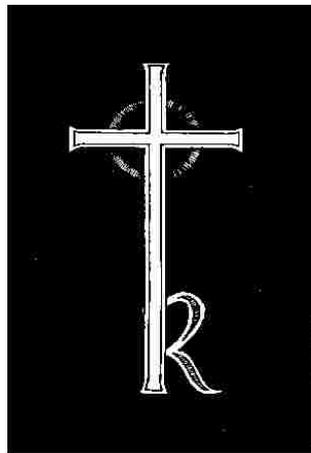




The Church of Scotland

Ministries Council

Readership Placement Guidance for Supervisors



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Contents

1	The Office of Reader	1
2	The first six month placement	2 - 3
	a aims	2
	b tasks	2
	c supervision	2
	d supporting the reader in training	2 - 3
	e report	3
3	The second six month placement	4 - 5
	a aims	4
	b tasks	4
	c supervision	4 - 5
	d supporting the reader in training	5
	e report	5
	f. conclusion of training	5
4	The concept of supervision	6
	The supervisory contract	6
	The supervisory relationship	6
	Conflict of roles	6

1 The Office of Reader

Thank you for taking on the role as Supervisor for a Reader in Training. The Office of Reader has undergone considerable change in recent years. Restored during the First World War as a way of providing pulpit supply in emergencies, it gradually became accepted as a regular ministry within the Church. Over time, the old ruling that you could use a Reader only if a Minister or Student was not available was eventually abolished. Then, in an Act of the General Assembly of 1992, a new concept was introduced: the Reader qualified for attachment to a charge.

All Readers now being trained need to be qualified for this new role. The new role envisages Readers who will work consistently with a Minister in a linkage or a single charge, regularly sharing in the leadership of worship and engaging in pastoral work. They are available to take funerals, to act as chaplains (or assistant chaplains) in schools, homes for the elderly or even small hospitals.

Whether or not a particular Presbytery chooses to attach a Reader to a charge is for the Presbytery to decide and will be dependent on available places and available Readers. Several Presbyteries have a deliberate policy of attaching Readers, seeing this as a way of creating the kind of ministry teams which are likely to be increasingly important as patterns of ministry develop and change. Some Readers have been appointed by their Presbytery to work as part of a prison chaplaincy team or as locum in a vacancy.

You should view any Reader in Training placed with you as someone who will potentially be working in this type of role, and who therefore needs the experience appropriate for it. You should not see them as people who are training only for occasional pulpit supply, even if that for the moment is all they intend to do.

There may have been a time in the past where there was a tendency to think that Readers only needed to be good enough to get by on an occasional, one off visit to a congregation. If this was ever the case it certainly is not now. We are seeking to ensure that Readers are now trained for the various possible functions of the role and are enabled to offer a good quality of frequent, sustained worship in any given congregation.

2 The First Six-month Placement

Aims

The aim of the first six month placement is to provide a context in which all the basic skills of worship leadership can be developed to an initial level of competence. Readers in Training may not yet have studied the theology of worship, the nature of preaching and the purpose of public prayer in any depth - this ought to happen over the course of the full Readership Training Programme. But at this stage, they should have opportunities to acquire some of the basic competence and understanding which will facilitate meaningful and constructive reflection and learning as the programme unfolds.

Before coming to you, Readers in Training will have undergone the enquiry and assessment scheme in a different church to develop confidence, speaking skills and hopefully have their first attempt at preaching. Your task is to take them to the next stage, to the point where their leadership of worship is acceptable to the congregation, even if not yet with the depth and polish we might eventually hope for. The emphasis in this placement is therefore on skills development and reflective practice.

Please remember that if necessary the placement can be split or lengthened to take into account particular circumstances for the individual Reader in Training (RIT), and also the local situation. Given the requirements of academic study and residential conferences in January and June, in addition to any work or family commitments, flexibility in arranging the placement is in order.

(N.B. Activities in the placement church should not require of the student more than 5 hours work per week, not including the Sunday morning service)

During the first placement, the RIT should undertake the following:

- Take some part in the leadership of public worship three Sundays a month;
- On one of these Sunday each month, take major responsibility for the service;
- On at least one of those Sundays every two months (once a month if there is a linked charge) to preach the sermon;
- Share in discussion with the minister as he or she plans the worship over the period, to gain insight into the planning process;
- Visit a local school on a number of occasions, probably with the minister, and undertake a supervised role in leading school worship at least once (NB: It is recognised that people with full-time jobs might not be able to do this). Alternatively visits to hospitals or residential homes where services are taken by the minister may be appropriate;
- Observe the minister conducting a funeral at least three times, and discuss with her or him the preparation, form and conduct of the service.
- No more than 15 hours of worship-related pastoral work.

Supervision

Supervision over this period is likely to focus on technical questions in worship and on basic competencies in the relevant pastoral relationship with a congregation. At the start of the placement it would be helpful to discuss aims and aspirations and agree on what areas might be possible to work on. It is recommended that the trainee Reader collaboratively formulates a learning agreement with the placement supervisor. An example learning agreement is available as appendix 9 of the Readership Handbook. There should be a weekly meeting between the supervisor and the Reader in Training, reviewing the previous Sunday's worship, talking through any pastoral contacts over the previous seven days, and looking at worship forthcoming. It would be helpful for the supervisor to read over sermon scripts before they are preached, and discuss with the Reader in Training how they might be improved. The meeting need not be long - it would probably be wise to schedule it for no more than 30 minutes - but it should be regular.

You will probably find it helpful to maintain contact with the RIT's Regent (appointed by Presbytery to monitor the training programme and offer support to the RIT), and/or the responsible person within the Presbytery's Ministries Committee (or equivalent), especially if there are any areas of worry about her or his progress or attitude.

Supporting the Reader in Training

While there is no requirement for a Reader in Training to have a Support Group it is extremely helpful if a few (perhaps 3 or 4) members of the placement congregation are asked to fulfil this role. The Reader in Training may have set up for themselves some such arrangement in their home congregation or have someone who acts as mentor and may wish them to be included in a supporting role during the placement. The group should be small but enough to ensure at least one is present at every service to give constructive critical feedback alongside the supervisor.

It is entirely up to the Reader in Training and the supervisor to organise any such group as appropriate for the circumstances of the placement.

There is no formal role for the Support Group but it is hoped that as representatives from the placement congregation, they would take part in the discussions regarding the report made at the end of the placement.

Report

At the end of the placement, you are asked to send a report (form R1, see Appendix 2 of the Readership Handbook for a template) to the Ministries Council and a copy to the Presbytery Clerk and Reader in Training.

You may want to include an additional note or covering letter with the form to help the Presbytery set up the next placement. It would help if you could identify:

- the areas of work in which you have not been able to offer much experience (e.g. it may be that yours is a church where all-age worship is seldom possible, or there may have been little opportunity to work in schools or take funerals)
- aspects of the role in which you feel the Reader in Training needs further or particular development (please be as specific as possible)
- the kind of church required to provide experience and learning which would complement and enhance what the RIT has received with you and your church.

3 The Second Six-month Placement

Aims

The aims of the second placement are to ensure that the trainee is of sufficient calibre to undertake the work of a Reader-attached-to-a-Charge. The Academic Provider will be supplying formal tuition, but the placement is where the trainee can practise what is being learned, and where the level of engagement and performance can be effectively monitored.

The standard required of a trainee by the end of the placement is not simply that they should be adequate to stand in on the odd occasion, but that they could sustain effective worship for a congregation in which they were frequently leading and preaching.

The aim is therefore to ensure that they have reached an adequate standard of competence in

- preaching
- constructing an order of service (including choice of hymns, etc.)
- leading public prayer
- speaking to and interacting with children in worship
- leading worship in at least two of the following: schools, homes for the elderly, small groups or hospitals
- conducting funerals
- maintaining the kind of pastoral relationships which would be appropriate in a congregation should they have an attachment to the charge.

(NB: Activities in the placement church should not require of the trainee more than 5 hours work per week, not including the Sunday morning service);

Please remember that where necessary the placement can be split or lengthened to allow the Reader in Training the flexibility they might require.

Tasks

During the second placement, the RIT should

- 1 Take some part in the leadership of public worship on all but one Sunday a month
- 2 Preach the sermon, if arrangements permit, one Sunday a month and certainly no less than four times over the six months
- 3 Lead a period of all-age worship, where this is part of the Sunday pattern, once a month
- 4 Lead the main part of the service once a month
- 5 Share in an appropriate way in the conduct of at least three funerals
- 6 Lead worship in at least one of the following; homes for the elderly, hospitals or schools. The number of times this is done depends on circumstances not least of which may be the availability of the Reader in Training in regard to work and other commitments.
- 7 Share in discussion with the minister as s/he plans worship over the period, in order to gain insight into the planning process as well as gaining practical insights into the nature of worship in this particular charge.
- 8 Conduct at least two whole diets of worship, one of which should be at the end of the placement, and will be the occasion for the Reader in Training's final assessment (when an appointee of the Ministries Council and representative of the Presbytery will attend).

Supervision

Supervision at this stage should be directed towards quality, depth and an all-round competence. At the start of the placement it would be helpful to discuss aims and aspirations and agree what areas might be possible to work on. It is recommended that the trainee Reader collaboratively formulates a learning agreement with the placement supervisor. An example is provided in appendix 9 of the Readership Handbook. The Reader in Training should already have basic competence by the time they reach you, and throughout their time with you ought to be deepening their understanding and practice in construction of prayers and sermons. Your task is to focus on quality, ensuring that the Reader in Training goes beyond the obvious, and engages her or

his imagination and study. You might also focus on the pastoral relationship dimensions of the Reader in Training's activities in the Church.

We suggest a weekly meeting with the Reader in Training, reviewing the service most recently conducted and looking forward to the next. It should also review the Reader in Training's pastoral relationships, possibly focusing each meeting on one visit or encounter the student has had in the previous seven days.

You will probably find it helpful to maintain contact with the Regent and/or responsible person within the Presbytery's, Ministries Committee (or equivalent), especially if there are any areas of worry about his or her progress or attitude.

Supporting the Reader in Training

While there is no requirement for a Reader in Training to have a Support Group it is extremely helpful if a few (perhaps 3 or 4) members of the placement congregation are asked to fulfil this role. The Reader in Training may have set up for themselves some such arrangement in their home congregation or have someone who acts as mentor and may wish them to be included in a supporting role during the placement. The group should be kept small but large enough to ensure at least one is present at every service to give constructive but critical feedback alongside the supervisor.

It is entirely up to the Reader in Training and the supervisor to organise any such group in a way appropriate to the circumstance of the placement.

There is no formal role for any Support Group but it is hoped that they, as representatives from the placement congregation, would take part in the discussions regarding the report made at the end of the placement.

Report

At the end of this placement, the Reader in Training's final assessment takes place. The Ministries Council will want to be satisfied that the Reader in Training has reached an acceptable level to have passed the practical element of the course. The Presbytery will want to be satisfied that the Reader in Training is ready to be set apart as a Reader.

Your role is to contribute to this process in two ways.

- 1 You will complete the report form R1 (see Appendix 2 of the Readership Handbook for a template) and return it to the Ministries Council, sending a copy to the Presbytery and to the Reader in Training. In it you are asked to assess and judge the Reader in Training's competence.
- 2 You will be asked to contribute at the final assessment meeting. This will take place in your church directly after the student has taken a whole service for final assessment. The assessment panel comprises a Ministries Council appointee, a representative from Presbytery and the placement supervisor (you). Representatives from the congregation should also be involved if possible. You will seek to agree a recommendation to be made to the Ministries Council, and then bring in the Reader in Training to share comments and your conclusion with him or her. There are three options for recommendation, based on the final preaching assessment and the conclusion will be dependent on all other aspects of training being completed satisfactorily.
 - a) That the trainee be set apart as a Reader
 - b) That the trainee complete a probationary period as determined by the Presbytery, giving attention to specified aspects of the Readership, before a further decision is made
 - c) That the trainee be not set apart.

Conclusion of Training

Before the Ministries Council issues the certificate of completion of training to the Presbytery so that it may proceed to the setting apart, it will require to be assured of the following:

1. Final Preaching Assessment has been undertaken and the report received
2. Final Placement Report received
3. Required academic study has been completed
4. Safeguarding Training has been undertaken and satisfactory Disclosure received
5. Full conference attendance

4 The Concept of Supervision

SUPERVISION OF READERS IN TRAINING

What is supervision?

A helpful definition is given by Proctor and Inskipp -

“Supervision is a working alliance between a supervisor and a worker or workers, in which the worker can reflect on herself in her working situation by giving an account of her work and receiving feedback, and, where appropriate, guidance and appraisal. The object of this alliance is to maximise the competence of the worker in providing a helpful service.”

It is important to recognise that the relationship is an alliance whose focus is on the work being done by the Reader in Training. Its purpose is to help the Reader in Training to reflect on that work and how she/he has done it as well as for the Reader in Training to hear the reaction of the supervisor through feedback; guidance which will, at times, include teaching; and appraisal of where the Reader in Training is in her/his development. Not only is supervision essential for the professional and personal growth of the Reader in Training but it is also the well-being and safety of those whom the Reader serves.

The supervisory contract

The relationship between Reader in Training and supervisor is contractual. The two parties involved will work out together the purpose of their meetings and the practicalities involved. There is a contract between, the Reader in Training and the Ministries Council with regard to the Reader in Training's learning programme.

The contract will deal with expectations and requirements, the frequency and venue of meetings, the form and purpose of such meetings, and so on, a written document expressing these at the start of placement will be beneficial. Certain parts of the contract are required in terms of the training procedure but other parts are negotiable. The contract is mutually agreed and binding.

The supervisory relationship

The contract will make some reference to the nature of relationship within which it is to be fulfilled and it is important that some time is taken to explore this together. While the roles of Reader in Training and supervisor are not to be confused, there is a mutuality of respect, openness, honesty and trust.

The supervisor will not impose her/his views on the Reader in Training but will seek to facilitate their learning by drawing out of them their thoughts and feelings on the material brought to supervision. A good picture for the supervisor is as an enabler who has skills and experience but who does not impose them except when that is necessary.

The supervisor will be a good listener and will attempt to reflect back what s/he hears from the Reader in Training while, at times, being positively critical of the Reader in Training's thoughts or practice. *Empathy* — listening your way into the Reader in Training's world and frame of reference and *congruence* — being able appropriately to be on the outside with the Reader in Training what you are on the inside — are basic, helpful attitudes in supervision.

Conflict of roles

It is important that both the Reader in Training and the supervisor are aware of the tension between the dual role of the latter in that the supervisor is asked to support the Reader in Training and also to report on them. Conflict may arise if the supervisor's report is in any way critical. It is therefore important that this is noted when the contract is being made, that the content of the report is openly shared, and that the nature of support is seen to include the possibility of challenge, confrontation and constructive criticism.