

11.3 CONTINUING EDUCATION

1 BACKGROUND

At the 1997 Assembly, the Uniting Church affirmed the importance of continuing education, and asked of all its Ministers (and by implication ministry agents) that they enter into continuing education learning agreements to foster their faith and understanding.

2 PRINCIPLE

Further study and continuing education enables Ministers to enhance their own gifts for the work of ministry [Regulation 2.2.1(xi)]. It can help improve a Minister's knowledge and skills to carry out their ministry in a professional and accountable manner; and can increase a Minister's competence in areas of ministry relevant to their placement [Code of Ethics 1.7; 3.4a].

With the constant changes in society and the church, it is important for those in ministry to be able to respond to these changes. Those in ministry need nourishment, encouragement, knowledge and skills to respond to these changes. Continuing Education can provide valuable opportunities for this to occur.

All Ministers, Deacons, Community Ministers, Lay Pastors, Youth Workers, those awaiting placement and those in ministry serving in an approved placement are expected to do continuing education.

Ordinarily, the Minister will discuss with the placement body how the study entitlement is to be used. It would be a valuable exercise to provide a written report to the placement body after the leave has been taken.

3 STUDY LEAVE ENTITLEMENT

A Minister in a full time placement is entitled to 14 days study leave per year (interpreted as 2 weeks – including Saturdays and Sundays but not public holidays), for agreed courses, taken at a time negotiated with the Church Council or placement body. Part time placements are entitled to study leave according to the ratio of workload being undertaken in the placement, i.e. on a pro-rata basis.

This time is meant to include preparation and contact learning time. This is a minimum amount, with ongoing planned reading programs and other enrichment like spiritual disciplines being integrated into a ministry agent's regular duties.

Ordinarily, study leave may be accumulated for up to two years; any further leave beyond this is forgone. A Minister can, however, accumulate study leave with the prior approval of the Minister's placement and the Pastoral Relations Committee (*PRC).

Study Leave should be approved and recorded by the Church Council or placement body.

Should Ministers have difficulty in getting time off for study leave they should consult with the Pastoral Relations Coordinator.

4 **COST**

The Personal Resources and Development Grant is provided to assist in the financial cost of taking study leave, purchasing resources and supervision. [Refer Policy 6.1]

5 **RESOURCES FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION**

Those in ministry are encouraged to discuss continuing education with their professional supervisor. A professional supervisor can assist the Minister to discern what further education may be needed in their ministry context; areas where the Minister needs further knowledge and skills or discuss the value of attending a conference the Minister may wish to go.

The Perth Theological Hall, the Commission for Education for Discipleship and Leadership may be able to assist in courses of study.

6 **REFERENCE**

Seeking a Heart of Wisdom

Guidelines for Continuing Education for Uniting Church Ministry Agents

Published by Uniting Church Ministerial Education Commission 2011

Available on website: <http://assembly.uca.org.au/about/mec>

This reference includes a Sample Learning Agreement and lists areas of responsibility for those in ministry and congregations/placement body.