



The Church of Scotland

Faith Nurture Forum Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Policy

Performance

1. Introduction

The Faith Nurture Forum of the Church of Scotland (Faith Nurture Forum) is committed to providing an engaging, productive, thought-provoking and purposeful training programme through IME for students for the recognised Ministries. Faith Nurture Forum are aware that individuals learn at different speeds, in different ways and have different abilities. The programme design and delivery methods aim to take account of those factors and students are expected to fully commit to the IME Programme and all learning requirements.

Faith Nurture Forum recognise that there may be instances where students find learning difficult and as a first principle, Faith Nurture Forum take a supportive, remedial approach to working with the student to bring their learning back on track and support a student to achieve this. This policy provides a framework for resolving the issue, ideally through the improvement of the student's performance. As a last resort, the policy specifies the circumstances in which the student's candidature may be terminated on the grounds of capability.

Where a student's poor performance is believed to be the result of deliberate negligence, or where serious errors have been made by him/her to the detriment of Faith Nurture Forum, Presbytery, or the Church of Scotland, Faith Nurture Forum will invoke the discipline policy and procedure instead.

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all students, however where the student is studying with one of the university partners, the student will be subject to local policies in place. Faith Nurture Forum will work with the university to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

Where the student is on placement, Faith Nurture Forum will work with Presbytery, Placement Supervisors and the Education and Training Implementation Group. Faith Nurture Forum will guide this process.

3. Data and Confidentiality

Faith Nurture Forum will ensure that confidentiality is respected at all times and only those involved in the process will be made aware and on a need-to-know basis. A written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure will be made by Faith Nurture Forum. Faith Nurture Forum processes any personal data collected during the performance improvement procedure in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. Any data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of completing the performance improvement procedure. Inappropriate access or disclosure of student data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the data protection policy immediately.

4. Performance Concerns

Where there are concerns about a student's performance these will be made known to the student as soon as possible. Where the student is on placement and the supervisor has identified performance issues, then they will make this known to the student and Faith Nurture Forum Training Officers as soon as possible.

Students also have a responsibility to approach the supervisor if they are finding learning difficult or have noticed any issues with their own performance. Faith Nurture Forum are committed to working together with all parties at the earliest opportunity as this will have the greatest chance of rectifying any performance issues quickly.

5. Informal Approach – Performance Improvement

In all cases, Faith Nurture Forum will aim to apply an informal approach. If this is not possible for example, if the performance issues are too significant, a formal approach may be considered appropriate.

Using an informal approach, the supervisor or Training Officer will inform the student of the nature of the problem identified and confirm this in writing. The student will then be invited to an informal meeting to discuss concerns regarding their performance. The meeting will be conducted by the supervisor and the Faith Nurture Forum Training Officer, and depending on the point in their studies, a university representative, or another member of Presbytery may attend to ensure a co-ordinated and robust support plan.

Following discussion of the problem, the supervisor may choose to take no further action or to issue guidance to the student on what they need to do to improve their performance. This will usually be in the form of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The format of the PIP will be specific to the performance issues but in all cases will identify areas for improvement, set measurable and specific targets to be achieved, have a clear timeframe which is appropriate to the performance to be corrected and to detail who will support the student, and how they will do that.

If, at any stage, the supervisor or the student feels that the performance improvement programme is not progressing in a satisfactory way, a further meeting may be held with the student to discuss the issue. As a result of such a meeting, Presbytery or Faith Nurture Forum may amend or extend any part of the programme.

At the end of the performance improvement programme, the student's performance will be reviewed. If satisfactory progress has been made, the student will be notified of this fact in writing. However, if Presbytery or Faith Nurture Forum feels that progress has been insufficient, they may extend and/or amend the performance improvement programme to such extent as is considered appropriate.

However, Presbytery or Faith Nurture Forum may decide to refer the matter to a formal approach.

6. Formal Approach - Performance Improvement

Where informal performance improvement does not lead to a satisfactory improvement in the student's performance, the student will be invited to a performance review meeting.

The purpose of a performance review meeting is to discuss the student's performance and decide what measures should be taken, with a view to securing the required improvement in the student's performance. The meeting will be conducted by the Training Officer. Where it is considered appropriate, a member of the university, Presbytery and/or a more senior member of the Education and Training Implementation Group and/or a senior member of Faith Nurture Forum e.g. the Education and Training Secretary.

The student will be given an opportunity to respond to any criticisms of his/her performance and to put forward any explanation they may have for the matters identified as amounting to poor performance.

The outcome of the meeting may be:

- a decision to take no further action;
- a decision to refer the matter for investigation under the discipline policy and procedure; or
- invite the student to a formal performance hearing.

Faith Nurture Forum will write to the student and set out the respects in which Faith Nurture Forum believes that the student's performance still falls short of an acceptable standard.

The hearing will be conducted by an elected member of Faith Nurture Forum, a member of Presbytery and the Faith Nurture Forum Training Officer. The student will be entitled to be accompanied by an individual of their choice.

At the hearing, the student will be given an opportunity to respond to any criticism of his/her performance and to make representations about any aspect of the way in which the process has been managed.

The outcome of the meeting may be a decision to:

- take no further action;
- refer the matter for investigation under the disciplinary procedure;
- institute another performance improvement programme; or
- issue a formal warning to the student.

A formal warning will be issued if the hearing concludes that reasonable steps have been taken by Faith Nurture Forum that should have allowed the student to perform to an acceptable standard, but that these measures have not worked. The warning will explain the nature of the improvement that is required in the student's performance and state that the improvement must be immediate and sustained. It will also explain that, if the necessary improvement does not take place, the student may be asked to leave the IME Programme.

The warning will remain current for a period of 12 months, after which it will cease to have effect.

7. Formal Approach – Final Performance Improvement Stage

If a student has been issued with a warning under the formal approach that remains live and Faith Nurture Forum believes, or is made aware, that the student's performance is still not acceptable, the matter may be referred to a performance hearing.

The student will be informed in writing of the grounds on which the hearing is being convened. In particular, they will be told of the respects in which their performance remains below an acceptable level.

The hearing will be conducted by an elected member of Faith Nurture Forum who is authorised to make decisions to terminate candidature, accompanied by a Faith Nurture Forum Training Officer, a member of Presbytery or a representative from university if this is applicable. The student may be accompanied by a companion of their choice.

At the meeting, the student will have the opportunity to respond to any criticisms made of his/her performance and make representations about how the situation should be treated. The outcome of the meeting may be:

- a decision to take no further action;
- the issuing of another performance management warning; or
- a decision to terminate the candidature of the student.

The decision to terminate the candidature of the student, together with the reasons for the termination will be set out in writing and sent to the student.

Where a student's candidature is terminated in accordance with this procedure, they will have a right of appeal.

8. Appeal

A student has a right of appeal against a termination of candidature from the IME Programme. A request for an appeal should be sent in writing to the Convenor of Faith Nurture Forum and set out the grounds on which the student believes that the decision was flawed or unfair. The request should be sent within seven days of the student receiving written confirmation of the sanction imposed by Faith Nurture Forum.

An appeal hearing will be convened to consider the matter. It will be chaired by the Convenor of Faith Nurture Forum together with an other elected member of Faith Nurture Forum. The student will be entitled to be accompanied by a companion of their choice.

At the hearing, the decision to impose the sanction will be reviewed and the student will be entitled to make representations about the appropriateness of that decision.

The result of the hearing will be either to confirm the sanction or substitute any outcome that was available under the formal approach – final performance improvement stage.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed to the student in writing, explaining the grounds on which the decision was reached. The outcome of the appeal will be final.

9. Monitoring and Review

The impact of this policy will be monitored and the policy is subject to amendments as necessary. This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

Date First Published:	September 2018
Date of Last Review:	December 2020
Frequency of Review:	2 years
Approved by:	E&S Committee

Initial Ministerial Education Programme – Performance Improvement Plan

Student Name	
Student Supervisor/Training Officer	
Date of Performance Improvement Plan Meeting	Initial Meeting: 3 August Review 1: 21 September Review 2: 14 November

Area of concern	Performance concern details	Expected standard of performance	Agreed Improvement actions	Support	Date to achieve improvements	Review 1: Notes	Review 2: Notes
<i>Detail specific area where performance standards have not been met e.g. prioritising workload, communication.</i>	<i>Detail specific dates and examples of the performance concern e.g. failed to send email as agreed.</i>	<i>Detail what is expected of the student e.g. To respond to emails in a timely manner.</i>	<i>Detail what actions need to be taken e.g. respond to emails within 3 working days or sooner.</i>	<i>Detail of who will support the student and what specific actions will be taken to do so.</i>	<i>A clear and realistic date should be set and depending on the nature of the improvement required.</i>	<i>Detail any notes from meeting 1.</i>	<i>Detail any notes from meeting 2.</i>