

STANDARDS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND FORMATION: PHASE 2 FOR ORDAINED MINISTRIES

1. Source of Authority

Regulations

2.4 FORMATION AND EDUCATION FOR A MINISTER

- 2.4.1 (a) A candidate for Minister shall undertake formation and education for ministry in accordance with
- (i) the standards set by the Assembly; and
 - (ii) prescriptions set by the Ministerial Education Board or the body authorised by it.

3.7.4.3 MINISTERIAL EDUCATION BOARD

Responsibilities

- 3.7.4.3 (c) The responsibilities of the Ministerial Educational Board shall include the following:
- (5) ensuring that the courses and training that the theological college offers for the formation and education of Ministers in accordance with
 - (a) prescriptions set by the Ministerial Education Board or the body authorised by it to set prescriptions; and
 - (b) standards set by the Assembly.

2. Scope

These Standards provide a guideline to Uniting Church theological colleges and Ministerial Education Boards in each Synod, with regard to the formation and education of candidates for ordination as Ministers of the Word and Deacons.

3. Standards

VISION

1. Recognising that the Uniting Church in Australia seeks to “provide for the exercise by men and women of the gifts God bestows upon them, and will order her life in response to his call to enter more fully into her mission” (*Basis of Union* paragraph 13);
2. And that the Church is characterised by increasing diversity among its members and communities of both First and Second Peoples, and affirms the fundamental importance of God’s gift of diversity for the whole of the worship, witness and service of the Uniting Church through actions such as
 - i. the recognition of the UAICC (4th Assembly, 1985)
 - ii. the declaration that *We Are A Multicultural Church* (4th Assembly, 1985)
 - iii. the establishment of the *Covenant* between First Peoples (UAICC) and Second Peoples of the UCA (7th Assembly, 1994) and the adoption of the *Revised Preamble* to the *Constitution* (12th Assembly, 2009)
 - iv. the commitment of the Church to living faith and life cross-culturally, expressed in *Living with the Neighbour Who is Different* (9th Assembly, 2000) and *One Body Many Members, Living faith and life cross culturally* (13th Assembly, 2012)
3. And that the Church envisions Education for Ministry which will:
 - i. **foster** the centrality of the Scriptures in the life of the Church and the work of ministry; as described in the *Basis of Union*;

- ii. **inspire** the participation of the people of God in the mission of God revealed in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit;
- iii. **strengthen** resilience, passion and competence for ministry in multicultural and multifaith contexts of the 21st century;
- iv. **stimulate** lifelong learning and formation in the Christian life for all people;
- v. **celebrate** the shared ministry of the whole people of God;

The Assembly determines the following Standards to guide Uniting Church theological colleges and Ministerial Education Boards in each Synod, with regard to the formation and education of candidates for ordination as Ministers of the Word and Deacons:

FAITH, LIFE AND KNOWLEDGE

4. All aspects and elements of the education and formation of candidates for ordination as Ministers of the Word or Deacons shall be oriented towards the provision of Ministers who have made appropriate progress – as part of a life-long journey – in exhibiting the following attributes:
 - i. an understanding of God, a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and the capacity to articulate this contextually;
 - ii. the practice of Christian spiritual disciplines and embodying faith in Jesus Christ in their own lives;
 - iii. acknowledging a call by God through the Church to give themselves to the Ministry for which they are ordained, following Jesus' pattern of love and service;
 - iv. a mature knowledge of Christian tradition and the Biblical witness, and the ability to help the Church shape its future in the light of that tradition;
 - v. a capacity to articulate Christian faith in contextually appropriate ways;
 - vi. adherence to the *Basis of Union*;
 - vii. being equipped to help the Church be faithful to its identity and lead the Church in mission in a rapidly changing and diverse cultural and social context;
 - viii. commitment to the Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (1985) and working within the understandings expressed in the *Preamble to the Constitution* (2009);
 - ix. embodying the Church's declarations that *We Are A Multicultural Church* (1985), *Living with the Neighbour Who is Different* (2000), and *One Body Many Members, Living faith and life cross culturally* (2012)
 - x. a well-developed and reflective understanding of their identity as an ordained Minister within the Uniting Church;
 - xi. ability to engage the tasks of Ministry with critical imagination, courage, emotional maturity, theological judgment and self-reflection; and to exercise this Ministry within the ministry of the whole people of God;
 - xii. readiness for the practice of day-to-day Ministry, and the quality of being and awareness which gives integrity to the exercise of this practice;
 - xiii. the capacity for and commitment to intentional life-long learning;
 - xiv. the commitment to comply with the *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice*.
5. Those appointed by the Church to teach, supervise and mentor candidates shall embody the same attributes.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

6. The Church's basic approach to theological education is one in which the context and experience of Ministry is taken seriously and allowed to interact with the theological disciplines. The emphasis is not to be only on a mastery of academic knowledge, supplemented by field education. Rather, it is essential that there is an active interaction between culturally shaped insights, experiences of Ministry, and the academic disciplines. Candidates will study in an open learning environment where they are encouraged to question, to think creatively, to try new forms of Ministry and then to evaluate and reflect upon them theologically. Given the nature of contemporary Australian society, a significant portion of this study will take place in a multicultural and ecumenical context, where life in a multifaith society is in view.

7. The development of respectful relationships and a sense of community between Ministers and candidates is vital. Within this community, candidates will be able to explore Ministry and develop a sense of Ministerial identity, and Ministers may be exposed to new insights and expressions of faith relevant to their own Ministry development. In relation to this, each candidate should be attached to a mentor with experience in the Ministry and contexts for which the candidate is preparing; for spiritual counsel, ministerial formation and pastoral care. This is especially important for part-time or extension candidates.
8. The Church recognises that within some of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities a person's call to Ministry is normally discerned primarily by the community in which gifts and graces have been developed, rather than by an individual in his or her personal walk as a disciple. In this situation, flexible processes and adaptable forms of communication in the ongoing journey of discernment and formation are necessary. For example, the body with oversight of a candidate's formation may need to maintain good communication with the candidate's community to mitigate any sense that sending a candidate to college amounts to handing over a leader to be westernized and, thereby, rendered unfit for Ministry in that community.
9. Established degrees or diplomas in theology may not meet these Standards in the case of every candidate. For the information of those responsible for developing courses for particular candidates, the Church regards it as more important to see that candidates are prepared for Ministry than that they obtain a formal qualification. This is especially important in times when some who hear the call of God through the Church have limited formal education due to their particular life journey.
10. The Church anticipates diversity, collaboration and coordination between Synods in the development of the ordinand syllabus. The Church also anticipates the importance of flexibility within the program for individual candidates, recognising their prior learning and experience and their particular gifts and calling. Therefore, these Standards do not prescribe a detailed syllabus but the general parameters within which particular ordinand courses shall be developed. Each Synod and the UAICC, through its MEB, is responsible for the way it fills out the intention of the Standards in its particular missional context. (See, *One Body Many Members – Living Faith and Life Cross Culturally*, and the accompanying *Call to the Church*, 13th Assembly, 2012)

PATHWAYS

11. The outcomes desired at the end of Phase 2 encompass broad and coherent knowledge and skills for professional work. These will include the capacity for complex professional judgment, and the capacity for and commitment to intentional lifelong learning. The means to achieve these outcomes is an integrated formation program undertaken over a sustained period. This will entail a minimum of two years where a candidate presents with significant progress towards the development of the attributes, although a longer period of formation will be the norm. Such formation will be oriented towards the development of those attributes identified above in paragraph 4.
12. Such a program will take place within an educational and ecclesial context shaped and guided by the ethos of the Uniting Church, with oversight of the program undertaken by an approved Uniting Church college, under the direction of the relevant Ministerial Education Board. An MEB may recognise study undertaken in other contexts at its discretion and when the MEB regards such study as being of a satisfactory standard and consistent with the ethos of the Uniting Church. The Assembly encourages MEBs and their educational agencies to work co-operatively to develop programs of study for specific areas.
13. A variety of pathways for achieving these outcomes is encouraged, with each pathway to be developed in a culturally-appropriate and contextually-relevant manner which is student-focussed. The Assembly recommends that the following areas of learning are important to the integrative

program of learning undertaken during the process of formation: Christian scripture, history, and thought, discipleship and the life of faith, mission, and the practice of ministry (both Deacon Studies and Ministry of the Word Studies, as appropriate), in the context of relationship between First and Second Peoples in multicultural and multifaith Australia, with particular attention to the heritage, theology, polity and ethos of the UCA; including supervised field education experiences and formation programs mandated by the Assembly from time to time.

14. It is desirable that the pathway towards achieving the desired outcomes include either practical experience gained by working in an area of Diaconal Ministry or the Ministry of the Word; or studies in a non-church tertiary institution in areas related to Diaconal Ministry or the Ministry of the Word. Such studies may include, for example, community languages of First or Second Peoples, intercultural studies, community services, youth work, business administration, community development, organisational psychology, leadership, education, or communication. These studies may be undertaken before, during or after theological studies.
15. Flexibility in devising the pathways which enable candidates to achieve the desired outcomes will mean that candidates may proceed on a part-time basis; that academic studies may be undertaken by distance education; that some components may be completed in Phase Three; that mentoring of candidates and supervision of their formation may take place in diverse contexts; that due account will be given to the different perspectives of Diaconal Ministry and the Ministry of the Word; and that opportunity is provided to engage in exploration and study of areas which are more closely related to the particular field of Diaconal Ministry or Ministry of the Word for which they are preparing.

4. Related Documents

Education for Ministry Working Group, Mandate and Initial Formation

<http://assembly2015.uca.org.au/b9-formation-of-the-education-for-ministry-working-group/>

5. Definitions/Acronyms

Code of Ethics refers to the **Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Ministers in the Uniting Church in Australia** (whether in approved placements or not), as approved by the Twelfth Assembly in July 2009. (*Regulations* Division 1, adapted)

Deacon is a person recognised by the Church and set apart by ordination as a Deacon or a person who was set apart by commissioning or ordination as a Deaconess and was accredited as a Deacon in accordance with decisions of the Assembly or a person who was set apart by ordination and accredited as a Deacon in accordance with decisions of the Assembly. (*Constitution* Paragraph 3)

MEB refers to **Ministerial Education Board**, the body appointed within each Synod to exercise oversight of theological colleges and candidates for the specified ministries of Minister of the Word and Deacon. (Its responsibilities are detailed in *Regulations* 3.7.4.3.)

Minister means a Minister of the Word, Deacon or Deaconess. (*Constitution* Paragraph 3)

Minister of the Word is a person recognised by the Church and set apart by ordination as a Minister of the Word or a person who was set apart by ordination and accredited as a Minister of the Word in accordance with decisions of the Assembly. (*Constitution* Paragraph 3)

UAICC refers to the **Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress**, which means the Aboriginal and Islander body which is recognised by the Assembly as having responsibility for oversight of the ministry of the Church with the Aboriginal and Islander people of Australia. (*Constitution* Paragraph 3)

UCA refers to **The Uniting Church in Australia**.

6. Review

Review of these Standards is to be undertaken by the Assembly Working Group on Education for Ministry at a date to be determined, within five years of the adoption of these Standards.

7. Version History

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| Nov '15 | First revision of existing Rules undertaken by E4MWG (Melbourne) |
| Mar '16 | Draft revision of Standards reviewed by E4MWG Teleconference |
| Apr-May '16 | Comments solicited and received from MEBs and educational agencies |
| June '16 | Revised Standards reviewed by full E4MWG meeting (Melbourne) |
| July '16 | Standards approved by full E4MWG meeting (Melbourne) |

Approved by the Assembly Standing Committee, November 2016