub-committee.
10. Oversee the annual meeting with Candidating Secretaries or equivalent and the Annual assessor training in October.
11. Any other matters as may, from time to time, be allocated by the Ministries Committee.

It meets as the Assessment Conferences in March and November and for the AGM in September. Its function is overseen by the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) and it reports to Ministries Committee.

Accreditations sub-committee

The Accreditations sub-committee has delegated authority from General Assembly for the consideration and management of Certificates of Eligibility under function xxi and xxiii of the General Assembly. The functions of the Accreditations sub-committee are to oversee:

1. The approval and subsequent monitoring of CRCW projects.
2. The approval and subsequent monitoring of SCM projects.
3. The approval and subsequent monitoring of new pioneering projects.
4. The consideration and management of Certificates of Eligibility.
5. The consideration and management of Certificates for Limited Service.
6. The maintenance of the Roll of Ministers and Roll of Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers.

7. Any other matters as may, from time to time, be allocated by the Ministries Committee.

It meets five times per year. It reports to Ministries Committee.

Maintenance of the Ministries sub-committee

Advises on the level of stipend and ministers' conditions of service through the 'Plan for Partnership'. It is also concerned for pensions through the Pensions Executive.

The functions of the sub-committee are to:

1. Advise on, and recommend the annual revisions to the stipend to, the Resources Committee using the agreed formula: the average of the Consumer Price Index for the latest month available (September) and the Average Weekly Earnings increase over the latest three months (June-August), for regular pay.
2. Advise on, and recommend the annual revisions to associated allowances for ministers to Resources Committee.
3. Recommend amendments to ministerial conditions of service, The Plan for Partnership, in the light of experience, legislation and recommendations from the office of the General Assembly staff.
4. Resolve questions where the circumstances do not exactly fit the Plan for Partnership, or where it may be appropriate to make an exception.
5. Oversight of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial remuneration, ensuring it is kept up to date.
6. Oversight of the NSM Expenses Policy, ensuring it is kept up to date.
7. Make decisions about the stipends of ministers who have been unable to work for some time through ill health.
8. Receive reports on pension matters and ill health retirements, made to each meeting by the Pensions Convenor to keep members up to date.
9. Any other matters as may, from time to time, be allocated by the Ministries Committee.

The committee meets twice a year, normally in April and September, but may conduct urgent business via email. It reports to Ministries Committee.

Retired Ministers' Housing sub-committee

The functions of the Retired Ministers' Housing sub-committee are to:

1. Be the point of liaison between Ministries and RMHS on behalf of the URC and tenants, ensuring that all eligible member are adequately housed and supported in retirement.
2. Raise matters with the RMHS directors in relation to the needs of retired ministers and/or spouses.
3. Be responsible for gathering data for projecting future housing requirements for RMHS (URC Minister's Data Privacy Policy 2019).

4. Determine each applicant's eligibility for RMHS housing provision.
5. Promote good practice amongst ministers in making provision for retirement, including: a seminar ten years before the expected date of retirement and pre-retirement course.
6. Seek additional funding support from URC Synods and Synod Trust companies through URC General Assembly resolutions.
7. Appeal for donations and legacies from URC local churches and church members, through appeals based on resolutions to the URC General Assembly.
8. Appeal for RMHS Volunteer Overseers from the URC membership through General Assembly or Synod meetings.
9. Undertake anything else General Assembly instructs it to do.

It meets three times a year, normally two weeks before the RMHS Board meets. It reports to Ministries Committee.

Ministries and Learning sub-committee (formerly the Transitional Forum)

It is made up of the three RCL Principals, a TDO+ rep, a CYDO+ rep to be nominated by the respective networks and have some experience of education as trainer, the DGS (Faith in Action) and the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries). The functions of the forum are to:

1. Be a place of oversight and coordination for the technical, policy, governance and finance decisions and actions for the education/learning work undertaken by the RCLs on behalf of the General Assembly.
2. Receive an agenda from the College Connective.

It meets once an academic term. It reports to both the Ministries Committee and the Faith in Action Committee. Others may be invited to join the group as need for specific expertise or knowledge arises.

College Connective

In 2024, it was decided that some of its responsibilities of E&L would be devolved primarily to the RCLs who, together with the Ministries and Faith in Action Committees, would have oversight and co-ordination for the technical, policy, governance and finance decisions and actions for the education and learning work transferred to them. This would be known as the Transitional Forum. It would meet termly.

At the same time, it was recognized that there needed to be a two way point of communication which would allow for needs and priorities of the RCLs to inform into URC church structures through the Transitional Forum (Ministries and Learning sub-committee).

The Transitional Forum (Ministries and Learning sub-committee) would therefore receive its agenda from the College Connective, an informal body made up of the three principals of the RCLs and the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries).

After General Assembly 2025, the Transitional Forum will be known as the Ministries and Learning Forum and would inform the work of both Ministries and Faith in Action Committees. Its functions are to:

1. Provide, co-ordinate and inspire the direction of the work of the Transitional Forum and its successor in relation to the education and learning work devolved to it by the URC.
2. Co-ordinate the RCLs EM2 provision on a three year rotation.
3. Oversight of developments in education for ministry.
4. Mutual support.

It reports to both the Ministries and Faith in Action Committees through the Forum, including budgetary issues. It meets three times per year (termly), including a 24 hours residential.

Lay Preaching Advocates Network

The functions of the sub-committee are to:

1. Be responsible for the advocacy of Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching and Locally Recognised Worship Leading within the United Reformed Church.
2. Support those who lead worship in the United Reformed Church.
3. Promote the recognition and value of lay preachers/worship leaders and encourage others to answer the call to this ministry whenever and wherever possible.
4. Raise issues and concerns in relation to Lay Preaching and Worship Leading to the Ministries Committee.
5. Act as a reference point on procedures and good practice.
6. Encourage and enable the production or updating of guidelines where appropriate.
7. Arrange an annual Consultation for Synod Advocates in cooperation with the Ministries Office.
8. Encourage and enable networking between Synod Advocates.

It meets twice a year in January and June, including the annual retreat/gathering of the Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching Advocates. It reports to Ministries Committee once a year.

Other work

Continuing Studies Fund

Its function is to:

1. Allocate grants of up to £500 for accredited learning.

Its business is conducted by the Officers of the Ministries Committee and a representative of the Resources Committee. It meets once a year.

Student Finance Panel

Its function is to:

1. Consider EM1 finance.

Its business is conducted by the Officers of the Ministries Committee and a representative of the Resources Committee. It meets once a year.

Risk management

The committee will review the Risk Register as it relates to its key responsibilities at least once per year, but will add additional risks as and when they arise.

Conducting business

Additional meetings can be scheduled, with reasonable notice, if business requires it. Decisions can be taken via email with the same rules of quoracy applying. Such decisions will be recorded by the Convenor/Secretary and noted at the next meeting with updates on progress as needed. Expertise from outside its membership can be utilised for projects and instruct task groups from beyond its membership to develop specific pieces of work.

Interim arrangements

General Assembly is asked to authorise the previous Committee Convenors, along with the DGS Ministries, to take any urgent decisions necessary between the end of General Assembly and the formation of the new committee in the autumn, to ensure necessary continuity of work.