



Uniting Church in Australia
Presbytery of Western Australia

Application Process - Candidate for Ordination

2024

(Refer to *UCA Regulations 2.3.1 to 2.3.2.7*)

What is the process to apply to become a Candidate for Ordination as a Deacon or Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church?

1. Period of Discernment

You first need to complete a Period of Discernment (see Regulation 2.3.1) which is usually 12 months in length. To find out what is involved in a Period of Discernment and how to register for this, see the *Period of Discernment Handbook* on our [Exploring Ministry - Uniting Church Western Australia](#) page. To complete your Period of Discernment you write a Portfolio Statement which summarises what you have learnt and what you have discerned about your calling to ministry.

If through your Period of Discernment, you are discerning a call to ordained ministry, then make sure that you discuss with your Mentor the Uniting Church's understanding of ordination and explore the two forms of ordained ministry in the Uniting Church - Minister of the Word and Deacon. If you apply for candidature you will need to be able to articulate a clear understanding of the ordained ministry you feel called to and what gifts, skills, and experiences you bring to this ministry.

2. Application to Candidate for Ordained Ministry

The first step to applying for candidature is for you to fill in the Application Form which can be found on our [Exploring Ministry - Uniting Church Western Australia](#) page. Give yourself plenty of time to fill this in and gather all the documents you need to attach such as:

- Evidence of citizenship or visa status
- Evidence of IELTS assessment, if applicable
- Copy of Drivers Licence,
- Copy of Working with Children Card
- Copy of National Police Clearance
- Copy of Academic Record and Qualifications.
- Evidence of Confirmation
- Certificate of Completion of Period of Discernment
- Portfolio Statement
- Signed Declaration
- Applicant's Personal Reflection
- Statement on Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice

You are reminded that all applicants must be able to show evidence that they have been Confirmed Members of the Uniting Church for at least 12 months.

Applicants from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds will be asked to provide evidence of their competence in the English Language by undertaking, at their own cost, an International English Language Testing Scheme (IELTS) assessment. You need to be

able to demonstrate competency in English language, both written and spoken, to enable you to participate effectively in theological studies.

Normally you cannot be accepted as a candidate for ordained ministry unless you are an Australian Citizen or hold a Permanent Residency Visa.

Applicants need to be aware that the Commission on Discipleship and Leadership (CEDAL) does not cover course fees for candidates. All candidates are expected to apply for assistance under the Higher Education Loan Program (Fee- HELP). Permanent Residents are not eligible to apply for Fee- HELP and will need to pay their fees upfront. Holders of other visas may be charged overseas student rates by educational institutions which must be paid upfront.

While CEDAL can provide some financial assistance to candidates it is not able to provide this at a level equivalent to what candidates may have earned in previous employment, or the stipend that they may receive when they are ordained. This means that in becoming a candidate, students may find that they are not able to maintain their current standard of living. Applicants need to have considered the impact of this on themselves and their families prior to candidating.

The Application form and attached documents are to be sent to the Chair of the Candidates for Ministries Committee of the Presbytery of WA via email at:

candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au

3. Candidates for Ministries Committee

The Candidates for Ministries Committee will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the application.
- Seek a Confidential Reference from the minister of the congregation where you hold membership, or if no minister is in placement from another appropriate minister. The Minister needs to give attention to the issues named in *Regulation 2.3.2.1 (a) (ii)*
- Seek a Confidential Report from the Church Council where you hold membership. (*Reg 2.3.2.3 (a)*)
- Seek References from the named Referees (*Reg 2.3.2.3 (a)*)
- Seek any additional references, reports, tests and other information as may be required. (*Reg 2.3.2.3 (a)*)
- Interview you to determine if you are ready to be forwarded to the Synod Selection Panel.
- Prepare a report and recommendation (where the application is to be commended to the Synod Selection Panel) or determination (where the application is deferred or rejected), taking into account the matters raised in *Reg 2.3.2.3 (b)*.
- Advise you of the contents of the CMC report and recommendation or determination.
- Forward to Synod Selection Panel all relevant documentation for approved applications.

4. Preparation for Synod Selection Panel

The CEDAL Admin Officer will undertake to

- Arrange for you to get a psychological assessment from an approved psychologist. (*Reg 2.3.2.4 (b)*) Costs will be met by CEDAL.
- May seek other medical or other assessments (*Reg 2.3.2.4 (b)*) as directed by the Chair of the Selection Panel.
- Make all practical arrangements for the Selection Panel
- Collate all documents and ensure they are sent to Selection Panel members at least 7 days prior to the Panel meeting.

5. Synod Selection Panel

Membership

The Synod Selection Panel is appointed by CEDAL and it normally includes 7 people. It includes people with experience in ministry in congregational and non-congregational settings, theological grounding within the UCA tradition, understanding of the future needs of the church, and deep prayerfulness and wisdom needed for the process of discernment. It aims to include a balance of lay and ordained, male and female and will include at least one Deacon and one Minister of the Word.

Purpose of Selection Panel

The purpose of the Selection Panel is to assess the applicants according to *Regulation 2.3.2.4 (c)* and to make a decision about applications in accordance with *Regulation 2.3.2.4 (d)*.

Selection Panel Meeting

The Selection Panel usually meets over a weekend in October. Normally the Panel begins its work on Friday evening and works all day Saturday. Applicants are expected to attend the Friday evening session and also on Saturday morning, at least until lunchtime. You will be informed of the venue and times you are expected to be present.

What happens in a Selection Panel?

On a Friday evening (or at another time if more appropriate) the applicants meet with the Panel members for worship and a shared meal. After the meal applicants are free to go home. Partners of applicants may, but are not required to attend, the Friday night activities.

On Saturday morning, applicants will participate in three interviews. In each case, there will be two interviewers with each interviewer assessing a different aspect. Each interview will be for 50 minutes, with a 10-minute break between interviews. The topics covered in the interviews will include the following

- Understanding of ordained ministry
- Vocation/Motivation
- Ability to undertake ordained ministry
- Ability to undertake the formation programme

- Spiritual maturity
- Character and personality

After the interviews, the applicants share lunch with the Panel members and are then free to go home. After the interviews, the Selection Panel meets to discuss the material you have provided and their interviews with you. They seek to discern prayerfully your gifts and abilities and whether God is calling you to an ordained ministry within the Uniting Church.

The Decision of the Selection Panel

The Selection Panel can make one of the following decisions about the application:

- Acceptance of the applicant for the ministry applied for, with or without conditions.
- Deferral of the application, with or without conditions which must be satisfied before the application can be considered again.
- Acceptance of the applicant for a ministry other than the one applied for.
- Encouragement of the applicant to continue in lay ministry, but rejection of the application to serve in an ordained ministry.

The decision of the Selection Panel will be given to the applicant in writing by the Chair of the Selection Panel within 7 days of the Selection Panel meeting. If you choose to meet in person with the Chair of the Selection Panel to receive the result, you may bring a support person of your choice to this meeting (partner, friend, minister, mentor).

Appeal against the decision of the Selection Panel

You may appeal against the decision of the Selection Panel but only on the grounds that correct procedures were not followed. The appeal must be lodged with the General Secretary of the Synod within 21 days of receipt of the decision.

6. After the Selection Panel

If you have been accepted as a candidate, then you will need to arrange to meet with:

- The Principal of Uniting Centre for Education and Formation and/or other staff of UCEF to discuss possible academic studies and possible field education placements.
- The CEDAL Finance Committee to discuss any financial support you may need

7. Period of Formation

Normally the period of formation will not commence until the start of the next semester of studies. It is normally 3 years in length and consists of:

- Academic theological studies at an appropriate level (certificate, diploma, undergraduate or postgraduate)
- Field education experiences in a range of settings (congregational ministry, chaplaincy, rural or remote settings)
- Participation in formation activities, usually one day a fortnight, with a range of intensives from 2-4 days in length.

- Meetings three times a year with a Formation Panel that provides oversight and guidance to the candidate.

However, candidature can be longer than 3 years if the candidate has been engaging in formation on a part-time basis, or if insufficient progress has been made in formation. It should be noted that being selected for candidature does not guarantee ordination and candidature can be terminated at any time if it is determined that insufficient progress in formation is being made or the person is not suitable for ordained ministry.

In exceptional circumstances, candidature can be less than three years, but not less than two years. Factors that may result in a candidature being less than three years are:

- Active engagement in the formation process and evidence of significant growth in their own ministerial formation.
- Completion of significant theological studies.
- Significant ministry experience.
- Life experience and maturity.