



Formation



Panel

Handbook

Uniting College for Leadership & Theology



## **EFFECTIVE LEADERS FOR A HEALTHY, MISSIONAL CHURCH**

The Synod and Presbytery of South Australia has been reshaping its processes of theological education and formation with a focus on developing “effective leaders for a healthy, missional church” (see Appendix 1 and 2). Formation Panels are a recent South Australian innovation with this goal in view. In order to help you participate well as a member of a Formation Panel, this handbook outlines the nature, structure and operations of the Panels.

## **THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND FORMATION IN THE UNITING CHURCH**

Formation Panels participate in the Uniting Church’s processes for the theological education and formation of members of the church as ministers of the Word or deacons.

In the Uniting Church, theological education and ministerial formation is approached in four phases:

- Phase 1 (the Period of Discernment)
- Phase 2 (the Core Phase)
- Phase 3 (the First Placement)
- Phase 4 (Continuing Education)

Standards of theological education, in all four Phases, are set by the Assembly and overseen by the national Ministerial Education Commission (MEC). In South Australia the Leadership Development Council (LDC) is responsible for ensuring that our system of theological education meets the national standards of the Uniting Church. The LDC reports annually to the MEC, and every six or seven years an MEC Visitation Panel comes to South Australia to review and assess our practices in theological education.

Formation panels play the primary role in overseeing the formation of candidates for the ministry of the Word or ministry of deacon in Phase 2 (Core Phase) and in the first three years of Phase 3 (the First Placement).

### **WHAT IS FORMATION?**

Ministerial formation is first of all an aspect of Christian formation; growing as a disciple of Christ and serving God in the world. It includes transformation, taking on the likeness of Christ as we respond to God’s work of renewing creation. Ministerial formation is grounded in formation for discipleship.

The goal of ministerial formation is that candidates and ministers become effective leaders of healthy churches.

Ministerial formation is a lifelong process. It involves the whole person – integrating his or her spiritual life, knowledge, skills, attitudes, personal priorities and health. Formation is grounded in baptism into Christ. It has begun before a person applies to become a candidate. It continues throughout a person’s ministry.

The Core Phase of theological education builds on the formation for ministry that has already taken place and concentrates on some specific formational goals required for the ministry for which the person is a candidate; including the development of the attitudes and skills that the person will need for their continuing formation in the future.

Ministerial formation involves the initiation of candidates into an order of ministry. In this process the Holy Spirit grounds the individual’s personal experience of call in the shared set of accountabilities to the church and to ministerial colleagues that enables him or her to be a Uniting Church minister (a deacon or minister of the Word).

### **WHAT IS A FORMATION PANEL**

Formation panels play the primary role in overseeing the formation of candidates for the ministry of the Word or ministry of deacon in Phase 2 (Core Phase) and in the first three years of Phase 3 (the First Placement).

A Formation Panel is made up of 3-5 experienced, effective missional leaders and a college academic advisor, including one person with specialist knowledge and proven skill in adult education. It oversees the progress of up to 6 candidates in the Core Phase, meeting with each of them at least 3 times each

year. It continues to oversee the formation of those ministers for the first 3 years of their First Placement after ordination, meeting with them at least annually. In 2010 there are five Formation Panels.

On the basis of the Selection Panel's report and the candidate's own account of his or her call to ministry, the Formation Panel discerns with the candidate the pathway to placement and ordination. It asks, "What does this person need to do or experience or learn to be an effective missional leader?" It returns to that question at regular intervals during the candidate's Core Phase.

In collaboration with the academic advisor, the Formation Panel designs a course comprised of roughly equal parts of Ministry Practice, Formation, and Theological Study for each candidate. The course will normally be three years in length, depending on the Relevant Prior Learning (RPL) of the candidate and the discernment of the Formation Panel. The course will include a proposed plan of continuing education and professional development for the first 3 years of the person's First Placement after ordination.

A candidate's course will be designed with a focus on his or her particular passion and gifts together with an awareness of the needs of the church. The Formation Panel will strive for a flexibility that ensures that the course is made to fit the candidate rather than the reverse. The Formation Panel will engage in on-going discernment with the candidate to ensure that the course meets his or her formational needs.

The Formation Panel will determine when the candidate has completed satisfactorily the requirements of the Core Phase and recommend to the Presbytery that the candidate be ordained, subject to being called to a Placement.

The Formation Panel will determine when the minister is ready to transition from the special arrangements for mentoring and support of Phase 3 and into Phase 4.

### **CHAIRPERSON'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

The LDC appoints a chairperson for each panel. That person is responsible for leading the Formation Panel's conversation with each candidate. Because a Panel may be interviewing as many as 6 candidates in a single day it is important that the chairperson keeps the Panel's conversation with each candidate to time.

### **ACADEMIC ADVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

The academic advisor meets with each newly accepted candidate in the formation group to hear and understand his/her particular passion, call and gifts and to relate those to the needs of the church. In the light of this conversation the academic advisor will draft an appropriate course plan (core phase + continuing education in the first placement) to recommend to the candidate's Formation Panel.

The academic advisor will maintain a course plan for each candidate in the formation group; liaising between candidate, faculty and the formation panel.

The academic advisor will assist the candidate to prepare for each meeting with the Formation Panel, particularly if that meeting involves a mid-course review or transition interview. He or she will ensure that the Formation Panel members have any documents that will improve its conversation and discernment with the candidates (e.g. current course plan, Supervised Field Education (SFE) Supervisor report, mid-course review papers etc).

The academic advisor will have general pastoral oversight of each candidate in the formation group.

## FIRST MEETING WITH A NEW CANDIDATE

For the Formation Panel's first meeting with a new candidate the academic advisor will have circulated the candidate's Selection Panel report and proposed course plan. The meeting follows this agenda:

Introduction of Panel	The chairperson introduces each Panel member to the candidate; giving their names and current ministry placements.	1 minute
Opening Prayer	The chairperson leads in prayer.	1 minute
Introduction of Candidate	The chairperson asks the candidate to tell the Panel something about their <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Background,</li><li>• Call to ministry, and</li><li>• Particular passion, focus or gifts for ministry</li></ul>	10 minutes
Conversation	Members of the Panel engage the candidate in conversation about what he or she has told them.	10 minutes
Course Plan	The academic advisor introduces the proposed course plan for discussion and approval.	10 minutes
Other Matters	The chairperson invites the candidate to ask the Panel any other question he or she might have.	10 minutes
Close	The chairperson invites a Panel member to pray for the candidate.	3 minutes
Debrief	After the candidate leaves the Panel reflects together on the conversation.	15 minutes

## ORDINARY MEETING

For subsequent meetings of the Formation Panel and the candidate (other than mid-course reviews or transition interviews) the academic advisor will have circulated any reports on the candidate (e.g. from the candidate's supervisor or from the faculty), any academic results, and any changes to the course plan. These ordinary meetings will follow this agenda:

Greetings	The Panel members greet the candidate, reminding him or her of their names if necessary.	1 minute
Opening Prayer	The chairperson leads in prayer.	1 minute
Candidate's update	The chairperson asks the candidate to tell the Panel something about the highlights and lowlights of their time since the last meeting.	10 minutes
Conversation	Members of the Panel engage the candidate in conversation about what he or she has told them.	15 minutes
Matters from Reports	The chairperson leads a conversation with the candidate on matters raised in any reports which have been received.	10 minutes

Course Plan	The academic advisor comments as necessary on the candidate's course plan and achievements since the last meeting.	5 minutes
Close	The chairperson invites a Panel member to pray for the candidate.	3 minutes
Debrief	After the candidate leaves the Panel reflects together on the conversation.	15 minutes

### **MID-COURSE REVIEW (see Candidates' Handbook for details)**

Prior to a mid-course review the academic advisor will have circulated the candidate's Personal Statement of Faith and Discipleship, course plan, academic record, and supervisor's report. The candidate will be accompanied by a friend, with whom he or she can reflect after the meeting.

The mid-course review will follow this agenda:

Greeting and Introduction	The chairperson greets the candidate and introduces the Panel members to the candidate's friend.	1 minute
Opening Prayer	The chairperson leads in prayer.	1 minute
Explanations	The chairperson briefly reminds the candidate of the meeting's purpose and process.	1 minute
Introductory Comment	The chairperson thanks the candidate for their <i>Personal Statement of Faith and Discipleship</i> and invites the candidate to add anything they would like.	2 minutes
Conversation	Members of the Panel engage the candidate in conversation about his or her <i>Personal Statement of Faith and Discipleship</i> , and raise any pertinent matters from the supervisor's report, academic record or course plan.	20 minutes
Course Plan	The academic advisor confirms with the Panel the suitability of the current course plan.	3 minutes
Other Matters	The chairperson invites the candidate to ask the Panel any other question he or she might have.	2 minutes
Affirmations	The chairperson invites each Panel member to give feedback to the candidate, affirming the strengths they see in the candidate and naming any areas in which they would encourage the candidate to do more work.	10 minutes
Close	The chairperson invites a Panel member to pray for the candidate.	3 minutes
Debrief	After the candidate leaves, the Panel reflects together on the conversation.	15 minutes

## TRANSITION INTERVIEW (Ordination)

Prior to a transition interview the academic advisor will have circulated the candidate's Minister's Profile, course plan, academic record, and supervisor's report.

The candidate will be accompanied by a friend, with whom he or she can reflect after the meeting.

The transition interview will follow this agenda:

Greeting and Introduction	The chairperson greets the candidate and introduces the Panel members to the candidate's friend.	1 minute
Opening Prayer	The chairperson leads in prayer.	1 minute
Explanations	The chairperson briefly reminds the candidate of the meeting's purpose and process.	1 minute
Introductory Comment	The chairperson thanks the candidate for his or her <i>Minister's Profile</i> and invites the candidate to add anything he or she would like.	2 minutes
Conversation	Members of the Panel engage the candidate in conversation about his or her <i>Minister's Profile</i> , and raise any pertinent matters from the Supervisor's report, academic record or course plan.	20 minutes
Course Plan	The academic advisor confirms with the Panel the suitability of the continuing education plan, provided as the next part of the candidate's course plan.	3 minutes
Other Matters	The chairperson invites the candidate to ask the Panel any other question or make any other comment he or she might have.	2 minutes
Affirmations	The chairperson invites each Panel member to give feedback to the candidate, affirming the strengths they see in the candidate and naming any areas in which they would encourage the candidate to do more work.	10 minutes
Close	The chairperson invites a Panel member to pray for the candidate.	3 minutes
Debrief and Decision	After the candidate leaves, the Panel reflects together on the conversation and decides whether it is ready to recommend to the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) "that NNN be ordained to the ministry of deacon/ministry of the Word subject to receiving a call to a ministry placement".	30 minutes

The chairperson will inform the candidate of the Formation Panel's decision as soon as possible after the meeting.

If the decision has been made to recommend that the candidate be ordained, a member of the Formation Panel will draft a report to the PRC.

## **REPORT TO PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

A report recommending that a candidate be ordained should be brief (1-2 pages) and make concise comments on the following matters.

- The candidate's sense of call, and his or her passions and gifts for ministry
- The candidate's personal leadership qualities
- Evidence of the effectiveness of the candidate as a leader
- The candidate's achievements in the 3 key areas of the Core Phase (ministry practice, formation, and theological study)
- Areas in which the candidate needs to continue to develop through continuing education and professional development after ordination
- The Formation Panel's estimation of the candidate's readiness and potential to be an effective leader for a healthy missional church

## **PHASE THREE (First Placement)**

The Formation Panel will continue to have oversight of the minister for the first three years of his or her ministry after ordination. National guidelines for this period are still being prepared by the Ministerial Education Commission. Formation Panel processes consistent with these guidelines will be provided as soon as practicable.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **SYNOD OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA BY-LAWS**

#### 14.1 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

14.1.1 The Presbytery and Synod shall establish a Leadership Development Council.

#### MANDATE 14.1.2

To develop effective leaders for a healthy, missional Church, who are:

- Passionate
- Christ-centred
- Highly skilled
- Mission-oriented practitioners

#### OUTCOMES 14.1.3

a. A shared vision for ministry and leadership development consistent with the missional context of the Church in the 21st century in South Australia is articulated and promoted.

b. Members of the Church with a heart for mission are encouraged and equipped for their particular calling.

c. Ministers, leaders and faith communities are equipped to encourage members of the Church to discern and respond to God's call to discipleship and ministry; including God's call to any of the Church's specified ministries.

d. Members of the Church are receiving high quality, relevant education and training for lay and ordained ministries within the Uniting Church and for Christian leadership in the wider South Australian community.

e. Ministers and leaders are fully engaged in appropriate continuing education and professional development.

f. A centre for leadership development is established as the primary instrument through which the Leadership Development Council works to achieve these outcomes.

g. The centre for leadership development is recognized by the Assembly as an approved centre for training for ministry (reg. 2.2.18) and provides high quality theological leadership and resources to the Church.

h. The responsibilities of a Ministerial Education Board are fulfilled (reg. 2.2.19-27).

#### OPERATION 14.1.4

The Leadership Development Council is empowered to establish any committees, task groups, consultancies or other instruments by which it may most effectively fulfil its mandate.

#### MEMBERSHIP 14.1.5 a.

The membership of the Leadership Development Council shall comprise up to fourteen (14) members:

- i. Executive Chairperson appointed by the Presbytery Standing Committee.
- ii. Four (4) members elected by the Presbytery/Synod.
- iii. Principal of Uniting College for Leadership & Theology.
- iv. CEO/General Secretary of the Presbytery and Synod or his/her nominee.
- v. Executive Officer, Mission Resourcing Network or his/her nominee.
- vi. Executive Officer, Pastoral Relations or his/her nominee.
- vii. Three (3) teachers elected by the faculty, and at least one (1) shall be a man and one (1) shall be a woman.

b. The electing bodies shall note that the preferred composition of the Council includes at least four (4) women and at least four (4) men.

c. In addition, up to two (2) members may be co-opted by the Council.

d. Terms of elected members shall be three (3) years. Elected members may be re-elected for not more than two (2) consecutive terms and will subsequently be eligible for election again after two (2) years.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **PRESBYTERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA RULES**

#### **PR1.8 CANDIDATE FORMATION PANELS (SC09.139)**

PR 1.8.1 The Leadership Development Council will appoint Formation Panels to be responsible for:

1. The pastoral and formational supervision of candidates for ministry;
2. Assessing candidates for ordination as Minister of the Word or Deacon.

The Formation Panels shall consist of:

1. The Uniting College Principal or an alternate faculty member.
2. Between four and six effective ministry practitioners appointed by the LDC.

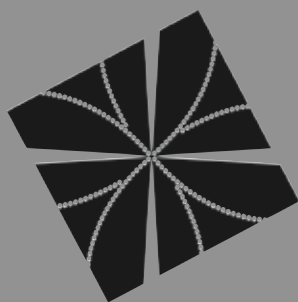
PR1.8.2 In carrying out their duties the panels shall:

1. Meet with candidates for ministry at least three times each year during their core phase;
2. Meet regularly with candidates in phase three;
3. Provide support and guidance regarding a candidate's personal formation;
4. Assist in the selection of a candidate's course of study, field placement and preparation for ministry;
5. Receive regular reports, at least annually, from the Uniting College faculty and from the candidate's supervisor, noting the student's development and any concerns;
6. Conduct mid course reviews as appropriate and report on each candidate to the LDC;
7. Report to the PRC any concerns or issues about which the PRC should be aware;
8. Determine readiness to commence phase three and report to the PRC and Placements Committee;
9. Assess readiness for ordination, report to the LDC, and recommend to the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee.

PR1.8.3 Process for assessing and deciding the suitability of a candidate for ordination:

1. The Formation Panel shall assess the suitability of a candidate eligible for ordination, and shall bring a report and recommendation to the Pastoral Relations Committee.
2. Where the Pastoral Relations Committee approves the recommendation, it shall come as a formal motion from the PRC to the Presbytery.
3. Where the Pastoral Relations Committee has concerns or objections to the recommendation, the Formation Panel shall reconvene to consider the concerns or objections.
4. Notification of the recommendation to the presbytery shall be made in writing to the membership of the Presbytery at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting of the Presbytery that will consider the recommendation.
5. Objections to such a recommendation regarding the suitability of a candidate for ordination shall be put in the form of a notice of motion no less than seven (7) days prior to the meeting of the Presbytery at which the recommendation is to be received.
6. Where no objections are made to the recommendation of the PRC, this recommendation shall be received by the Presbytery and the Presbytery shall resolve to ordain or not ordain the candidate in accordance with the recommendation of the PRC.
7. Where objections are made to the recommendation, in accordance with these procedures, then the question of suitability for ordination shall be determined by the Presbytery, after consideration of a report from the Formation Panel and the objections raised to the recommendation.





# Uniting College

for Leadership & Theology



34 Lipsett Terrace  
Brooklyn Park SA 5032  
P: 08 8416 8420 F: 08 8416 8430  
E: [info@unitingcollege.org.au](mailto:info@unitingcollege.org.au)  
W: [www.unitingcollege.sa.uca.org.au](http://www.unitingcollege.sa.uca.org.au)