

TRAINING HANDBOOK

Initial Ministerial Education



We wish to extend a very warm welcome to all new and continuing candidates in training for full-time, ordained local or diaconal ministry or readership in the Church of Scotland. As a team we are delighted you are embracing your call to serve and we look forward to journeying with you through ministerial training and formation.

Every training journey is personal to each individual as they explore the call of ministry from God in their lives. The training programme will encourage candidates to strengthen their theological knowledge and understanding, develop their practical skills and engage in new experiences, whilst demonstrating throughout personal reflection and spiritual growth. The programme continues to evolve, making sure that training stays relevant to ministerial practice and the landscape of the national church.

The training programme is guided by the acts and regulations of the Church of Scotland and General Assembly. Please familiarise yourself with the relevant Acts in Church Law regarding training, which contain important information. They can be found here:

Training Act:

https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/72027/2004-Act-10-X-revised-to-October-2020.pdf

OLM Act:

2011 Act 9: Ordained Local Ministry (**churchofscotland.org.uk**)

Readership Act:

1992 Act 17: Readership Act (**churchofscotland.org.uk**)

We appreciate that there is a lot of information surrounding your training. This handbook is designed to support you to access that, but please get in touch with the training team if you have any questions or queries.

Contact:

For any general training enquiries:

ministriestraining@churchofscotland.org.uk

For any Reading in Training enquiries:

readertraining@churchofscotland.org.uk

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Glossary of Ministries

Diac	Diaconate
FTWAS	Full-time Word and Sacrament
OLM	Ordained Local Ministry

Section 1: Who is involved in my training?

Throughout your training you will encounter many different people and groups. This guide explains the responsibility each has for your training.

The Church of Scotland

Presbytery	<i>Continuing support throughout training. A Presbytery Assessor will be present at Candidate Appraisals.</i> <i>Readers in training will be assigned a 'Regent' who will manage and monitor training.</i>
Faith Nurture Forum	<i>The forum of the Church with oversight of all aspects of training.</i>
Training Officers	<i>Deployed from the Forum's Training Team, the Training Officers and associated admin staff journey alongside you during training, coordinating your placements (excluding Readers), and hosting conferences and other training provision.</i>
Formation Partner	<i>As part of an ongoing pilot, a Formation Partner will journey with Candidates as a critical friend and will develop a unique relationship with them throughout the duration of training.</i>
Supervisor	<i>The Minister or Deacon who will supervise your placements and report on your progress. They will facilitate ongoing theological reflection, learning and development, as well as acting as your line manager during your placements.</i>
Ministries Training Network Facilitator	<i>A facilitator who leads your ongoing theological reflection group. (FTWAS/ Diac/OLM only.)</i>
Pastoral Support Team	<i>Central pastoral support is available to everyone in training. The team can help you find a spiritual director, a pastoral supervisor or a coach, depending on your needs.</i>
Congregational Support Group	<i>A group set up during your probation placement to aid you in your ministerial development.</i>

University

Academic provider	<i>Theological education</i>
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Section 2: Outline of the elements of training

In order to successfully complete your training, you are required to complete several components of training outlined below.

Academic Studies

While in discernment you will have applied to study at university and for SAAS funding as outlined in the Discernment pack. It is important that you confirm your place at university and funding situation with the training team as soon as possible.

Type of ministry	Required academic qualification
FTWAS	Bachelor of Divinity
Diac	Bachelor of Divinity
OLM	Certificate of Higher Education
Reader	Certificate of Higher Education

Where Candidates already have academic qualifications in theology, this will be considered and an appropriate course will be found to refresh and update theological knowledge and understanding.

When selecting your modules please remember that you are required to cover the following subject areas:

- Modern Church History
- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Worship
- Missiology
- Practical Theology
- Systematic Theology

Placements

Training Officers will arrange your placements (excluding Readers) based on your formation, learning and development needs. Different ministries have different placement requirements as set out below.

FTWAS/Diac

Placement	Duration	Timeframe	Details	Time commitment
1 Autumn	25 weeks	September - May	Part-time	10 hrs per week
2 Autumn	25 weeks	September - May	Part-time	10 hrs per week
3 Summer	10 weeks	Summer	Full-time	40 hrs per week
Probation	15 months	Starting between June and August	Full-time	40 hrs per week

Per Autumn placement	Probation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 complete services • Preach 6 times (min.) • Holidays to be arranged with supervisor, but placement must be a minimum of 25 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preaching 23 times • 6 weeks holiday plus 8 days public holiday (not including Sundays)

OLM

Placement	Duration	Timeframe	Details	Time commitment
1 – Autumn	25 weeks	September - May	Part-time	3 hrs per week plus Sunday
2 – Autumn	25 weeks	September - May	Part-time	3 hrs per week plus Sunday
Probation	12 months	Starting between June and August	Part -time	10 hrs per week plus Sunday

Per Autumn placement	Probation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 complete services • 3 Sundays holiday plus associated work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 complete services • Preaching 8 times (min.)

While the training should be completed in three years, a period of up to six years could be allowed from the point of beginning training until finishing probation. It is requested that an OLM Candidate seek to complete at least one module of academic study and one placement in their first year to ensure the relationship between theological learning and ministry practice is strong. Thereafter, if required, the Candidate could alternate academic study with placement until the completion of their training. A year of deferral of both study and placement would be possible, as long as everything is completed within six years. A minimum of three Candidate Gatherings and two Probation Conferences should be attended.

Readers

Placements are arranged locally through Presbytery and focus on leading worship.

Placement	Duration	Timeframe	Details	Time commitment
Year 1	6 months	Flexible	Part-time	5 hrs max per week plus Sunday
Year 2	6 months	Flexible	Part-time	5 hrs max per week plus Sunday

Placement 1	Placement 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship involvement 3 Sundays per month • Major responsibility 1 Sunday per month • Preach once in 2 months (twice if a linked charge) • Gain experience of other services (e.g. schools, care homes) • Discuss worship planning with supervisor • Observe at least 3 funerals and reflect on experience with supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship involvement 3 Sundays per month • Preach 1 Sunday per month (twice if a linked charge) • Lead all-age section worship once a month • Share in the conduct of 3 funerals • Lead worship in a school, care home or hospital • Discuss worship planning with supervisor • Conduct at least two whole services of worship

NB. You should not take part in more than 15 hrs of worship-related pastoral work over each 6-month placement. For additional information please see the Readership Handbook.

Conferences

Conferences are run by the Faith Nurture Forum and are a great opportunity for all Candidates to come together to learn and develop as a group.

Conference	Required	Details
Candidates Gathering	All	August (3 times/2 times for Readers)
Probation Conferences 1 & 3	FTWAS/OLM/Diac	September & March
Probation Conferences 2, 4 & General Assembly visit	All FTWAS/Diac probationers; OLM optional	January, June & May (General Assembly)

PVG & Safeguarding

Before you can begin your placement, you **must** be PVG checked and attend Safeguarding Training even if you have attended this locally. Safeguarding Training for new Candidates includes initial online training and the participation in follow-up sessions at the first Candidates Gathering that you attend. There is an online Safeguarding course available to Readers starting placements outwith the annual cycle.

Ministries Training Network (MTN)

Ministries Training Network (MTN) groups are peer learning groups designed to enable the integration of all you are learning in both the academic and placement spaces, by encouraging and developing your reflective skills.

They meet monthly, between October and May for 2 hours each time. These groups are facilitated by Practitioners, sourced by the Training Team, who serve in a variety of roles across the Church.

Each year has a theme which runs through all of the groups and there will be an element of preparation required. You will be expected to contribute to discussion and reflection at each meeting.

Occasionally you will be asked to lead worship or contribute an example of a recent experience of significant learning for ministry.

These meetings are counted in placement time. The Training Team will assign you to a MTN group each year.

These groups are compulsory for FTWS candidates and full attendance is expected unless there is a good reason for absence. Membership of an MTN group is optional for OLM, Diaconate and Readership Candidates, and they are asked to indicate any desire to participate by the end of August.

NB Probationers participate in their own MTN groups, which have a different format.

Speech Training

Those training for the Recognised Ministries need to be able to communicate the word of God in various ways to different audiences, with confidence and clarity.

Speech Training gives a space for all Candidates in their first year of study to examine the purpose, mechanics, handling of self and importance of connection in communication; giving everyone access to good training wherever they are in the country. A series of three mandatory online sessions will run each winter, while participants have current experience of preaching and opportunity to practise and grow. Another mandatory follow-up session will be arranged for the summer to both reflect and identify future development. It is hoped that peer support and accountability will come from this, giving each other honest and helpful feedback.

Church Law

In addition to attending Church Law training at conferences you are required to pass a Church Law assignment, which will be set at your third probation conference.

Again, please take note and familiarise yourself with the following Acts in Church Law which contain important information about your training.

Training Act:

https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/72027/2004-Act-10-X-revised-to-October-2020.pdf

OLM Act:

2011 Act 9: Ordained Local Ministry (**[churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)**)

Readership Act:

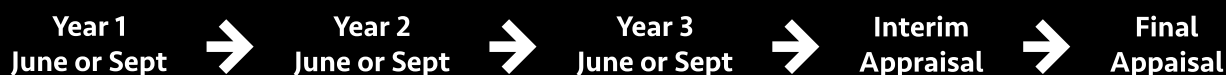
1992 Act 17: Readership Act (**[churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)**)

Section 3: Candidate Appraisal

3.1 - FTWAS/OLM/Diac

Your progress will be appraised throughout your candidacy by a panel of representatives of the Faith Nurture Forum and/or its Training Team, and your Presbytery. At these appraisal meetings you will be asked to reflect on your process and identify your learning and development needs for the next stage of your training. The panel will also confirm that you can progress to the next stage of training.

Appraisals can be called at any time, but they generally fall into the following pattern:



Initial Course Meeting (ICM)

This will be your first training meeting with a Training Officer. You will discuss a personalised training programme, discuss your training requirements, training points from the Assessment Conference and your goals for the year to come. Confirmation of your nomination by Presbytery and completion of the PVG process will be checked.

Annual Candidate Appraisal (Years 1-3)

This is a meeting to support and encourage you, confirm your progress has been satisfactory, seek clarification where required, and set formation and learning goals for the following year through a facilitated conversation and discussion.

Prior to the appraisal the Training Officer will assess your paperwork for satisfactory evidence that you have met the relevant criteria regarding the tasks and skills of ministry set out in the Formation Framework. They will write a short recommendation for the relevant Forum body and the Presbytery. The nature of this recommendation will determine which of the following appraisals takes place:

Positive recommendation

If your progress has been satisfactory, the appraisal will take place with the Training Officer and a trained Presbytery representative. At this appraisal, confirmation that you can proceed will be given and clarification sought if necessary. The majority of time will be dedicated to exploring your ministerial formation over the past year and collaboratively developing learning goals for the coming year.

Negative recommendation (either from paperwork or another incident)

If your progress has not been satisfactory or an incident has occurred, the appraisal will take place with a representative of the Forum, the Training Officer and a trained Presbytery Assessor. It will be made clear to you that there are concerns regarding your performance and that you may not be permitted to proceed to the next stage of training. As in any appraisal process there should be no surprises. The outcome of the appraisal will be communicated within 3 working days allowing the panel adequate time to reflect, discuss and come to a decision. It is likely that you will be placed under performance review under these circumstances as per the performance review policy.

Interim Appraisal

This appraisal takes place 6 months into your probation placement. It is an informal discussion between you and a Training Officer, which will focus on your learning, development and formation needs. The Training Officer will also have a phone consultation with your Supervisor and a Presbytery representative.

Final Probation Appraisal

This appraisal will follow the same pattern as the Annual Candidate Appraisal.

The outcomes

1. Progress/Proceed to ordination
2. Progress/Proceed to ordination on completion of outstanding work
3. Extension of training
4. Termination of Candidature

If a decision 4 is reached it will be reported to and minuted by the Presbytery and the Forum. This is subject to normal appeal procedures.

Appraisal paperwork

Each appraisal has supporting paperwork that must be completed for each placement. You and your Supervisor are responsible for ensuring that this is completed by the set deadline.

Learning and Serving Covenant

Before the beginning of the placement, some goals for the coming year will have been drawn up and agreed through annual review paperwork. For new Candidates, suggestions may have been made at an Initial Course Meeting. These goals represent identified training needs for the Candidate and will help form the basis of the Learning Covenant. Supervisor and Candidate together should identify further goals, and consider what activities, experiences and opportunities for reflection can be put in place to enable the Candidate to achieve these goals by the end of the placement. A well thought-out Learning Covenant is a significant learning tool and should be referred to throughout the placement. It needs to be completed and returned to the Training Team within 6 weeks of the start of the placement.

Placement Report

Towards the end of your placement your Supervisor must complete a placement report. You will be shown the report before it is submitted and asked to comment at the end. This report must be received at least 2 weeks before your appraisal.

3.2 - Reader

Your progress will be reviewed throughout your training by your Presbytery and culminate in a Final Preaching Assessment at the end of your second placement.

The Minister who is supervising your placement will complete a report at the end of each placement, which will be sent to Presbytery and the Faith Nurture Forum.

Final Preaching Assessment

At the end of your second placement a panel will visit the congregation you are attached to in order to witness you leading an entire service and meet with you afterwards to discuss your progress. The panel comprises of the following:

1. Faith Nurture Forum appointed assessor
2. Member of Presbytery
3. Your second placement Supervisor

At this meeting one of the following three recommendations will be made and a report is sent to Presbytery and the Faith Nurture Forum:

1. That the trainee be set apart as a Reader; or
2. That the trainee completes a probationary period as determined by the Presbytery, giving attention to specified aspects of the Readership, before a further decision is made; or
3. That the trainee be not set apart.

If a decision 3 is reached it will be reported to and minuted by the Presbytery and the Faith Nurture Forum. This is subject to normal appeal procedures.

Section 4: Funding and Finance

Financial support and funding are available for Candidates from a variety of sources.

You will be asked annually to apply for Candidate and placement grants and to update your details. This is to ensure GDPR compliance.

FTWAS/DIAC

Funding	Source	Details
Academic studies	SAAS	If you are not eligible you can apply for sponsorship by the Faith Nurture Forum
Probation placement	Faith Nurture Forum	85% of the first point of the ministers' stipend scale*
Candidate grants	Faith Nurture Forum	£15,000 paid in twelve monthly instalments directly into your bank from September.
Hardship grant	Faith Nurture Forum	Application form available on request from training team
Travel hardship grant	Faith Nurture Forum	Application form available on request from training team
Guild Reading Matters	The Guild	Available to probationers for the purchase of books or electronic equipment
Other	Church Colleges	Ask your academic provider if any funding is available
Other	Presbytery	Ask your Presbytery if any funding is available
Other	Various	Details of external grants can be found in the Church of Scotland Yearbook

*All Probationers will be auto-enrolled on the Church of Scotland's qualified pension scheme in-line with government legislation. You will be notified of your auto-enrolment. Please note:

- You can choose to opt out of the scheme if you want to, but if you stay in you will have your own pension which you get when you retire
- The Church of Scotland will pay into it every month alongside any contributions you are required to pay
- The Government will also contribute through the tax relief it will give you on the contributions you September pay as a scheme member
- Your pension belongs to you, even if you leave the Church in the future

OLM

Funding	Source	Details
Academic studies	Faith Nurture Forum	Application via academic sponsorship form.
Hardship grant	Faith Nurture Forum	Application form available on request from training team
Travel hardship grant	Faith Nurture Forum	Application form available on request from training team
Other	Presbytery	Ask your Presbytery if funding is available.

Reader

Funding	Source	Details
Academic studies	Faith Nurture Forum	Invoices should be sent directly to the Training Team from your university. If they are sent to you please notify us and do not pay them.
Other	Presbytery	Ask your Presbytery if funding is available.

Travel Expenses

Candidates may claim placement travel expenses at 45p per mile for car use or 20p per mile for bicycle use. Please note:

- All mileage claimed must be wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the pursuit of your duties in your placement
- Claimed within three months of being incurred, otherwise it will not be reimbursed
- Any MTN and conference expenses are to be processed separately. The Training Team will issue expense forms for these events

Please note that during probation no claim can be made for making your way to your place of work, deemed to be the church building.

Use a [spreadsheet](#) to keep a running record of each journey you make in a month. At the end of each month complete an electronic monthly travel expenses claim form, to be signed by your Supervisor and emailed to ministriestraining@churchofscotland.org.uk

Section 5: Guidance and Support

As a Candidate or Probationer there are various avenues of support open to you.

Academic provider	<i>Each university has a named staff member responsible for candidates for the ministry.</i>
Presbytery	<i>Your Presbytery should give you a contact for pastoral support. If this is not the case please contact Presbytery directly or raise it at your next appraisal.</i>
Training Officers	<i>The training officers are available for a conversation. Please make use of this and don't wait until something is very wrong before contacting them.</i> <i>They can put you in contact with the Pastoral Support Team, who can speak with you or meet you in confidence, and can recommend further support.</i> <i>The Training Officers can also help you to access other support mechanisms, such as coaching.</i>
Ascend	<i>Ascend brings together a range of services and opportunities for those in ministry. The heart of Ascend is to provide a creative and safe space that enables meaningful support and development. Ascend was started in 2016; creating a centre for support and development for those in ministry. IME Candidates can access tailored services, resources and events via the "roles in Ministry" menu on the Ascend website (www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend) and we invite you to sign up for the monthly eNews (Newsletter The Church of Scotland) to stay updated with our latest articles.</i> <i>We hope the services and opportunities of Ascend benefits all of you in ministry serving God throughout the local communities throughout the Church.</i>

Absence

We recognise that few individuals will go through their Candidacy without becoming unwell / requiring time off which requires them to take time off from their studies. The Faith Nurture Forum appreciates this, is sympathetic to students who are unwell and is committed to supporting Candidates wherever possible to return to good health. There may also be other circumstances where Candidates are unable to attend studies e.g. carer responsibilities, pregnancy, emergency domestic situations.

If any such situation should arise, Candidates should contact the Training Team to notify them of absence and to seek for support and guidance. Relevant sickness policies can be found [here](#).

Throughout training, Candidates are responsible for:

- attending all placements, unless unfit to do so;
- investigating alternative arrangements to compensate for missed work;
- ensuring that proper notifications are made when unwell, in line with the policy;
- ensuring that when they return, they complete the Student Absence Return form;
- taking personal responsibility for their health.

Section 6: Completion of Training

Customarily, once you have passed your final probation appraisal you can begin to think about applying for a charge, a post, or starting a Presbytery deployment, but you must complete the entirety of your probation placement before you can move onto the next phase of your ministry. After the completion of your probation placement, and until you are ordained, you are known as a 'Graduate Candidate' and are under the care and provision of Presbytery.

FTWAS

This is the outline process for the period following your final probation appraisal:

12 months	Final appraisal
13 months	Can apply for charges
14 months	Can preach as sole nominee
15 months	Probation complete – eligible for ordination

Your probation Supervisor will be able to offer you advice on applying for charges and reflect on your ordination vows with you. Once you have been invited to preach as sole nominee please contact the Training Team and we will send you a pack of relevant information.

Please note if you are not a UK or EU national there may be visa restrictions on your eligibility to apply for charges that have been advertised for fewer than 6 months. Please contact the relevant Interim Moderator for more information.

Diac

After the completion of your probation placement you are eligible for ordination and to apply for relevant roles.

OLM

Once you have completed your probation you can begin your Presbytery deployed role, but please note you must be ordained into a designated appointment. Conversations should have been happening throughout your training to discuss your calling, gifts and skills, so that both you and Presbytery are comfortable with how you are being deployed. This can be as part of a ministry-team or in a Presbytery-wide role.

Readers

The Readership training programme is completed once:

- the Academic Provider has confirmed successful completion of the Readership modules;
- all the residential conferences have been attended;
- the two six-month placements have been successfully completed and the two corresponding report forms (R1) have been submitted; and
- the Final Preaching Assessment and interview have been carried out and the corresponding report has been submitted.

At this stage Presbytery will decide if it chooses to set you apart as a Reader. Many Presbyteries will follow the recommendations of the Final Preaching Assessment, but some may choose to hold an interview with you.

Setting apart

Once you have completed your training a certificate is issued by the Faith Nurture Forum which is countersigned by Presbytery when they agree you should be set apart as a Reader. It is usually presented at Presbytery, possibly during the service of setting apart. This happens at a special service of Presbytery. The Church's Panel on Worship created a revised service for the purpose and there are certain elements which legally have to be incorporated. These are a series of seven questions that will be put to you (listed in the Act anent the Readership 1992), in addition to the signing of the Formula. There will also be a formal statement of admission to the office of Reader.

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