

Assessment Board and Appealing a Decision

1. Introduction

Not everyone who candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or for Church Related Community Work will be recommended by the Assessment Board. Where the Board concludes that a candidate should not proceed, this can be a difficult and disappointing outcome. Candidates may experience a sense of personal rejection or question their sense of vocation. It is important to remember, however, that whilst the Church may conclude that a particular form of ministry is not appropriate, God does not reject; God may instead be calling a person to serve in a different way.

The United Reformed Church recognises and values many forms of ministry. Ordained ministry of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work are only two among a wide range of ways in which people are called to serve God's mission. A decision not to recommend a candidate for one particular form of ministry should not be understood as a judgement on their faith, gifts or commitment to Christ.

Following the Assessment Board, candidates will meet with representatives of the Board and their Synod Candidating Secretary or Synod Candidating Committee. The Assessment Board's written decision, together with these conversations, will explain the reasons for the outcome and provide an opportunity for reflection. Candidates are also encouraged to seek support from their minister, the Convener of the Synod Pastoral Committee and/or the Synod Moderator as they discern the next steps in their vocation.

2. Appeals

An appeal is concerned with the fairness of the Assessment Board's process and not with reconsidering the Board's judgement and their decision about a candidate's suitability for ministry.

A candidate may appeal by giving written notice to the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) within 14 days of being notified of the Assessment Board's decision. An appeal may be made only on one or both of the following grounds:

- a. that the Assessment Board did not follow the proper procedures in reaching its decision; or
- b. that there were material facts which were not available to the Assessment Board at the time of its deliberations and which, had they been available, may have affected its recommendation.

3. The Appeals Committee

3.1 The Appeals Committee shall comprise the Convener of the Ministries Committee (or their Deputy) together with two other members of the Ministries Committee. The Committee shall be facilitated by the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries).

- 3.2 The Appeals Committee shall first consider the written appeal and supporting documentation to determine whether the stated grounds for appeal have been established.
- 3.3 Where the Appeals Committee determines that there are sufficient grounds for an appeal to proceed, it shall convene a hearing. The appellant has the right to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by a supporter, who may not address the Committee.
- 3.4 If the Appeals Committee upholds the appeal, it does not overturn the recommendation of the Assessment Board or substitute its own decision. Instead, the candidate will be invited to attend the next Assessment Board Conference for a fresh interview and assessment, at which the application will be considered anew.
- 3.5 The Appeals Committee shall communicate its decision in writing within 14 days of the hearing. The decision of the Appeals Committee shall be final.

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