

Ministries Training Network

Handbook for Facilitators



Church of Scotland
Ministries Council

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I: Proposal for a Dynamic Collegial Structure: The Ministries Training Network

Report to the General Assembly 2007

Aim

To create and establish a dynamic collegial structure which provides relevant training for all the ministries of the Church in a way that integrates effective academic learning, practical theological reflection and active spirituality.

Objectives

In setting up the Ministries Training Network, the Ministries Council has the following objectives:

- To enable the Church to take more direct responsibility for the whole process of formation for ministries;
- To achieve consistency of Church provision for all Candidates, regardless of the academic institution attended;
- To promote greater integration of practical, professional, spiritual and intellectual development in Candidates throughout the formation period;
- To address the growing need to provide input in ministries-related subject areas which are not currently offered by academic providers;
- To develop reflective practice in a more coherent and disciplined way;
- To respond to the General Assembly's instruction to provide for the Church a range of ministries which are integrated with each other;
- To support and develop the Church's relationship with the three Church Colleges.

Key Components

The aim and objectives imply the provision of a framework for formation shaped around the regular engagement of candidates for the various ministries of the Church with each other¹, with academics, and with experienced practitioners, both on a national and a local level. It further anticipates the development of a network of local bases for training whose integration with each other is made effective through the maintenance of a dynamic collegial structure.

In order to realise the aim an overall **Candidates' Programme** needs to be developed which provides a physical, intellectual and spiritual meeting place for all ministries Candidates. The following key components, some of which already exist, should make up the Candidates' Programme:

- A residential **Candidates' Conference** cycle of five Conferences, two of 5 – 6 days each being held in each academic year, one in late summer and the other around Easter.² Residential weeks would remain as at present and continue to be constructed around a theme, including such activities as:
 - a framework of worship
 - biblical / theological reflection groups

¹Footnote to the report: "For the purposes of this paper, the term **Candidate** refers to someone who has been formally accepted into training for one of the recognised ministries of the Church: the Ministry of Word & Sacrament (full-time and Auxiliary); the Diaconate; the Readership." Since 2007 the Auxiliary Ministry has become Ordained Local Ministry. Neither OLM candidates nor Readers-in-Training are currently required to take part in an MTN reflection group.

² This pattern no longer pertains. Rather, the overall conference programme is rolled out over three years with three dedicated streams within each year: New candidates concentrate on Pastoral Care, 2nd years on Worship and 3rd Years on Mission. Also included are sessions on Church Law relating to these three areas of Church life and a number of plenary sessions which explore issues of significance to ministry in 21st century Scotland. Over the three years the following topics are covered in plenary:

- Year A: Focus on Ministry: Being Presbyterian; Interfaith issues, Ecumenical issues, The Guild; Mission and Discipleship
- Year B: Focus on Ministry: Being Inclusive; Disability Focus; HIV AIDS; World Mission; Church and Society
- Year C: Focus on Ministry: Power and Privilege and Use of Authority; Race; Gender; Ministries Council; Crossreach

In addition there are two spring retreats of 44 hours for groups of 8 – 10 candidates.

- lectures
- discussions
- workshops

The Conferences should also continue to contain an element of intentional socialising to foster and strengthen relationships.

- Facilitated **Regional Support Group** meetings should be set up to enable ongoing Candidate interaction on the lines established in the Candidates' Conference. These, together with the larger Candidates' Conference, provide the 'critical mass' referred to in previous reports to the General Assembly (=GA) as a necessary component of ministries training. As the name indicates, they would meet to engage Candidates across a region rather than in a particular centre and would be facilitated by experienced practitioners. The organisation of the meetings would fall within the work of departmental staff. An important informal part of the RSG meetings would be social interaction, with the opportunity also for mutual support.

Candidates would be expected to build up a **portfolio** of work emerging from engagement in the RSG over the year, which would replace the current set of assignments undertaken by Candidates. This portfolio would be assessed towards the end of the academic year (April) by appropriately trained markers. Ministries Support Officers would be instructed to ensure that work on the portfolio was proceeding effectively throughout the year, and a sample portfolio provided for all Candidates illustrating the kind of materials and standard required. The portfolio contributes to the integrative process of learning by which Candidates are able to make connections between the academic, the practical and the spiritual dimensions of ministries.

Characteristic features of RSG meetings would be:

- **Worship**, including that planned, prepared and led by Candidates. There might be scope for some kind of peer evaluation here.
- **Biblical Reflection**: materials would be provided to enable 30 mins of reflection on biblical texts. Candidates would be expected to read and make notes on the texts (including reference to commentaries and other materials) *in advance* of the RSG, and to write up a short reflection on the discussion *after* the RSG meeting. These notes form part of the ongoing portfolio.
- **Book Discussion**: an agreed book would be read by all Candidates throughout the year (this could be selected by the RSG from a shortlist) and used as a basis for group discussion. Candidates would be expected to read and make notes on the chapters(s) agreed for each meeting. These notes form part of the ongoing portfolio. Before handing in the completed portfolio, Candidates would be expected to write a brief (500 word) review of the book as a whole and include this with the portfolio.
- **Pastoral Case Studies**: materials would be provided to enable 30 mins of discussion around pastoral case studies. Candidates would be expected to read and make notes on the case studies *in advance* of the RSG, and to write up a short reflection on the discussion *after* the RSG meeting. These notes form part of the ongoing portfolio.
- RSG meetings would be held **five** times a year between late August and mid-April. Attendance would be compulsory for Candidates for ministry of word and sacrament and diaconal ministry. Meetings should normally last for 2.5 hours, including a 30 minute break for tea / socialising.

It is hoped that Readers-in-Training might be able to join these groups as available and as practically possible.

- Engagement in **Placements** remains an integral part of the ministries formation process. All Candidates will undertake a number of placements as specified in the relevant Acts of the General Assembly (Act XVII 1992 [Readers]; Act IX 2001 [Deacons]; Act X 2004 [Ministers of Word & Sacrament] *as amended*). Reflection on placement experience takes place with supervisors, in the Personal Journal and thence in the Regional Support Groups.

Relationship to Academic Institutions

The Ministries Training Network will relate directly to those academic institutions already recognised as partners in the training processes for ministries and to any others which the Ministries Council may from time to time recognise as appropriate.³ Six main criteria are set out for the recognition of institutions as partners in the Board of Ministry report to the GA 2005 (par 3.8.1). The relationship between the Ministries Training Network and these institutions would be expressed in a document outlining a **collaborative partnership agreement**⁴. It is recognised that the current academic providers already offer corporate life and worship in different ways. The proposal for the Network in no way seeks to diminish the role which each institution has and may wish to develop in relation to pastoral support of Candidates and patterns of worship.

A designated local person, an experienced ministries practitioner, should regularly convene the meetings of the RSG (this should normally be the same person throughout the year). While staff of the Ministries Department will assist in facilitating arrangements for the groups, it is hoped that a representative of the College staff will also participate where possible in the life of the relevant RSG, to help strengthen relations with the Training Network.

Electronic Network

Those engaging with the Ministries Training Network will have the opportunity to be linked at all times through an electronic network. This includes a **website** administered by the Candidates and a register of personal e-mail addresses through which communication is fostered. The website would also contain a 'chat-room' to foster dialogue between all the partners involved in the formation process. This means that even when the larger 'critical mass' is not *physically* present, there is nevertheless a significant opportunity to link up and engage with colleagues in training, Ministries Council support Staff, and Regional Support Group members (including any academic or practitioner participants).

N.B. the final two points of this report, Relationship to Academic Partners, and Electronic Network, have never been implemented. Footnotes 3 and 4 are integral to the original report.

³ Currently this includes the four ancient Scottish Universities (Aberdeen; Edinburgh; Glasgow; St Andrews) and the Highland Theological College, Dingwall (part of the University of the Highlands and Islands).

⁴ This is already a recognised term in University contexts. In the case of the relationship between the MTN and the three Church Colleges, such a partnership could take the form of a 'constitution' referred to in the BOM report to the GA 2005 (par 3.8.3).

2. Reflective Practice and Ministerial Formation

'Those who have charge of the preparation of people for ministry have serious work to do; they have extraordinary responsibilities and marvellous opportunities' (Wilson, 2008: 113).

In the current sociological context of dwindling numbers and aging congregations, how do we train and prepare our ministers to nurture the new – to take bold and prophetic steps into the future – whilst also equipping them to pastor those faithful and committed members who do not want to see their beloved church change? The challenges are clearly outlined in the Board of Ministry's report to the general Assembly in 2000 'Ministers of the Gospel' (MG):

How is ... ministry to be understood and exercised today, in a Church that rightly affirms the ministry of the whole people of God and in a rapidly changing society that questions the relevance of [the] Gospel? And what does it mean to be ministers of the Gospel ... at a time when some are experiencing a crisis of identity and purpose in wrestling with inherited models and conflicting expectations of ordained ministry? (MG: 2.2.2)

This report was prompted by the recognition that for years we have been failing our ministers, and therefore our Church, by inconsistency of training and lack of engagement with the real issues facing the Church. It clearly identifies reflective practice as a significant tool to equip ministers for ministry in these challenging times: 'Those called and ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament ... must be reflective practitioners, collaborative leaders and formative learners' (MG: 2.4.5.3-5).

While reflective practice has been fundamental to professional training in various disciplines since the early 1980s, only recently has it been a feature of the Church of Scotland process. Nevertheless, it has become increasingly valued for its potential to enable and encourage ministers to challenge their own practice and refresh their skills in response to the pressure to manage decline while engaging in mission.

Although in theory training equips candidates with skills of reflective practice, Kinast (1996) reminds us that 'moving from "what happened" to "what it means" is not automatic'. It is crucial to enable those training for ministry to make this journey, deepening their theology through critical reflection and praxis. A serious analysis of assumptions and ideology is required for learning to take place; 'experience without reflection is not education' (Pyle, 1995: 109).

Theological Reflection as Professional Development

To be effective, reflective practice needs to go beyond a model which simply asks the candidate to consider how well something went and how it could be improved. As David Walters has noted, to be a truly developmental tool reflective practice has to address more than mere function:

We should ... be seeking to act as facilitators of learning in which the outcomes go beyond subject knowledge and reach into the promotion of deeper-level learning capacities, which are transferable to new and less predictable areas. (Walters, 2007: 58)

Reflective practice is increasingly significant in ministerial formation. Since "[t]here is a divine dimension at the origin of all experience" (Kinast, 1996: 20), and as theological educators have adopted reflective practice for their own disciplines, so it has been adapted from the process described by Schön (1983), Kolb (1984) and others into a more intentionally theological act which seeks to identify God's agency in addition to other factors, assumptions and principles in the event. It is the forum, too, where other theological disciplines meet as practice engages with perceptions of history and traditions of faith, the propositions of our faith position and biblical understanding.

The advantage of reflective practice is that it takes seriously the subjective world of the learner but has the capacity to challenge the assumptions both of the student and of the dominant structure offering the

potential for an alternative paradigm to be identified. Reflection, however, requires significant personal investment in terms of choosing to be vulnerable. It is critical analysis brought to bear on an incident or situation which requires self-discipline and vulnerability in putting our intentions and theories, actions and results under a microscope and calling them into question. It is a rigorous process founded on a high degree of honest self awareness necessitating both an assessment of personal reactions and feelings, beliefs and values in a situation and honest observation of our effect on others. It involves scrupulous thinking to reframe, and then further reframe, experiences. As a result we may find ourselves uncomfortably challenged and required to develop new understandings to make sense of the situation in context.

Theological reflection of necessity draws upon a diversity of skills: cognitive, relational, professional and spiritual, requiring an imaginative response to correlate various disciplines and enable engagement in transformative practice. It requires time to reflect, honesty and vulnerability in re-entering a dissonant situation, study, prayer and interpersonal skills in engaging in the conversational process and both creativity and imagination in order to deepen understanding. Creativity therefore is often a key both to making sense of experiences and in postulating new courses of action.

Often pre-entry level understanding of the nature of reflection on practice is poor; students in training “don’t always know what they don’t know” (Lamdin and Tilley, 2007: 24). However, training increases in effectiveness as students progress through learning, gaining experience and developing a context in which knowledge can be understood. In other words, meaning is constructed through experience, rather than distilled from information imparted by didactic means.

Since the nature of parish business is to be doing several contradictory and personally demanding tasks simultaneously, for example weddings and funerals, ministerial formation is an apposite arena for reflective practice which:

Engages with the messiness, the unpredictability, the uncertainty of practice, focussing not on abstract theory but on the real experiences of practitioners and the skills they develop as they try to make sense of these experiences. (Saltiel, 2010:131)

“Experience can serve as a genuine conversation partner in theological reflection in ministry only if we learn how to listen to it and purify it” (Whitehead and Whitehead, 1995: 46). Since we aim to create reflective practitioners, collaborative workers and lifelong learners (Ministers of the Gospel:2.4.5.3), learning to listen must be fundamental to formation.

The role of a mentor in reflection is crucial, however there a number of issues which have to be taken into account in this relationship. Clear boundaries and ground rules of confidentiality are essential and in addition, it is important to be aware of issues of power and control:

Educators should be ... aware of the issues in requiring less powerful people to perform confessional reflective tasks and not ... assume that reflective learning is always about positive development. (Saltiel, 2010: 140)

This raises questions about assessment, particularly since “there is ... evidence that the method of assessment shapes the nature of learning” (Lamdin, 1999: 22). There is a danger that supervised reflection can be a tool for surveillance and control leading to reflection becoming superficial and conformist. In addition, assessment can lead to increased anxiety, counter-productive to helpful reflection. Or the student concentrates on gathering information rather than employing the deep learning process which engages with below surface meaning which alone leads to enhanced understanding. However, there is a need for assessment of reflection in learning, if only to ascertain that learning is indeed taking place.

Notwithstanding the difficulties and perceived negatives, reflective practice as the means towards personal transcendence is a transformative learning tool whose value becomes apparent in practice.

Journalling

For a reflective practitioner, writing is of primary importance in learning about experience and the learning journal is the keystone of reflective practice. Journalling is “reflective writing which links theory, experience and observation of real situations and represents a collection of material over time” (Moon, 1999: 49). The act of journalling as a reflective tool enables us to ask questions of ourselves and improves the likelihood of renewed practice. It provides time to reflect, enabling the writer to make sense of inner thoughts and feelings by creating space to construct them cohesively. It is a forum for independent and self-initiated learning which facilitates a focus on specific areas of experience which demand reflection and emotional engagement, often improving the learning capacity. In journalling, therefore, we have the capacity to become more aware of our inner selves, more thoughtful and ultimately more confident, more autonomous as learners as we select and control the subject matter.

Journalling enables initial thinking on experiences which challenge and confront the practitioner, in order to re-present them for group reflection; it facilitates engagement with issues that might otherwise be glossed over or forgotten and serves both as record and graphic representation of learning development; “a journal makes most people more reflective” (Moon, 1999: 22). At its worst it is a diary of events, but at its best it represents a sophisticated analysis of incidents and responses. Resistance to journalling can be due to several factors. “Journals can be in danger of being used in inappropriate ways if they are assessed by superiors. A practitioner can feel under pressure to *confess* or disclose professional or personal material” (Bolton, 2005: 177). In addition, the self-discipline needed in order to engage usefully in the practice can be a disincentive or the assumption that there is a right and wrong way to write can lead to a lack of confidence; however the persistent practitioner will discover the benefits in journalling.

Peer Groups in Reflection

Peer groups can be central to developing a deep approach to learning and the development of skills of critical thinking and argument. “To be educational, much is to be gained from dialogue and ... some of the most useful reflections are ones that are shared” (Sweet, 2010: 190). A peer group requires the clear expression of our own thoughts, and yet careful and attentive listening to the thoughts of others, giving constructive feedback; such learning processes encouraging greater positivity and self-reliance. It must be a safe space as individuals engage in constructive criticism of one another. Peer and tutor involvement in a student’s reflection often leads to deeper reflection, openness to challenge and more critical analysis. The learning of the individual is enhanced and the potential for dialectic tension between theory and experience can result in stimulating and creative reflection particularly where feedback is “reinforcing, challenging, thorough and sincere, radiate[s] faith, of a friendly nature ... and non-judgemental” (Fund, 2010: 696). In this, the role of a group facilitator is significant in countering any stasis resulting from resistance or inexperience in order to create the reflective space.

However group reflection “involves high levels of commitment to the task ... [openness to the] ideas and experiences of others, and most importantly of all, a reasonable level of trust” (Boud, 2010: 35-6). Such groups are effective forums for reflection, the context for increased knowledge, developed awareness and therefore, potentially, transformation. In the Ministries Training Network communities of practice are formed which enhance the learning experience. These small groups privilege relationship and activity as learning, a focus otherwise in danger of being lost in the training process which prioritises individual achievement and reaching determined targets. These groups are particularly significant since communities of learning are likely to produce better quality reflection and can support a high level of engagement and development:

The alienation between theological studies and the needs and tasks of the church's leadership is promoted, not reduced, by the functionalist attempt to make the tasks of ministry themselves the criteria, subject matter and end of theological study. (Farley, 1983: 127)

Such an approach confines theological disciplines within the constraints of a pedagogical exercise and fails to take account of the teleological and redemptive nature of the community they seek to serve. This can result in a "clericalization of theology" (Farley, 1983: 130). Further, it neglects a basic aspect of theology, that it is not knowledge about God, but rather is knowledge of God. In ministerial formation, theological reflection provides the bridge between theory and practice especially when it is supported by a process of facilitated reflection.

Conclusion

This preparation for ministry aims to be grounded in the reality of the parish, rather than in an historical ideal. Its goal is to equip ministers with tools for a very different role from one they may have seen modelled and support them in ministries which are pioneering, prophetic and visionary. In achieving this goal, reflective practice is the primary tool, learning communities the crucible and facilitators the chief support for transformative learning and the development of reflective practitioners, collaborative workers and lifelong learners.

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3: Structure of Meetings and Guidelines for Submission

(Handout to candidates)

Introduction

The Ministries Training Network as described in the report to the general Assembly of 2007 was piloted in 2008-9. From the outset there were logistical problems in terms of travel, especially for the Highland and north eastern candidates, who had a 6 hour round trip to the venue. The number and length of exercises was an additional burden on candidates and proved to be too academic in character, rather than the reflective practice that was originally envisaged. However, the basic concept of reflective practice and peer learning was good and had the potential to be a much more focused and intentional learning tool for reflective practice. The project was further developed and now takes the form outlined below.

Structure of Meetings

- A 2-hour meeting monthly from October to May, offset against placement time.
- Small groups of up to 6 candidates organised geographically.
- Worship led by each candidate in turn (10 minutes), and by the group facilitator when necessary
- One verbatim/case study from each candidate including appropriate scriptural references (in each month one would be provided for discussion, analysis and reflection and biblical reflection). (60 minutes+)

Biblical reflection

- The facilitator will ensure that each candidate takes good part in this. The aim is to ascertain/encourage appropriate engagement with the text as a pastoral tool. This element places biblical reflection at the heart of MTN and ensures candidates are able to use the bible appropriately in ministry. At least one journal entry ought to feature biblical reflection.

Two assessed exercises

- Essay on the practice of ministry - reflection on provided material. This will be chosen by the facilitator and therefore will differ between groups. This material will relate directly to the practice of ministry e.g. material on spirituality or leadership skills. A bibliography will be provided for this (in the form of the agreed reading material), but should not be considered to be exclusive. This is a reflective piece outlining how the reading has influenced/shaped the candidate's understanding of ministry and how his/her practice will alter as a result. (1500 words max)
- Critical commentary on verbatim/case study discussed at the meeting. This should be an encounter which has caused dissonance and need not be pastoral but could be related to leadership or spirituality, or management. The purpose of the commentary is to **begin to address a learning need** identified in the course of analysing the verbatim, therefore a bibliography will not be supplied but should be constructed by the candidate in response to the learning need. The verbatim/case study should be submitted as an appendix to the essay. (1500 words max)

Journalling

The requirement is to journal no less than fortnightly. The journal will be submitted at the end of December, February and May (for those going into Probation) or June/July (for continuing candidates), but not assessed. It will be reviewed by the group facilitator. A critical commentary of 500 words should be attached to the submission in May. This commentary will identify personal development and awareness of learning needs and will inform the goal-setting exercise at Annual Review. This commentary will be assessed.

Candidates can journal in any way which is comfortable and helpful for them, but should agree this with their facilitator in advance. E.g.:

- Electronic or handwritten
- Blogging
- Audio journal
- Sketched, in colour, or a scrap book, with sufficient text to outline and give evidence of reflection.

Submissions

Essay on the practice of ministry:	Submission by end February
Case Study/verbatim and critical commentary:	Submission by mid June (for Candidates – probationers are not required to write a critical commentary)
Journal (probationers are expected to journal but not required to submit):	<p>1st Submission Submission by end December</p> <p>2nd Submission Submission by end March</p> <p>3rd Submission Submission by Mid May (for those whose annual review is in June) and by end June (for those whose annual review is in September)</p>
Journal and critical commentary:	Submission Mid May (for those whose annual review is in June) and by end June (for those whose annual review is in September)

Please note: Journals should be submitted directly to the facilitator with a note to the appropriate administrator to say that this has been done. Journal commentaries should be submitted to the office.

All submissions are assessed as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. A satisfactory submission will show signs of engagement with and critical reflection on the issues including appropriate reading, self-awareness in terms of good or poor practice, identification of learning needs and commitment to improved practice in ministry.

Submissions should be emailed by the appropriate date and NOT direct to the facilitator. **Submission dates should be strictly observed and are issued early to allow for forward planning.**

Each page should carry as a header:

- Candidate's name
- University
- Year of study (Church of Scotland not academic) eg 1 of 3
- Placement number (if applicable)
- Name of facilitator

Please note: all conversations, written exercises and observations are completely confidential and should not be discussed outwith the context of the reflective group.

4: Role of Facilitator

Facilitator:

Contact Candidates and arrange an initial meeting. Information including contact details and guidelines for meetings and submissions is provided for all candidates and facilitators.

Initial Meeting:

- Set up ground rules, confidentiality etc.
- Set meeting dates, precise times and venue.
- Aim to have sufficient number of meetings to allow each Candidate to present, plus at least one additional one at the end for catch-up, in case anyone has been unable to present etc. This should be completed by April/May.
- Decide who will present the Case Study/Verbatim at each meeting.
- Decide who will lead worship at each meeting.
- Discuss the requirements for the whole programme –
 - Timings within the meeting
 - Arrangements for refreshments/timing
 - Submissions: dates, need for timeous submission, administration.
 - The administrator will receive, log and collect submissions up to the submission date. The submissions will then go to Supervisors in a batch. Assessment or possibility of late submissions should be discussed with the Training Development Officer and facilitator.
 - Journaling: how, why, value of, and any questions, issues.

Missing a meeting: It is acceptable to miss up to two meetings. Any more than two will be detrimental to the reflective process and will be considered unsatisfactory attendance. Any problems regarding attendance at meetings should be addressed as soon as possible with both MTN facilitator and TDO. Facilitators should record attendance at meetings.

Other responsibilities:

- Act as host at meetings.
- Facilitate discussion ensuring that all members take good part.
- Read journal submissions at three points in the year. It is helpful to give feedback on these, especially if you think that the candidate has not quite understood the requirements. This is often a problem and especially at the beginning.
- Assess submissions: For each candidate – critical commentary on verbatim; reflective essay on the practice of ministry; journal commentary. Feedback on these should be offered as to what has been done well, quality of the reflection and how the submissions could be improved. Areas for further consideration are helpful for the candidates. As above, all submissions will be assessed as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. A satisfactory submission will show signs of engagement with and critical reflection on the issues including appropriate reading, self-awareness in terms of good or poor practice, the identification of learning needs and a commitment to improved practice in ministry.
- Compile a brief report for each candidate (a paragraph of 200-300 words will suffice) to be included in the candidate's end of year report.

Definitions: (from W.T. Pyle)

“Critical Reflection is the process of examining one's actions in order to identify the assumptions which are behind the actions,” checking the “validity and accuracy” of those assumptions, and reforming these assumptions based on new learning.

“Theological Reflection occurs when the events of life are examined through the eyes of faith, in order to integrate experience and faith.”

MINISTRIES TRAINING NETWORK FACILITATOR – REMIT

Administration will be dealt with in the office by a named administrator

The MTN Facilitators will be selected from among the cohort of trained supervisors and approved by the Training Task Group.

Remit:

- i) To communicate regularly with all members of the reflective group
- ii) To identify dates for meeting once monthly between October and May and ensure all members of the group are aware of the dates
- iii) To identify a suitable meeting place and liaise with the office over room booking (if necessary)
- iv) To select (along with the group) an appropriate book for reading/reflection
- v) To draft an appropriate schedule of participation for all group members
- vi) To monitor members input/reflection/attendance to ensure appropriate commitment and learning
- vii) To facilitate reflective practice on the part of the candidates through guided discussion and reflection on verbatim/case study
- viii) To review journals three times a year to ensure appropriate reflection is taking place
- ix) To assess (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) candidates' submissions
 - a) Candidates: Essay, verbatim reflection, journal commentary
 - b) Probationers: Essay
- x) To give appropriate feedback on submissions, including indicating potential for improvement
- xi) To keep TDO informed of any issues arising such as non-attendance or non-submission

LEAD FACILITATOR

In addition, a lead facilitator will be selected from among the facilitators. The responsibilities of this post will be:

- i) To liaise with the TDO over the delivery of the Ministries Training Network and where necessary to ensure its delivery
- ii) To attend Training Task Group in an ex officio capacity

5: Unpacking the Verbatim/Case Study

The verbatim is the most helpful method of communicating the case as it gets closest to the “action”. A case study can be in danger of becoming edited, a third person account where the presenter is not really present and feelings and reactions can be lost. There can be a high level of objectivity in presenting a case study which is not conducive to reflective practice which is a subjective activity. Analysis of verbatim enables the candidate to unpick the context and content of their interaction. As the verbatim is explored with the group, representing a safe space, possibilities for different courses of action emerge. Some methods of analysis follow:

1) General discussion

It can be helpful to have the author/presenter briefly set the scene and then remain quiet while other group members discuss the scenario or act out the conversation. Only after a full discussion does the presenter respond and reflect on his or her own role. This allows for others to respond to what they read uninfluenced by the presenter and can pave the way for a much richer learning experience as hitherto unrecognised elements are brought out.

2) Using the Clinical Rhombus: See fig. 1:

(For further information see *Helping the Helpers*, John Foskett and David Lyall: pp32-42; *Lifelong Learning*, Frances Ward: pp113 -128. Based on Ekstein & Wallerstein’s clinical rhombus)

The relationship under discussion occurs as part of complex series of relationships and so can be subject to potentially conflicting pressures. The clinical rhombus highlights these and helps to make explicit what is implicit in the conversation/incident.

- Identify relationships/pressures. Who fits the four points? Who or what is the Agency – the Church? The Congregation? The parishioner’s family? Other candidates? The Ministries Council? The power to which other parties are or may feel accountable in some way.
- Where is the power? How does this affect the dynamic? Where are the pressures? Wider issues? Tensions, creative or otherwise?
- Who is present, or absent, in the situation? Are unseen personalities influencing the conversation?
- What might have been said or done differently at each point?
- Theological reflection?

3) Using the Parabolic Loop See fig. 2

The parabolic loop is a fairly simple diagram which serves as a template for a reflective conversation. It is a way of thinking about the structure of a reflective conversation. It is a means of providing space and challenge. It is quite straightforward and flexible for situations and people. It focuses thinking. It comes from real life and leads to real action. It demands articulated reflection. It provides space for encounter (with one's thoughts, other ideas, with God). It makes the supervisee's resources available to them by recognising or eliciting focus on issues such as:

- God's promises and Christ's dependability
- isolation or community
- repentance or progression
- developing ministerial identity
- prophecy or pastoring

This model for theological reflection is a simple way to order our thinking, a checklist, almost, to help us cover all the bases and to encourage us to ask questions we might ordinarily forget or avoid. It ensures that we dig into our responses, emotional, spiritual, theological, rather than going straight from “what happened” to “what happens next”. In doing this it creates the space for deep reflection and the possibility of new or renewed action. It is based on open questions and encourages students to identify their own answers to problems and identify learning needs.

- What new insights have I discovered?
- How can I test this understanding?
- Are there follow-up actions I need to take, and if so, what?
- How would I adapt or modify my behaviour in future?
- What supports and/or blocks are there to renewed action?
- What alternative strategies might I have?
- What are the implications for me and others, in not taking action?
- What reading/research/resources can I discover for more depth and understanding?
- What skills/knowledge/values do I need to acquire?

Reflect on the experience:

- What happened?
- Who was involved
- What was my role?
- What were my reactions?
- How did others respond?
- Where did it leave me?

Analyse the experience:

- What factors were at work in the situation? (attitudes, emotions, power dynamics)
- What was at stake for me? (how does it connect with my own history, convictions, values)
- How was I enriched or challenged??
- What did I discover about myself?
- What do I want to remember or forget about it?
- What questions or concerns remain with me?

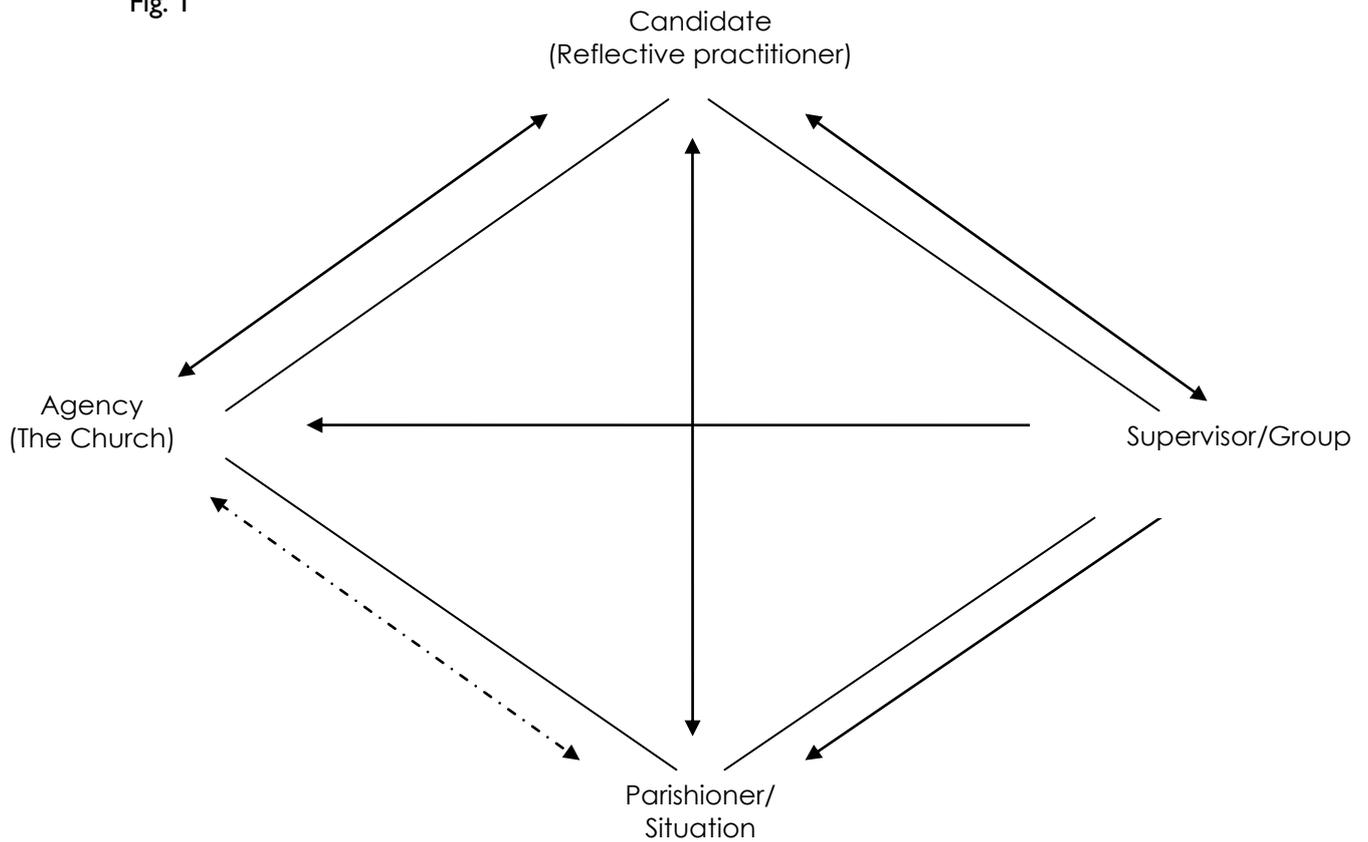
Make some faith connections:

- What theological images/symbols/concepts does it evoke?
- Where (and who) is God in this situation, for me and for others?
- What biblical, historical, literary or other stories does it call to mind?
- How does it relate to other faiths/cultures/traditions?

Reflect on learning:

- How has my faith been enriched or challenged?
- What have I learned or discovered about the practice of ministry?
- What have I learned or discovered about my own pastoral identity?
- How does all this relate to my learning goals?

Fig. 1

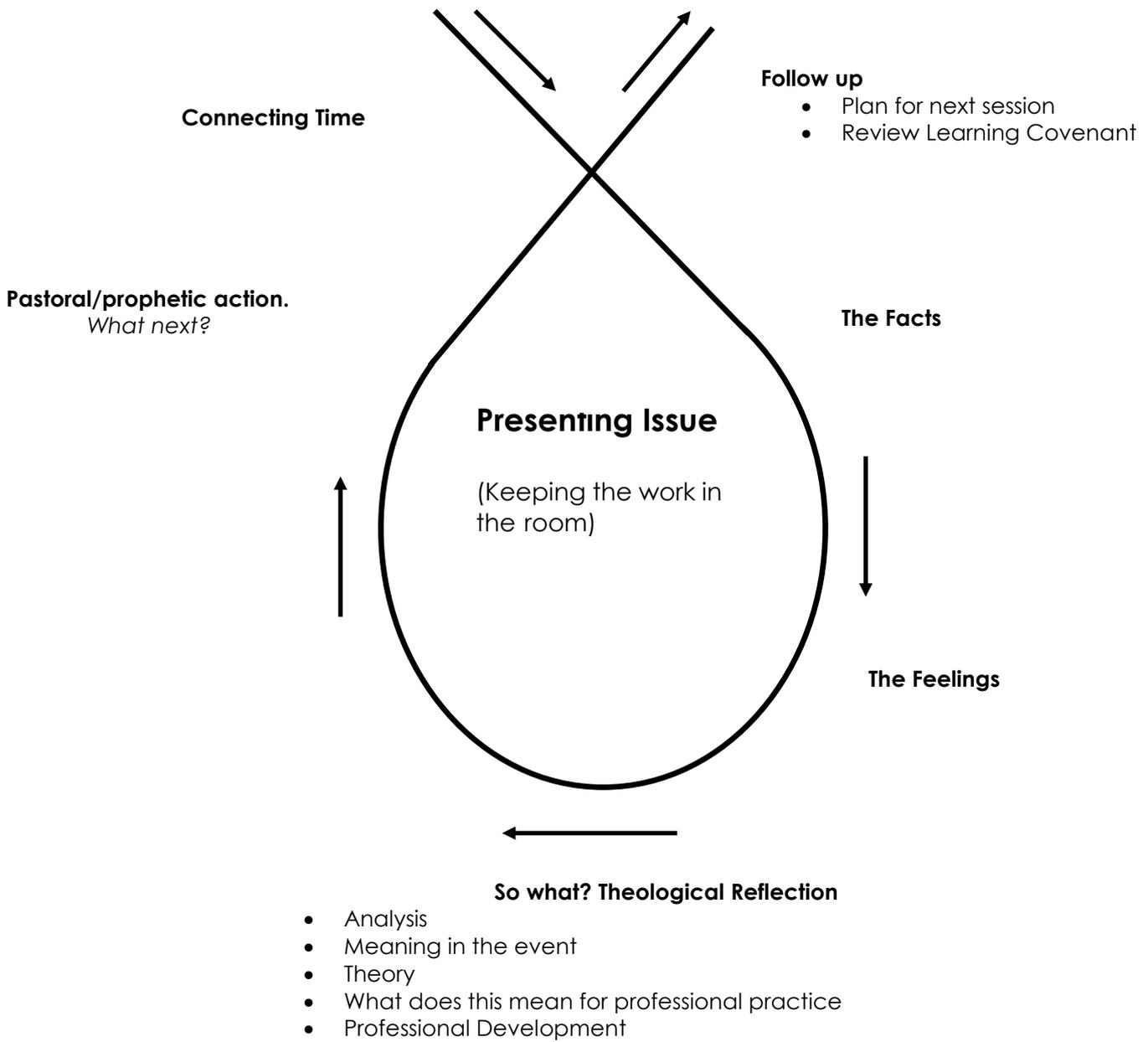


Significant in reflection are the feelings and reactions of the other members of the group; this can give rise to a rich seam of learning as individuals identify with players in the drama and react to the events as they unfold.

It can be helpful to draw this on a flipchart or whiteboard and jot down comments as they are made.

Fig. 2

Parabolic Loop



Verbatim report form

Your name	
Date of encounter/meeting/visit	
Setting	
<p>1. About yourself (<i>How were you feeling before this encounter/meeting/visit? What had happened immediately beforehand? What was your aim for this encounter? What did you anticipate your role would be?</i>)</p>	
<p>2. Your knowledge of the situation (<i>What do you know about the situation before you enter it – this may vary from nothing at all to a great deal. Write what will be helpful to the reflection group when reading this.</i>)</p>	
<p>3. Your initial impressions (<i>What do you notice e.g. body language; tone of voice; set up of the room; atmospheres already established? Does anything surprise you or make an impact on you?</i>)</p>	
<p>4. The Conversation (<i>Write here a key extract from the conversation as you recall it. Set it out like a play script. Number the contributions people make for ease of reference. Include pauses, tone of voice, interruptions and your own internal dialogue at the time in italics or brackets). Use separate sheets if necessary.</i>)</p>	
<p>5. Review (<i>As you write down the conversation, record your current observations, feelings and questions here. How do you interpret what was happening? How do you evaluate your interventions?</i>)</p>	
<p>6. Insight</p> <p>a) What was this experience about – for the other(s), for me?</p> <p>b) Whose need was being met? And how?</p> <p>c) What were its implications for the other(s) and for me?</p> <p>d) What does it tell me about my pastoral ability?</p> <p>e) What questions does it raise about God, my values, beliefs, worldview/frame of reference?</p>	
<p>7 Future action</p> <p><i>What future action will you take in relation to this encounter: For the wellbeing of the patient/carer/member of staff or others involved? For your own wellbeing? For your own future practice?</i></p>	

6: Keeping a Learning Journal (Handout to candidates)

One of the chief frustrations in engaging in training for ministries is the perceived gap between academia and the work of ministry. The key to bridging this gap is reflective practice; a cycle of theory followed by action and then reflection leading to renewed theory and renewed action which will be familiar to pastoral theologians and those engaged in ministry as the Pastoral Cycle. Increasingly the Ministries Council has emphasised the need for ministers involved in any of the ministries of the church to be reflective practitioners and has developed a range of exercises and learning situations designed to encourage this. The Ministries Training Network is an exercise in enabling reflective practice and encouraging the formation of good habits of reflection as well as an opportunity to engage in peer learning. In effect it aims to connect the “high ground of theory and the swampy lowlands of practice” (Schön, 1983).

Foundational to the Ministries Training Network is the regular use of a learning journal. For a reflective practitioner, writing is of primary importance in learning about experience and the learning journal is the keystone of reflective practice. Journalling is “reflective writing which links theory, experience and observation of real situations and represents a collection of material over time” (Moon, 1999:49). The act of journalling as a reflective tool enables us to ask questions of ourselves and improves the likelihood of renewed practice. It provides time to reflect, enabling the writer to make sense of inner thoughts and feelings by creating space to construct them cohesively. It is a forum for independent and self-initiated learning which facilitates a focus on specific areas of experience which demand reflection and emotional engagement, often improving the learning capacity. In journalling, therefore, we have the capacity to become more aware of our inner selves, more thoughtful and ultimately more confident, more autonomous as learners as we select and control the subject matter.

Journalling enables initial thinking on experiences which challenge and confront the practitioner, in order to re-present them for group reflection; it facilitates engagement with issues that might otherwise be glossed over or forgotten and serves both as record and graphic representation of learning development; “a journal makes most people more reflective” (Moon, 1999:22). At its worst it is a diary of events, but at its best it represents a sophisticated analysis of incidents and responses. Resistance to journalling can be due to several factors. “Journals can be in danger of being used in inappropriate ways if they are assessed by superiors. While the self-discipline needed in order to engage usefully in the practice can be a disincentive or the assumption that there is a right and wrong way to write can lead to a lack of confidence the persistent practitioner will discover the benefits in journalling.

It is recommended that you consult some of the literature available on this subject (see select bibliography), however these notes aim to clarify the basic issues and give guidelines in helpful ways of maintaining the journal. It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to keep a journal; find a way that works for you.

Some basic tips:

- Write regularly – normally this would be at least once a week, but for the purposes of the MTN submission once a fortnight would be sufficient.
- Always date entries.
- Write in whatever way is most helpful; by hand, word processing, blogging.....
- Write as soon as possible after the event
- Leave space for later comments as you review your writing. Your analysis is important.
- Include anything that strikes you as significant or comes to mind, whether it seems immediately relevant or not. Does this situation remind you of anything? Write poetically, use pictures – anything goes!

- Reflect on what you feel, not just what you think. Explore your emotional reactions.
- Try to be honest (although do remember that this will be read at the end of the year – or you may want to edit out any very personal writing before you submit it)
- Review regularly. Are there recurring themes? Ask yourself about these:
 - How do I respond in this situation? How did others respond?
 - How do I feel? Comfortable? Uncomfortable? Why?
 - Can I think of other similar instances?
 - What was my “theory” in advance of this situation? Has it changed?
 - How could I have responded better/more helpfully? How do I evaluate my communication skills?
 - What can I learn from this situation about myself, my practice, and my own needs? How has my emotional response influenced my practice and impacted on the situation?
 - What learning needs can I identify as a result of this?

This learning journal should be reflective notes on your placement or other similar engagement with people as the primary purpose is for you to critically reflect upon your own practice and develop your skills for ministry in line with the Indicators for Assessment. The journal should help you to increase your critical abilities and self-awareness and expand your vision and understanding. It is a place to explore possibilities and chart developments in thinking, beliefs, theories and practice.

The Learning Journal will be submitted twice during the year (December and February) to encourage you to maintain the practice, and once at the end of the session (May or June) **along with a critical commentary of 500 words** which you will write. The aim of this commentary is to enable you to be somewhat objective about your practice over the year and allow you to identify your learning needs for the coming year. The journal will be read only by the facilitator of your reflective group while your reports and journal commentary are read by Council and Presbytery Assessors. However, it is important that your learning needs are identified; this is the purpose of the assessment of the critical commentary and you should ensure that they are translated into goals for the coming year.

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|---|---|
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| Ward, Frances | Lifelong Learning: Theological Education and Supervision , SCM, London, 2005 |
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7: Writing a Verbatim or Case Study

(Handout to candidates)

The verbatim/case study is a crucial tool in enabling the practitioner, who is often exercising ministry in a solo situation, to identify and engage with issues arising from situations they have encountered in their ministry which have caused them to reflect theologically. A written account is shared with a trusted group who, guided by a facilitator, analyse and interpret the situation from the perspective of all involved. While we are all engaged in constant learning, the member of the group presenting is the focus of the discussion, the aim being to sharpen awareness and increase effectiveness on a return to the practice of ministry.

As part of the commitment to reflective practice and peer learning, the Ministries Council has agreed that a significant part of the training provided by the Network will be based on the analysis of and reflection on a case study or verbatim. Each candidate will produce one example and this will provide the material for reflection in an evening meeting. The verbatim/case study will be analysed by the group guided by the facilitator and the candidate should write up the discussion for later use. The verbatim/case study will provide the basis for one of the pieces of assessed work which has to be submitted over the year. This will comprise a 1500 word critical commentary on the verbatim/case study including an analysis of identified learning needs. There is no bibliography for this exercise as the bibliography should be informed by the learning needs. For example, if the case study was on a meeting of the Kirk Session, then the learning need might be on group dynamics and so the bibliography would include books on that subject. Similarly a verbatim on a pastoral visit to someone recently bereaved would include books on dealing with grief and ministry to the bereaved.

There are a variety of ways of presenting a verbatim or case study but some principles apply to both:

- Use a situation in which you were actually involved which relates to the practice of ministry – this is not about hypothetical situations.
- Write in the first person but maintain the anonymity of all other parties in the case
- Be relatively brief – no more than two sides of A4 for a case study and three for a verbatim.
- Number lines for easy reference
- Stick to a specific incident – do not use general principles.
- Maintain confidentiality – you might want to collect your papers after the study.

For a case study you should:

- Describe the location, body language and emotions as you experienced them
- Try to identify the crucial incident/s
- Provide only the information you believe to be necessary to understand the case
- Try to tell the story in an orderly progression

Bibliography

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| Foskett, John & Lyall, David | Helping the Helpers , SPCK, London, 1988 (out of print but secondhand copies are available) |
| Mahan, Jeffrey H., Troxell, Barbara B., Allen, Carol J., | Shared Wisdom: A Guide to Case Study Reflection in Ministry , Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1993 |
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8: Remuneration

Much of the Church's work is facilitated by volunteers however occasionally there is a recognition that some pieces of work are sufficiently different from the normal round of ministerial tasks, or require a significant amount of time in preparation of material, that some remuneration is offered. In the case of Ministries Training Network time given to meetings is assumed to be voluntary but there is a small fee pertaining to assessed work, plus expenses. In practice this means that you should not be out of pocket in hosting these meetings therefore travel, any necessary room hire and other expenses such as catering (coffee and biscuits, for example) can be reclaimed from the department. Fees are payable at the rate of £3.00 for each assessed piece of work. For the avoidance of doubt, this is three submissions (essay, verbatim commentary and journal commentary) per candidate, and one submission (essay) for probationers. Fee payment claim forms (Appendix II) should be submitted in June of each year. Travel claims and any other out of pocket expenses should also be claimed on the Fee Payment Document.

APPENDIX I: INDICATORS FOR ASSESSMENT

Assessment Area	Indicators
<p>Integration of Life and Faith:</p> <p>How and in what ways does the Candidate bring together the different parts of life under the heading of spirituality? In what ways has their background and life experience influenced them and brought them to this point?</p>	<p><i>The Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shows commitment to a Christ-like form of service; - displays a degree of integrity of word and action; - exhibits balance in talking about faith; - has a disciplined approach to personal devotion; - is open to exploring different expressions of spirituality; - relates well to people with differing expressions of spirituality; - is able to relax; - has a breadth of interests other than Church life.
<p>Interpersonal, Leadership and Teamwork Skills:</p> <p>How does the Candidate relate to and deal with people? What leadership potential is evident? How does the Candidate work as part of a team? How does the Candidate deal with conflict?</p>	<p><i>The Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - generates trust and displays honesty; - forms positive relationships with a variety of types of people; - works well in a team setting; - is able to respond to others with flexibility; - is patient and tolerant in expressing views; - demonstrates listening and empathic skills; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communicates well in language people understand; - offers appropriate openness and vulnerability to relationships; - shows self-awareness in relation to verbal and non-verbal communication skills; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to offer and receive feedback in constructive ways. - demonstrates the potential to offer leadership to others; - shows awareness and understanding of different styles of leadership;
<p>Openness to Learning:</p> <p>How does the Candidate learn and how open are they to learning? How does the Candidate handle criticism, both just and unjust</p>	<p><i>The Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shows an aptitude for listening and responds to ideas; - is able to express themselves well both orally and in written work; - enters constructively into dialogue; - shows the ability to live with difference; - responds appropriately to criticism; - reads broadly: General: <i>fiction; non-fiction</i>; Theological: <i>different stances; different disciplines</i>; - is able to formulate a cogent argument; - shows awareness of the implications of lifelong learning; - employs different styles of learning; - works well with others who use learning styles other than the Candidate's preferred ones.
<p>Preparation and Reflective Skills:</p> <p>How is the Candidate preparing? How does the Candidate assimilate, analyse and integrate experience? How does the Candidate organise and manage their time and work?</p>	<p><i>The Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to make basic connections between different kinds of experience: <i>church; community; intellectual; spiritual</i> - generally presents as a well-integrated, holistic person; - is reasonably self-aware and can recognise strengths and weaknesses; - exhibits awareness of the global context and can relate it to the local; - shows creativity analysing and interpreting experiences; - gives proper space and time to the reflective process; - shows the aptitude for coping with the intellectual demands of ministry; - can assimilate and deal appropriately with negative or difficult life experiences; - encourages others to engage in the reflective process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possesses good administrative and organisational skills; - is able to manage time reasonably; - copes adequately with stress.
<p>Handling Change:</p> <p>How does the Candidate initiate and respond to change and help others deal with it?</p>	<p><i>The Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collaborates well in drawing up plans for change; - works willingly at addressing identifiable weaknesses; - is motivated towards the implementation of goals in an action plan; - is able to offer and analyse differing perspectives on problems; - tries to elicit and investigate alternatives; - can assess the benefits and costs of change; - demonstrates awareness of issues arising from the transition to the role of minister.
<p>Discernment and Affirmation of Call:</p> <p>How does the Candidate view their call? In what ways has their call been affirmed? What is their understanding of the Ministry for which they are applying in the life of the Church of Scotland?</p>	<p><i>The Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can clearly articulate a sense of call towards ministry; - is positively motivated towards fulfilment of ministry; - demonstrates knowledge of the life and structures of the Church of Scotland;

APPENDIX II: Fee Payment Document and Expenses Claim Form
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

MINISTRIES COUNCIL

MINISTRIES TRAINING NETWORK FEE PAYMENT DOCUMENT

PERSONAL DETAILS

Preferred Title _____ Forename _____ Surname _____

Home Address _____

Date of Birth _____

Bank Name _____

Bank Account Number _____ Bank Sort Code _____

Are you on the Church of Scotland Payroll (or about to be)? **YES/NO ***

Payroll Number _____ (seven digits)

If **NO** please give **NI Number** _____

Are you a taxpayer? **YES/NO ***

(* please delete as appropriate)

DATE _____

For Office Use

Payment Date	No. of Essays	Rate per Essay	Fee Payable
		£3.00	£
		£3.00	£
		£3.00	£
TOTAL			£

Authorising Signature _____

Finance Office Use

Code No. **165100230/22110220/80**

Code Name **FULL TIME CANDIDATES**

N.B. Please ensure that you submit your claim by the 10th of the month at the latest to be included in the current month's payroll, with the exception of December when they have to be in by the 5th.