SCOTTISH
UNITED REFORMED & CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE

PLACEMENT AND PROJECT HANDBOOK

(UNITED REFORMED CHURCH STUDENTS)

Revised February 2020

HELLO AND WELCOME TO THE HANDBOOK

First of all, we want to express our deep appreciation to our colleagues and their pastorates/ agencies who afford placement opportunities to our students. These are a fundamental element in ministerial formation and our work as theological educators would be impossible without the co-operation and collaboration of our colleagues in the field.

We are conscious that ministers and other church workers are under considerable pressures, not least in terms of workload. We realise that receiving a student on placement is a not inconsiderable additional responsibility and we are grateful for this generosity.

We believe that it's not just that generosity that leads supervisors frequently to comment that they are not only givers in placements but receivers too. We do hope that providing a placement for one of our students will be a good and valuable experience for all concerned.

The handbook is intended to be a guidance document rather than a set of rules. We realise that placements occur in very different situations and our guidance has to be adapted accordingly. Trust is at the heart of placements (as in ministry) and we do entrust our students to their placement providers.

There will be placement conversations involving the college, supervisor (and perhaps others from the placement) and the ordinand. The handbook is intended to facilitate those discussions. It's always a challenge to decide what to include and what to omit and we are not able to address the particularities of each placement situation. We hope that the wood has not become hidden amongst the trees.

Many placement supervisors are well-experienced and we hope they will forgive the inclusion of material that is long familiar to them. We value the role of placement supervisor and with other URC resource centres for learning are seeking to address the need for training and for support. This handbook is intended to be a contribution towards meeting those needs.

We realise that placements take place in different organisational settings and in ecumenical contexts where language and terms change and ask forgiveness if we lapse into assuming that a placement in a URC pastorate is the norm!

The handbook (like the painting of the Forth Rail Bridge, if non-Scots will forgive the reference) is a work constantly in progress. We should be very glad of comments from students and supervisors about what is unclear or omitted or wrong.

PLACEMENTS AND PROJECTS AS PART OF THE LEARNING

Ministerial formation draws on a range of learning experiences. Ordinands undertake (or have undertaken) university-based courses and the College programme, centred on gathering together, complements this academy-focused learning. These in turn are complemented by engagement in church and community.

It's not a simplistic distinction between the theoretical and the practical. The learning that goes on in the discussion group ought to be informed by the life experiences of the participants; the theology that is unpacked grows out of the contexts that participants bring; professional models are tested in the practical situation which in turn through reflection re-shapes and refines our thinking. Our engagement with Scripture and tradition comes alive in our engagement with other people and their life challenges. Classroom and field need one another and mutually enriched.

For this reason primarily, the College generally prefers that placements be integrated through the ordinand's learning programme rather than in a specific internship year. When the student is engaged in placement or project work alongside their academic and professional education, the contextuality of it all can be more readily discerned. The conversation between the different formational elements is more natural where the learning is within an action-reflection cycle. For assessment purposes, the learning in the 'classroom' can be evaluated, not simply through essay-work or discussion contribution, but also applied in the church or community context. Assessors would expect to see the impact of the student's reading and university/college learning in the practice of ministry on placement. From time to time, a particular placement descriptor may identify a specific piece of work to be undertaken which relates to a course in college.

An internship year, of course, does allow for a more extended engagement that in some measure replicates the pattern and demands of ministry itself. One of the challenges of a formational programme is to prepare the ordinand in some measure for a form of service that has very distinctive characteristics and demands. At least one of the integrated placements, therefore, wherever possible, will be of a more extended nature and require a level of commitment that more closely mirrors a normal working week. It is recognised, however, that this is not always possible, particularly where the ordinand is concurrently undertaking a university qualification.

An ordinand in the course of training will engage with a variety of 'teachers', some with particular academic expertise, some with ministerial experience. Going out on placement, however, does bring the ordinand into lively interaction with ministers in pastoral charges or in chaplaincy or working in community settings. Church office-bearers, elders and members too will bring their gifts for the ordinand's learning and this is a fundamental component in facilitating a formation that is informed by a range of perspectives, understandings and life experiences. 'Formation' in this way is liberated from being a shaping to a particular model and enables it to be more truly open.

Strengthening the links between different elements in the formational programme is a task for us all, though the college carries the primary role in facilitating integration. The student too will learn more effectively if they are committed to finding/ building the connections across the range of experiences that make up their programme.

THE PLACEMENT TEAM

A placement is very much a collaboration involving
- the student
- the supervisor
- the receiving pastorate or agency
- the college.

In unpicking here specific comment on each of these roles, we don't want to imply at all that the handbook reader should skip the other sections!

THE STUDENT

A major plank in formation is that the ordinand becomes more and more the reflective practitioner with a suitable measure of 'professional' autonomy within the context of collaborative practice and shared accountability. The student has therefore a significant measure of responsibility for the management and development of her or his own learning and is not the passive recipient of placement experiences directed by others. (We hesitate to speak of the 'autonomous professional' as we don't believe that ministry is primarily about 'autonomy', though no doubt some people are drawn to it because it seems to offer that personal freedom of thought and action. Without going down a crudely managerialist line, we are committed to collaboration and mutual accountability and working with a shared vision as significant aspects of ministry. We know too that some find the term 'professional' unhelpful and inappropriate, but that's a debate for somewhere else!)

There will have been discussions, involving negotiation, as to the content and other features of the placement and the ordinand plays an important role in these. It is not of course solely the role of the student. The college has knowledge and experience in ministerial formation and is responsible to the denomination for ensuring the formational curriculum is sufficient preparation for ministry. The supervisor is an experienced practitioner and is responsible to their own pastorate, church body or agency.

Placements are about learning. Normally, the student ought not to be used simply as a replacement or substitute for the minister or other supervisor or another member of staff. This is not to say that an ordinand, in appropriate circumstances, cannot provide some limited amount of cover. It must be careful not be exploitative however and the focus of the placement as an educational activity must be maintained. It is important that the supervisor is available while the student is engaged in practice in order to counsel and advise, to be in conversation, to be a critical reflection partner and to undertake any relevant assessment. Generally, therefore, it is assumed that the supervisor is not absent for significant amounts of or elements in a placement. (It is recognised however that, closer to EM1 completion, placements might be organised which are intended to give an ordinand experience of 'flying solo' and may indeed involve locum status. This will have been explicitly arranged.)

It has to be realised and accepted that the work of ministry is rarely a readily regulated life. It makes demands on an irregular basis and requires a responsiveness that is positive and willing. This will require some degree of flexibility if the student is to achieve the learning outcomes and experience a breadth of ministerial activity. Nonetheless, the student is not a full-time minister and ought not to be expected to respond to the extremes of demand that can fall upon such a minister.

Appropriate planning is required in order that the student can, where necessary, make proper arrangements for family or other commitments.

A placement is only part of the formational programme which may be being undertaken at one time. It is important then that other formational commitments are recognised and taken into account.

Asking questions and exploring responses are fundamental to placement. No question should ever be thought 'too foolish' by either the asker or the responder. Practical hands-on experience is so vital and placement provides a major part of this. Tips-and-hints are often found to be useful, but on their own they are a poor diet! The questions and the conversation should go deeper. In allocating time within the placement programme, making generous space for reflection and for conversation is a vital aspect.

A balance has to be maintained between too much and too little direction, supervision and control. This balance can be set and adjusted through talking through how the student feels about a piece of work, assessing the level of prior experience and introducing the student to a situation or responsibilities gradually with feedback. It is important that students are honest about how they are feeling and the apprehensions they may have. Clergy are notoriously fearful of admitting insufficient experience or an absence of knowledge or personal anxieties – we should all feel free to admit that our prior experience hasn't prepared us for a particular challenge or that we've forgotten something (or never known it) or that we're not sure about transferability or whatever.

The College is anxious not to operate an over-safe or a blame culture. There is room for making of mistakes within ministerial formation. Appropriate risk-taking is an element in development. On the other hand, students must be conscious of the impact that their work may have on their placement situation, avoid leaving negative legacies when they depart and be sensitive to the context in which they find themselves.

THE SUPERVISOR

Responsibilities
It is the supervisor who is the in-the-place person with responsibility for the student. He or she is therefore a key person within the placement who takes responsibility for its local management.

Planning and negotiating the programme
The supervisor should ensure through discussion with the student that there is clearly identified
- The experiences and tasks the student should undertake
- The timetabling of work ensuring that the student is fully extended and meets the placement hours requirement yet is not overburdened
- The arrangements for support, feedback and assessment.

Supervising
The supervisor is responsible for
- identifying what briefing and other prior knowledge the student requires in order to undertake specific responsibilities
- monitoring the work of the student in order to give feedback and so to ensure progress towards the achievement of the planned and agreed programme and learning outcomes

- ensuring that the student complies with health and safety requirements
- reporting to the College staff as agreed
- acting as a day to day manager of the student while on placement.

Coaching

There is a teaching role for placement supervisors and perhaps this is best viewed as coaching. The distinctive characteristics of this approach are that it

- takes place at or in close proximity to the real life demand
- is generally informal in style
- allows the student to be in some control of the pace
- uses the interpersonal relationship between coach and student as a learning enabler
- is tailored to meet the needs of the particular learner
- guides towards rather than teaches a solution
- encourages the student to transfer their learning from other experiences into this specific situation and to see its transferability into others.

Of course, much learning is through observation by the student of what practitioners model.

We are conscious too that learning about ministry is not simply about functional performance. Exploring the underpinning theological understandings and values, recognising the relationship between identity and action, linking the rationality and the affectivity are utterly at the heart of learning about ministry.

Supporting

The supervisor is a key pastoral support to the student. Quite naturally, there may be particular stresses in placement, not least confronting new and challenging situations, but also growing in self-awareness and in faith development. The supervisor has a significant pastoral role, but they are not alone in this. There will be for each student on placement a named college contact person. URC ordinands are under the continuing pastoral care of their sending synod, through the (variously named training officer). The College makes available a chaplain with whom students are meant to meet once in each term. The URC makes provision for students to access the Ministerial Counselling Service. As a general rule, the conduit in each case is through the college.

The different parts in the educational process do run the risk of separating elements – and worse of compartmentalising and of losing any holistic sight of the person at the centre of it all, the student. It does place a responsibility on us all to try to keep that broader view, to see the whole person, to recognise that the student is always more than a student with us and to be aware of the competing pressures on the ordinand.

Liaising

The college relies upon placement supervisors to be the link to the church or agency with whom they work. While the burden of work falls clearly on the supervisor, we know that placements work best when the receiving congregation/ organisation also has some measure of ownership of the placement – does not see it as an imposition, taking their minister away from other duties, but takes pleasure in giving this hospitality and welcomes the learning that the placement brings.

Assessing

There is a separate section on learning outcomes and assessment. For the moment, suffice it to say that the assessment role is important but must not become the tail that wags the learning dog. Its primary role must be in order to give informed feedback and support.

THE PLACEMENT CHURCH (OR OTHER ORGANISATION)

It is important that the church is not ignored or marginalised as mere observers of a placement going on in their midst. Different receiving denominations or organisations will have their own processes for agreeing a placement.   It works best however where the partners consciously welcome and accept the student into its midst and makes him or her feel part of the community. The supervisor and student should be alert to ethical issues that arise, particularly where there is no explicit consent by church members or others to be involved in work upon which the student (and perhaps the supervisor) will report. The church should extend trust to the student, but realise too that the student is a learner and will make mistakes as part of the learning process. Care should be taken that the student is not drawn into the conflicts which can occur within the life of the local congregation (and students should avoid being tempted to get involved, even for the most constructive reasons), but equally the student has to experience congregational life as it really is!

THE COLLEGE

The College entrusts students on placements to placement providers, but this is delegation and collaboration not abdication.

The College acknowledges its responsibility
- to ensure that appropriate placements are found which will contribute significantly to the learning and ministerial formation of the student
- to support the supervisor in his/her work through the provision of guidance, a suitable and viable assessment and reporting system and the involvement of College staff at appropriate intervals
- to support the student by pre-placement briefing, by endeavouring to integrate learning in college and placement and by College staff visits
- to ensure that the terms of placement contract are fair and reasonable.

FORMS OF PLACEMENT/ PROJECT

Each and every placement/ project has its own distinctive aspects. The student, the supervisor, the receiving church/ organisation and the college all contribute to the design of the programme. The interaction locally however will inevitably and rightly mould the experience. While there will generally be some degree of intentionality and specificity in the design and negotiation of the programme content, we would want to acknowledge the merit there can be in picking up on the spontaneous learning opportunities that very often will occur naturally within a placement. This is not an encouragement to chase every pastoral hare that passes! Yet using the opportunistic opening may present a learning experience that will not pass this way again! It also reflects a reality in ministry – that your best-laid plans can be blown off course, your schedule thrown, by another priority appearing.

Nonetheless, placement is not merely a sending-out to experience whatever comes by. As we shall explain further in the section on COMPETENCES, placements and projects have a significant measure of focus and framing and are related to an understanding of some core skills, bodies of knowledge, behaviours, aptitudes and attitudes. This must not obscure the importance, however, of a holistic view.

In proposing particular work, we have in mind certain kinds of placement/ project. In this section, we want to explain something of their particular characteristics.

- **First placement** This is generally undertaken in the first term of ministerial formation, but may be postponed where the ordinand's initial period makes particular demands so that a concurrent placement would place an undue and unhelpful burden on them. Usually, the placement will be general in character rather than closely focused. It is an opportunity for the student to broaden their awareness of church life, to engage with a minister in reflecting on the challenges of ministry in that context, to see something of the shape of ministerial life and to begin to recognise issues for their own ministerial formation. For a student preparing for ministry of Word and Sacraments, it will most often be with a pastorate. It will tend to be primarily observational. The task is to take a step back, to take in the experience and to reflect upon it, rather than to develop specific skills such as in preaching or in pastoral work. This does not rule out the possibility of a rather limited range of practical work agreed between the student and supervisor. We recognise that effective learning is very often through hands-on engagement in practice and reflection, but sometimes there ought to be space for taking a more holistic view rather than being concerned with preparation and performance. (We do understand that ordinands can be very eager to 'get on with it'!) In this initial placement, supervisors in general are not asked to create particular learning experiences but rather to share their work experiences with the student. Very important, however, is the creation of ample space for questions and conversation between student and supervisor.

  o Unless otherwise specified, the written outcome from the student should be a general reflective report that focuses more on such issues as (a) what was unfamiliar or even surprising (b) what was different from their own personal church experience (c) the impact of context on the ministry being exercised and (d) some sense (tentative!) of self-awareness and of their own learning needs and priorities - rather on simple narrative of the placement content.

  o The supervisor's report should comment broadly on the qualities of the student and on any emerging pointers towards learning needs and priorities. If there are

early indicators of concern, it is important that these are shared with the college (and, if these are serious concerns, then that that sharing is at an early stage rather than in final reporting).

- **Observational placements** As indicated in the preceding paragraph, the first placement is usually primarily observational in character. Very occasionally, the nature of the setting, the need for certain prior experience or skills or indeed qualifications, a specified level of clearance or the requirements of the placement provider will lead to the placement being observational and reflective rather than the student being an active participant in the placement activities.

- **General practice** It is important that some placements encourage the ordinand to see the ministry of a particular person in a particular placement whole. Ministry is clearly more than simply a set of loosely related professional duties; the practice of ministry more than a set of specific competences in a range of situations. A call to ministry is more than a professional choice; it is an invitation to a way of life. This is not to deny the need for a variety of defined skills. It does, however, warn against an over-instrumentalist view of ministry or a fragmentation of its overall coherence. A general practice placement is intended to engage as holistically as possible in the life of ministry. There should however be significant elements of ministry practice in the light of the needs of the student and the strengths of the pastorate or organisation.

  - The student's report on the placement *inter alia* should identify and comment upon broad themes and issues rather than only on particular elements, recognising commonalities and distinctions across the practice of ministry. It should demonstrate a capacity to reflect not simply on details of ministry activity but also on underlying values, concepts and assumptions. It should offer a critical appreciation of any special aspects of the pastorate or agency.
  - The supervisor's report should comment on the student's strengths and weaknesses across the placement work, on their ability to reflect conceptually and critically (including self-awareness), on their understanding of ministry, on any ministry work they have undertaken and on learning needs that have been identified.

- **Focused placement** Though the placement may be wide in its scope, here there will be certain designated roles and responsibilities for the student. Indeed, it is likely that the placement setting will have been chosen particularly with this in mind. The competences framework is an important tool in identifying the areas to be emphasised. We understand, of course, that some knowledge/skill areas are dependent upon opportunity (eg funerals, weddings, baptisms or other rites) and so there can be advantage in taking these opportunities as they arise, even if they were not in the originally negotiated specification. The reporting on and assessment of the placement will give due emphasis to the student's competence in undertaking the aspects of ministry specified.

- **Personal learning project** In addition to placements, students may be asked to pursue one or more personal projects. For example: designing and leading a retreat, undertaking a small-scale research project. This may reflect their particular experience or interests or aptitudes. It will generally require the practice of a range of skills, including generic core skills (see below); will encourage the deployment of these skills in a coherent and effective

way; and will have a wider awareness-raising purpose. Projects may be individual or collaborative. For such projects, there will be a project descriptor (sample attached). As well as undertaking the project specified and producing materials ancillary to the project, the student will be required generally to write a reflective account which identifies their learning gains and the future learning needs that arise.

PRIOR LEARNING

Students come into ministerial formation very often with significant professional/ life/ church experience and this must be regarded as a tool for their own learning progression and for the learning of others. As far as possible, students should not be expected simply to engage repetitively in learning that have already undertaken, either on formal learning courses or through experiential learning.

Experience suggests that educational establishments and their partners have to be cautious about too readily making the assumption that because a competence would appear to be inherent in a previous work role that the student is competent. We recognise too that it can be difficult for someone who has practised in a particular field, perhaps for some time, to acknowledge their weaknesses in knowledge or practice. This is especially true where the aptitude can be thought to be at the very heart of the occupational field. (For example, 'I've worked for twenty years with people, therefore I am good with people.')

It is important too to give proper emphasis to the question of **context**. Skills are often in some measure transferable, but there are sometimes substantial contextual issues. (For example: Chairing a company board meeting or acting as leader in a hierarchical organisation may involve different sets of skills, different knowledge, different assumptions and values from chairing and leadership in a local church setting.)

PLACEMENT CONTRACT

It is intended to ensure that

- there is explicit agreement on the key terms and expectations of all the parties involved in a placement
- there is a plan to guide the placement
- the student is not exploited nor are insufficient demands placed upon him/her.
-

The placement contract should cover

- Expectations – scope of placement, workload priorities, learning priorities, hours, responsibilities of each party
- Supervision - nature of support
- Assessment processes
- Evaluation, liaison and monitoring arrangements
- Key time points.

It may also incorporate any other material that the partners feel right to include.

The contract does not set out a set of legal obligations. It is however a shared understanding and significant change in the course of the placement should be a conscious agreed decision that is recorded. Significant changes should not happen simply through drift!

TIME

The length of a placement will vary according to the circumstances of the student, the capacity of the receiving church or group, the nature of the intended learning and other factors. The amount of time spent on placement will vary but it is perhaps worthy of note that NSM part-time ordinands have a requirement of a minimum of 800 hours of placement. Students naturally are often concerned to know how many hours a placement requires per week. To some extent, this has to be negotiated at the setting-up meeting for the placement. As a rule of thumb, a placement might well require the student's attendance on 1.5 days plus Sunday responsibilities as face-to-face contact time, including supervision sessions. Extended placements will generally have a higher commitment as they are intended in part to introduce the ordinand to the patterns and rhythms of the ministry. In relation to holidays, some regard to family commitments is right, but it also has to be remembered that holidays may well coincide with religious festivals which the ordinand should experience on placement and in which they should participate actively. A distinction has to be drawn between active hours on placement, hours of travel and time for reflection and recording, each of which has to be taken into account. While due regard will be had to ordinands' personal circumstances, it must be remembered where a student is full-time that part of that commitment may involve unsociable hours and evening/weekend working. Particularly in longer placements, there may be an attempt to introduce the ordinand to the patterns of clergy working.

CONTENT

Whether the placement is general or focused, observational or practice-oriented will affect decisions about content. Sometimes, a particular placement will have been chosen because of the specific work that goes on there or the strengths of the minister or congregation. This will not rule out other elements, but will naturally suggest a particular focus.
Beyond the first placement, the college will generally seek to negotiate with the placement and the student to ensure that, over the whole formational period, key areas are covered and so specific areas may be proposed.

Instead of identifying a range of learning within a specific set of responsibilities (eg a cluster of preaching, leading in prayer, selecting hymns, conducting specific-group services…), consideration might be given to a more thematic approach (eg exploring issues in collaboration and teamwork across working with elders, collaborating with ecumenical partners, supporting networking around issues…).

The identification of particular learning areas and outcomes should not eliminate the taking of opportunities that present themselves naturally in the life of the congregation. At an early stage, if possible at the pre-planning, thought should be given to the church diary and the learning possibilities it offers.

The interests of the student should be taken into account. Sometimes, the ordinand will have some ideas of what types of ministry they are particularly interested in, but some care has to be taken not to give undue emphasis to this. The URC ordains people to the ministry of Word and Sacraments and, though there are some specialist forms of ministry, its expectation is that ordinands should be prepared for a breadth of ministerial work. And, of course, any formation properly takes us beyond our comfort zones, even if we are capable of defending a rationale for staying in the safer places.

A common risk is overloading.   Good placements are like an Aladdin's Cave. It can be tempting to squeeze in too much.   Prioritization is important.

In looking at timetable and diary, there needs to be space for reflection, for reading around the subject, for recording and for conversation.

<div style="background-color:red; color:yellow;">**PLACEMENT CONTRACT**</div>

This document seeks to set out the main areas of common understanding. It does not form a contract of employment or other legally enforceable agreement between the parties.

Student	
Local supervisor (s)	
Placement church or organisation	
College tutor	
Placement period	
Location(s)	

PLACEMENT CONDITIONS

Student	
Placement church or organisation	
Supervisor	
College link	
Period	
Primary location	
Ancillary elements	
Anticipated level of commitment	
Health and safety	

METHODS OF LEARNING

(Tick (and, where possible give a brief description of the methods of learning available to the trainee on this placement)

Observation of minister **[this includes sufficient opportunity for conversation afterwards]**	
Collaboration with the minister	
Supervised practice	
Working alone or relatively unsupervised	
Engagement with church members	

Attendance at / participation in meetings	
Informal social interaction	
Other	

MAIN AREAS
See the competences framework for more detail of each role, for suggestions of underpinning knowledge and for possible competence qualities which should be the subject of conversation

Pastor	
Applied theologian	
Worship leader and collaborator	
Biblical scholar	
Mission enabler	
Educator	
Manager/ organiser	
Other	

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
(Please note any perceived strengths and weaknesses of student, supervisor and placement that should be considered in planning this placement.)

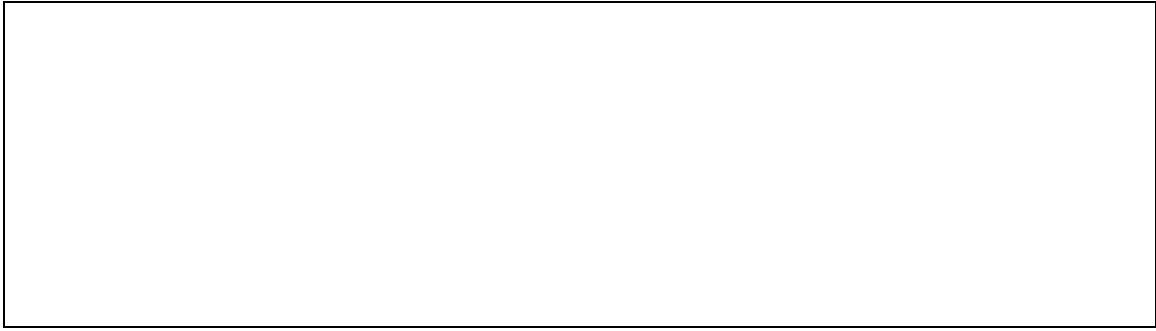|	Of the Student	Of the Supervisor	Of the Placement
Strengths			
Weaknesses			

ANY PARTICULAR ANTICIPATED EVENTS OF NOTE DURING PLACEMENT

PLANS FOR VISITS

END OF PLACEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

LEARNING OUTCOMES, ASSESSMENT & PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Ministry is a complex business and we are cautious about defining too narrowly outcomes for any placement. Indeed, we are conscious that the outcomes of the whole formational programme are neither precise nor invariable. There is no single and uncontested set of competences for ministry. There is no common role description. Individual aptitudes, personality traits, theological understanding, prior experience and much more shape how we are each inclined to exercise ministry. Contexts will make different demands and require different responses.

None of this however denies that there are clusters of knowledge, skill and more that contribute to a good performance, though we are often better at discerning what constitutes *poor* performance.

There is not space here for a thorough discussion of the issues, still less of setting out a formal framework. This section however is intended to inform planning and judgement.

It is important that, particularly in other than general observational placements, there is some common agreement on what the outcomes of the placement are intended to be.

- The activities and conversations of the placement have to be guided by some specification
- While there is room for (and good reason to pursue) opportunistic learning opportunities, the placement will often lack direction if there is no agreement of intended outcomes
- An agreement on outcomes should have resulted from conversation and a good measure of negotiation
- Assessment is only possible where there has been some description of what the student has to achieve
- Problems will often emerge if there have been unspoken and unacknowledged differences between student and supervisor
- Only with some statement of outcomes can the college plan to ensure that each ordinand follows a programme that covers the core elements of ministerial formation.

Apologies now for embarking upon an explanation of terms – sorry to those for whom they are already familiar and sorry to those who are repelled/ baffled by them!

1 Sometimes, it is helpful to think in terms of **roles** – eg preacher or educator. This perspective will take seriously the integration of a set of knowledge and understanding, of generic and specific skills, and of values and attitudes.

2   Perhaps related to such an approach is a focus on **functions** – eg chairing a meeting.   This tends to be more specific than the idea of a role.   The weakness here can be that it compartmentalises the work of a minister, when the trick can be to manage simultaneously different types of work and bringing some underlying cohesion to it all.
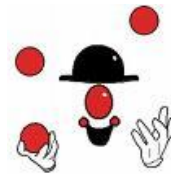
3   There are however certain **generic or core abilities** which are part of any learning situation and run through ministry practice, viz capacity for:

- Developing and sustaining positive relationships with others
- Recognising and nurturing the gifts and contributions of others
- Commitment to the Christian faith and the work of ministry together with a commitment to openness and critical inquiry
- Communication – oral and written – in a range of contexts
- Collaboration – ministerial, ecumenical, with external partners and in the context of the local church
- Effective management of time, including punctuality and the undertaking of work to schedule
- Analysis, conceptualisation, theological reflection and self-criticism
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Trust-building with personal integrity.

Such core elements will often run across different roles and responsibilities.

4   In identifying learning, some attention often has to be paid to **contexts**.   This is not to say that learning is always and only context-specific.   There may well be core shared elements.   For example, we might have a learning focus on pastoral care: there will be commonalities around ability to establish a sustain relationships or to listen empathetically, but there are distinct knowledge requirements, interpersonal skills and emotional strength for marriage preparation and supporting the bereaved.   'Communicating effectively' may be different in public speaking and in pastoral conversation…   Some care has to be exercised to prevent falling into an assumption that performing well in one setting necessarily implies ability in a significantly different one.   Transferability is important, however – we can't re-learn what to do for every situation; part of our human skill is in adaptation.   It's helpful therefore to think about application in and testing in significantly different contexts.

5   We've avoided using the terms '**competence**' or **'competencies',** not least because of the managerialist and functionalist undertones.   One strength of the competences perspective however is that it draws together distinct knowledge/ skills and recognises that it is their deployment coherently that constitutes a good performance in the role or responsibility.

6   A competency approach also generally implies that there is some process of **assessment**.   We want to stress that, for us, the primary purposes of assessment ought to be formative, ie it is intended to inform the learning through affording the student a chance to test out their understanding/ skill and through giving constructive feedback.   As ultimately we are accrediting someone's readiness for ministry, however, there has also to be summative purpose – concluding that the student can do this or that.

7   Such an assessment is based on **evidence**.
   - There is something of a presumption that evidence of actual doing the thing in a real-life situation is preferred to talking/writing about doing it in a simulated situation

- Alongside performance, there is equally importantly critical reflection – the capacity to examine our performance, our assumptions and values…
- The evidence should be assessed by the supervisor (sometimes a college tutor will undertake this in addition) but good evidence will often also draw on the perceptions of the student and, where possible, affected third parties (eg the congregation who have listened to a sermon).

8   The evidence of performance is assessed on the basis of **criteria**.   Sometimes, these are fairly implicit and scarcely need to be identified, but even then we can fall into a trap of assuming that there is a universal understanding that merely needs to be applied.   We suggest that, when a placement element is being planned, one aspect of that planning be a conversation about what would characterise a satisfactory performance.   This needs to be distinguished from an 'ideal' performance or even the performance to which the student aspires.   The criteria for assessment purposes set the qualities that might be reasonably expected.   Let's take an example: Here's a criteria word box that might be agreed between supervisor and student in relation to the preaching of a sermon.

<div style="border:1px solid">

clear   coherent   comprehensible   interesting

    engaging   audible   logically structured

suitable vocabulary   points were illustrated

    challenging   educative   spoke to feelings

    creative   varied in tone and pace

</div>

IF THINGS GET A LITTLE BUMPY
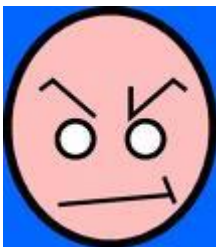
Ministry is neither a problem nor, sometimes, a conflict free zone. There is plenty of scope for differences of and disagreements about perspective and practice. Sometimes, we foul up and folk get hurt and angry. Each of us is learning as we go how to handle conflicts more positively and creatively and collaboratively.   Conflict then is not something to be hidden from or hidden away.

If there is significant, on-going and negative conflict between supervisor/ student, then we would welcome the opportunity to get involved in the process of resolving it.

Proper preparation and planning ought to help avoid some of the pitfalls that placements can encounter.

Placement however has to have an experimental quality. The ordinand is not a fully-fledged practitioner and that will mean that 'mistakes' are made – sometimes they will be at the larger end. Again, supervision at the right level may help to identify possible problems at an early stage.

Where difficulties are experienced, it is important that none of the people or agencies involved should focus on the issue of blame. (This is not to say that accountability and the acceptance of responsibility do not have a proper place.) Rather, the focus should be on the experience as a learning opportunity.   (This again is a reason why having the congregation on board and understanding the nature of placement can be important.)

The need for open and trusting dialogue within a shared commitment to resolve the issue cannot be overemphasised. This is not always easy.   We often find ourselves in a culture where error is not to be admitted because it is seen as weakness.

While not wishing to encourage either students or supervisors to rush to an overhasty conclusion that the placement is in trouble, we would encourage the view that timeous and even early identification of difficulties can prevent the problem becoming more extensive or deeper. It is essential not to leave informing the College until the issue has become more complex, the feelings hardened and the solutions more difficult to find and implement.

It is essential too that supervisor and student are honest and do not focus only on the strengths and on what has gone well. It does no favours to a student for their issues to be ignored or hidden. When difficulties, sometimes very serious ones, occur in first pastorate, it is difficult to believe that there was no sign of these during placements as a student.

One area where there can be difficulty is if there is a lack of clarity as to when
- there are aspects that are non-negotiable (eg the minister knows that the congregation won't wear a worship development because they have already taken a policy decision
- there is student freedom of action but this requires prior checking (surprises are not always welcome!)
- there is student freedom of action but the supervisor needs to be kept informed in due course
- there is open student freedom (within reason!).

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

For the guidance particularly of supervisors from a non-URC background, this section is intended to explain the United Reformed Church's position in relation to the celebration of the eucharist by people other than Ministers of Word and Sacraments. Celebration by ordained ministers is clearly the norm. Exceptionally, in circumstances of pastoral necessity, church meeting may authorise other persons (eg lay preachers or elders having the approval of synod) to celebrate the eucharist. It is not the intention of these provisions to allow for lay celebration routinely.   Synods (and their predecessor area/district councils) may vary in their interpretation and strictness of adherence (such is the URC!) but this is the general position within the church. Ordinands may seek guidance and clarification from the moderator of their sending synod. The college would wish to respect the church's policy. Even if a student is on placement with an ecumenical partner church where lay celebration is permitted such as would allow for the ordinand to celebrate, we would suggest that the proper course is for the URC position to prevail in relation to URC ordinands.   This does not of course prevent the student at the invitation of the receiving minister and congregation from participating in elements of a eucharist – reading lections or leading prayers (except the consecration of the elements) or sharing in the distribution. They may, if agreed by the presiding minister, prepare liturgical

material. We would hope that this inhibition on presidency by students would not lead to Sundays on which Holy Communion is celebrated being treated as 'Sundays off' for the student. It is important that they have opportunity to experience and to have conversation around the variety of liturgical practice.

MONEY MATTERS

We are conscious of the generosity of ministers and others in taking students on placement. We realise fully that this does involve an increase in workload. We are not in a position to pay fees for supervision, but we are keen that supervisors should advise us of any expenses that are incurred so that we can reimburse these.

Students on placement are entitled to reimbursement of their own travel and other reasonable costs. Exceptional costs, such as conference attendance fees, require the prior approval of the college.

Where a student participates in the conduct of worship, including preaching, as part of their placement commitment, the pastorate is not expected to pay any fee. Where the minister is absent and the student is invited to conduct the worship/ preach effectively as 'pulpit supply', we suggest that a fee is usually due. We are conscious that the pastorate may have acted generously in hosting the placement and that a student may feel that their leading/ preaching may express their gratitude. What is important is that the position is clarified by the parties when the arrangement is made.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Placements usually involve the student in going into the wider community or into specific institutional settings. While the college would not knowingly place a student in a situation of unusual risk, it is vital that all those concerned have proper regard to the risks that may be inherent in any situation. These risks may be physical but they may also be emotional and relational. Placement planning should always involve some attention to this area and a risk assessment undertaken. If you as the student have any adverse apprehensions about a placement activity or setting, then you must discuss this with your supervisor and the college and not place yourself or allow yourself to be exposed to an inappropriate risk. Certain kinds of placements may involve a higher than average level of risk, eg street work, but it is particularly important in such situations that there is a sufficient risk assessment and follow-up action, that the providing agency and supervisor have specialist experience, that the element and level of risk is acknowledged by all parties and that the student's protection is afforded priority.

Apart from any particular areas of risk which should be the subject of a specific assessment, you should be conscious of the more general advice that is available around personal safety issues, eg www.crimereduction.gov.uk/ypgcp05.htm or http://www.suzylamplugh.org/content.asp?PageID=1086. Students are encouraged to think ahead and recognise what risks might be present or develop and what strategy they have for avoidance or minimization of those risks. Common sense has to be used and, on placement, people should not place themselves at risk in ways that would be unwise in any other situation eg walking alone in a darkened area or where there are not other people nearby.

It is of the nature of pastoral work and pastoral relations, and indeed of placement, that not infrequently students will find themselves in a situation of being alone with another person.

Serious thought should be given, particularly when working with vulnerable adults, as to whether or not this level of privacy is suitable – eg should the meeting be in a space which is distanced from but visible by others, should a third party be invited?   It is not appropriate for an ordinand to be working in an unsupervised one-to-one situation with a child.

If a student becomes apprehensive in a one-to-one situation, it is suggested that they move immediately into a more public space.

On working with children and young people, supervisors and ordinands are directed to the United Reformed Church's publication on *Good* Practice which is available online at http://www.urc.org.uk/our_work/committees/childrens_work/good_practice/good-practice-3.pdf.

Relationships are rarely free of power dimensions and power can be abused.   Students are entitled to protection from abuse of any kind.   Bullying, harassment and inappropriate sexual behaviour of any kind are not to be tolerated.   Students should feel confident about their own intuition –if you have a sense of discomfort in a situation, then you should whenever possible In the event of you feeling that this is happening or that you feel some apprehension that it moving in that direction, you should discuss this with your college tutor or the Principal or a college officer as appropriate.

In any pastoral relationship, issues of particular vulnerability may arise, not least where the other person is experiencing personal or family or faith crisis.   It is fundamental to a pastoral relationship that it is non-exploitative.   If you become aware of or suspect an abusive or exploitative relationship involving others or find yourself in such a situation, you must take immediate steps to draw this to the attention of the college who will take action in respect of the church authorities and any other relevant authority and, where a criminal offence may be involved, the police. The college's fundamental responsibility is for the welfare of the affected party and to ensure that the possible risk is lifted and allegations are investigated properly and expeditiously and/or passed to the appropriate authorities. Where an allegation of inappropriate behaviour is made by or against a student, the appropriate synod designated person(s) will be advised.

It is important that no student should feel that, if they feel themselves to be a victim of inappropriate behaviour, they have some personal responsibility to resolve the situation.

It is essential that students are aware that the key perspective in determining the appropriateness of behaviour is the perspective of the other party.   This requires a significant level of sensitivity. Students on placement must be particularly conscious in a pastoral relationship not to engage in any behaviour that may be thought to be inappropriate, whatever the intention.   (For example: a hug may seem a natural human response to a distressed person, but people have different boundaries and perceptions of the acceptable.)   If there is any room for uncertainty, ask the person concerned what is ok with them.

The URC's resource material *Relating Together* is a helpful document and synod offices have a more comprehensive resource pack.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In ministry, confidentiality is a key value and practice. Clergy are allowed into the most private emotional places and entrusted with highly sensitive personal material. They may encounter people at their most vulnerable. The unwritten but real contract between pastor and pastored demands that confidentiality be respected.

The relationship between the placement supervisor and the student can often be enriched by a degree of openness between them. It is not required of supervisors that they reveal to students their errors and their vulnerabilities!, but it can be helpful to allow students to glimpse the truth that ordination does not remove all our doubts and fears or propensity to get it wrong! The student, trusted this way, must exercise appropriate confidentiality in respecting the privacy of the supervisor.

The student will learn of a congregation, of its ministers and office-bearers and so on. While this may not be strictly a matter of confidentiality, the use of information ought to be exercised with discretion.

When the student is engaged in pastoral work, the normal professional standards on confidentiality should be applied.

It should be recognised that
- the learning nature of a placement requires that there be feedback on the student's performance in pastoral work and that this may well involve some degree of disclosure - to the supervisor and College staff. In the writing up of notes or reports, identity of third parties should be concealed (not just names but potentially identifying material) and that the information will be held only for the purposes of learning/teaching and assessment
- there are circumstances – particularly where a crime may have been committed or the health, safety and welfare of another person is at risk – in which the bond of confidentiality cannot be maintained and there may be disclosure to appropriate other parties.

Pastorates and other receiving agencies, in receiving an ordinand as a student, are becoming partners in a learning experience. However, thought should be given by supervisor and student, to which situations in which it would be ethically appropriate to alert participants to the fact that there are 'the subjects of a study' and that what is observed is going to be written up. They should be assured however of the limited circulation that is involved.

The supervisor is there for the student, but s/he has duties also towards the College and sponsoring denomination. It is a responsibility of a supervisor therefore to make known to the College any matter which may significantly affect the student's formational programme or indeed suitability for ministry. In particular, the supervisor will make available to the College supervision and assessment reports.

RECORDING AND REPORTING

[The following is an excerpt from the Student Handbook on journaling]

The need for the maintenance and use of a learning journal comes from a range of needs.

- We do believe that, whatever form the journal takes, it is often a useful tool for reflection and for learning
- Reflective practice is one of the key capacities of clergy
- Particularly in a context where your learning happens over a number of settings, the journal can help to bring about some integration
- It can bring together the personal, professional and spiritual which other processes may tend to separate
- It forms a significant learning record for the transition between Education for Ministry phases 1, 2 and 3.

The journal is intended to be yours.   You can use it as you will.   It is private to you and you are not required or expected to make it available to others.   Its contents can form the basis however for speech and writing that you do take into the more shared college settings.   For each shared or personal tutorial, you should reflect on your journal entries and write up material that can usefully and properly be brought into the conversation.

There is no one format that a journal has to take.   It need not be in writing.   It can be audio-recorded or pictorial or whatever you feel is most helpful.

It does however have to be maintained regularly, even frequently.   Partly, this is because we may well otherwise fall away and feel that we never get back on to track.   It is useful too if you can record thoughts while they are still relatively contemporaneous with the events – the memory can re-invent the experience and recall may not be what it used to be.   The regularity of the demand also imposes a requirement upon us to take time out for recording and reflection.

It's not merely a log book into which the recorder faithfully enters the 'factual' data of the day (though that in itself might be useful). It also has to have conscious reflection and comment. It will not be confined to what we often describe as 'thinking' but should include our emotional responses.   It will reflect not only our conclusions but our ongoing questions.   You should not be afraid to record your thoughts, even/particularly if you suspect that your thinking and feeling will move on.   Nor does everything have to be 'evidenced' – keeping a record of your gut reactions and your intuitions can be an insight.

Writing down or otherwise recording may feel like a chore, particularly to some. So, find a medium that you believe will be least burdensome while achieving the purposes.   The act of recording in some way however brings on our thought processes, as when we can't summon up an opening for a sermon unless we have pen in hand or a keyboard before us (and even then…).

Journaling can even have some 'therapeutic' qualities.   Sometimes, it allows us to move on, for the moment at least.   It 'gets it off our chests'.   If we have other things to which we have to turn our minds, then it can help us to 'park' the thing that has been concerning us.   It may even externalise thoughts and feelings so that they are not caught up inside us and indeed can be brought out into the light of the day for us to work on them.

By going back through our journal, we can find connections and links that might not otherwise be obvious.   Experiences that are generally held apart because we categorise them differently or they occur in different settings can be brought into proximity and seen together.   Disparate experiences can start to have some coherence and even meaning.

When should you do it?   We've already argued that it has to be regularly and often – generally everyday if that's possible.   Some people prefer to set aside a particular slot in the day or week. They want some peace and quiet in order to do it, free from interruption.   This is helpful for reflectiveness.   For others, spontaneity is best, jotting thoughts down as they occur, using spaces like on a journey (and if that's your approach then this might suggest a notebook or loose-leaf pad rather than a folder on a PC).   There is something to be said for a mixed economy in journaling; getting down some of the immediacy but also preventing it from being simply a jotting of instant reactions.

We don't want to suggest a set format for the process.   It might be helpful to identify some crude components
Narrative – the context, what happened, what you thought at the time, what you felt at the time, what part other people played…
And then… - any follow- on information
Reflection – revisiting the experience, asking why questions, asking what if questions, attending to how we felt as much as what we thought, how did this compare to previous similar experiences, what was different?…
Action indicators – what might you want to take further or revisit again? are there any apparent needs for development and working on?

Of course, it's not possible or desirable (the 'woods for the trees' situation) to record absolutely everything, even if you could.   Clearly, you want to deal with what seem to be significant events – though identifying them is not always easy without the benefit of hindsight. In order to engender some variety, you might like to have a pack of starter questions and randomly pick out a couple of them each time to add to the experiences that you 'logically' think need to be addressed on that occasion.

What went well today?

What surprised me?

Did anything seem especially meaningful?

What made me laugh?

What disappointed me?

What made today different from others?

What didn't go so well?

Did anything especially me

What conversations did I have and with whom?

What was I reading?

What was today's Big Thought?

Is anything still bugging me from earlier?

What did I achieve?

What lit me up?

Of course, all this recording is but part of the story. We have to go back to it, to hear what it has to say to us, to ponder on our contemporaneous notes, to check out whether we now see things as we did then, to find continuities and disruptions, to see links and recurrences, to see how the story has moved on…

And that again, we're afraid, needs time. Pondering is not something done in an instant!

We need also to approach our journal with insistent self-questioning.   Were we fully honest with ourselves?   What do we now see that we omitted, deliberately or inadvertently or at least unaware?

The story in our journal is personal, but we know that it connects into other stories.   Have we then any insight into how others did read/ might have read the episodes?   Can we see this short set of experiences against a backdrop of a longer period in our life story?   Where does our story fit into the picture of the organisations/settings in which we participate?   And there's the really big picture stories – where do your personal stories and the story of God's engagement with his world touch and interact?

In your journaling, do not aspire to completeness, still less to perfection.   The best advice is often simply to get on with it.   Doing it is much better than not doing it because we can't find the space or the energy or whatever to do it really well (whatever that might mean).

***

STUDENT REFLECTIVE REPORT

Journaling can form the basis for the student's reflective report which is required, certainly at the end of the placement and often for the mid-placement review. The guidance above for the journal largely holds good for the reflective report.

In drawing on the journal but undertaking an overall review report, the benefits of spontaneous contemporaneous notes can be combined with taking a step back and taking a wider view.

The reflective report by the student must be more than simply a narrative, though story may be an important element. It ought however to record key events and elements.

It is expected that there should be some evidence across reports of
- self-awareness including a capacity for self-critical review
- building links and connections between experiences
- setting particular experiences within a wider context
- recognising underlying themes
- conceptualisation and theorising
- bringing Biblical and theological perspectives into analysis
- using evidence to support conclusions
- comparative evaluation
- written or other expressive communication skills
- balance of the intellectual, the affective, the spiritual…
- identifying future learning/ developmental needs.

There is no specified length. The report does however have to constitute a sufficient reflection on the placement experience. It is more important to identify and note the key aspects/ issues/ reflections as the report will be supplemented by a placement review conversation. It does however have to inform adequately that conversation.

SUPERVISOR'S REPORTS

Generally speaking, it is not necessary for supervisors to prepare a mid-placement report, but they are asked to reflect themselves on the student's performance and progress as a basis for the mid-placement review. If there are any significant issues emerging these should be considered at that review and any adjustments made as may seem right. (This is not to suggest that more immediate action may be necessary at an earlier stage in particular circumstances.)

The final placement report has to serve a number of purposes:
- it places on record the key elements of the placement particularly as a learning record that can be taken on through Education for Ministry 1 and into EM2 (post-ordination years 1-3) and EM3 (thereafter)
- it accredits the student's learning achievements on the placement
- it points to learning and developmental needs
- it contributes to the college's and synod's assessment of readiness for ministry (this is often conceived as being a final Summative decision at the conclusion of the formational period but in fact there is a continuous assessment aspect).

Supervisors are encouraged to express themselves honestly. We understand the cultural pressures to be 'positive' and even 'nice', but placements are crucial in terms of evidence and assessment. Observations of traits and habits in one learning setting can be undermined (to the learner's and the church's disadvantage) if, though observed in other settings, they are unreported there.

Students have a right to access data held on them, including assessment reports. We realise that this can inhibit frankness. Generally, it is best for supervisors to have shared either the report or a draft or its main conclusions and reasoning before the college makes this available to the student for the review meeting. This openness does mean that other people's rights to privacy and confidentiality have to be respected by a careful framing of the report.

If feedback has been given throughout the placement, the final report's content should come as no surprise to the student.

It is right that supervisor's should exercise their 'professional' judgement. We are relying upon that experience being brought to bear on assessment and evaluation. The assessment however should be in relation to agreed criteria where these have been negotiated (see the preaching example above). Conclusions have to be supported by at least some reference to evidence. They are strengthened where they are rooted in more than a single instance or in different contexts or drawing upon different sources of opinion.

Part of formation is a continuing process of discernment of vocation to ministry. Though supervisors will often be focusing on particular aspects of ministry, they are encouraged to do this within an overall evaluation of the ordinand's suitability for ministry.

CORE COMPETENCES

The following pages (all in landscape) set out a 'competences framework' which we hope ordinands, tutors and placement supervisors will find helpful in

- discerning the particular areas of responsibilities and roles that may be practised in the course of the placement (in particular recognising those the ordinand may recognise as areas of development or which have been absent from previous placement or other experience or which have been identified in previous placement or other reports)
- attempting to ensure that there is a satisfactory fit between the ordinand's knowledge base and their skills and attitudes
- unpacking the content of skills domains
- considering whether skills or attitudes in operation in one particular context are wholly or mainly transferable to different contexts
- negotiating the package of 'qualities' that one would reasonably expect to see apparent in the performance of that particular role.

We would want to affirm certain important features of the competences framework

- Competence is a combination of different factors – knowledge and understanding, cognitive and social skills, and attitudes, personality and behaviour
- This is an abbreviated framework. We have not pursued the road of formulating very developed and therefore very lengthy descriptors, because (a) the workload to effect ratio would be much poorer; (b) longer descriptors are unwieldy and difficult to apply; (c) extended descriptors can acquire a false certainty and require a relatively heavy bureaucratic process to implement them and (d)our understanding is that the United Reformed Church is looking to develop a competences framework and so this one is provisional.
- A competences framework is a guide and not a rule book. It is certainly not a checklist on which the items have to be ticked off. Readiness for ministry as an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments is an altogether more complex business and we should not want to give the impression that we have summed up the essence of ministry within a table of competences.
- While the specification must carry some weight, we have left room for conversation, particularly around defining the qualities that ought to be demonstrable, generally for that role or within a specific context.

CORE COMPETENCES

The competences framework is intended to enable dialogue.   In particular, the qualities column should be regarded as being a 'word box' to which other terms can be added through negotiation and from which contextually appropriate qualities will be identified for the situation in which the role is being practised.

Role	Underpinning knowledge	Skills	Contexts	Qualities
Applied Theologian	Main traditions in theology,including reformed theology and contemporary approaches; historical developments; philosophy of religion and strands of philosophical and social theory development; relationship of Scripture and wider theology	Descriptive, interpretative, analytic and critical; communication; contextualisation and action reflection; development of personal belief system	Preaching, liturgical and teaching; programme planning; mission enabling and envisioning; dialogue; pastoral work; the whole work of ministry	Critical, analytical, enquiring, open, tolerant; insightful, self-analytical, applied, committed, intellectually rigorous, able to learn, holistic

Worshipper/worship leader	Understanding of the structure of worship; awareness of main liturgical traditions, especially Reformed;awareness of roots of liturgical traditions, including Judaism; liturgical language; sacramental theology; social and personal psychology of worship; liturgical media; hymnology; public prayer; other rites; role of storytelling; liturgical calendar; spirituality and worship	Designing and leading worship; critical refection; collaborating and enabling; (see also sections on oral communication skills; pastoring); use of alternative media; introducing new hymns and other worship material	Principal services including the celebration of the sacraments; ecumenical worship; all-age worship; special Services; small group; chaplaincy contexts; principal rites	Coherent and holistic; sensitivity and responsiveness; creativity; confidence in role; collaborative and supportive; discipline

Biblical student	Understanding of the literary diversity of Scripture; main critical theories and approaches; historical backgound to Scripture; hermeneutical principles	Descriptive, interpretative, analytic and critical; communication; contextualisation and action reflection; development of personal belief system	Preaching, liturgical and teaching; mission enabling and envisioning; dialogue; pastoral work; the whole work of ministry	Critical, analytical, enquiring, open, tolerant; insightful, self-analytical, applied, committed, intellectually rigorous, able to learn, holistic

Disciple	Main schools of thought in relation to spirituality and prayer across traditions, including reformed and contemporary; relationship of spirituality to justice/peace; sense of vocation	Self-awareness; learning and personal development; interpersonal and relational	Leadership; personal and public life and spirituality	Self-affirming; other-centredness; disciplined yet open to the spontaneous; insightful; holistic; sincerity and integrity; consistent and persistent; commitment
Missioner	Theology of mission; relationship of mission, evangelism and service; Mission and ministries (CRCW, diaconal); Christian anthropology; theology of the oikoumene, including issues of justice and peace; pluralism; mission audit and strategy; role of prophetic witness.	Mission and audit practice; encounter with people in a non-church setting; research skills; presentation; strategic planning;	Local church, ecumenical, community projects, inter-faith, secular institutions, unfamiliar settings, world church	Tolerance and understanding; appropriateness to context; collaborative; strategic; pro-active

Educator	Child development; adult learning; learning in later life; education and empowerment; education in social context; design and delivery of learning; learning resources; preaching, worship and learning	Tutoring; group leadership; designing learning; using and adapting resources; critical reflection; teaching; listening and responding	Large and small group learning; church services; learning with a range of age groups; utilising and adapting resources; formal and informal situations; learning in a wider context	Openness; enthusiasm; critical capacity; supportiveness; positive in guiding and giving feedback; empowering; facilitating; clear in delivery; responsive to feedback from others; appropriate to context and purpose
Manager, Organiser	Main theories of the relationship between power, authority and influence. Leadership theories. The organisational structure of the Church. Organising personal resources and time.	Analytic; environmental awareness; responding to the democratic process; managing to empower; supervisory skills; the ability to be strategic, tactical, and interpersonal; IT awareness; presentational.	Supervising other staff and volunteers; recruiting and developing; chairing; presenting; developing policy; using IT skills in support of writing, research, data keeping, diary keeping.	Problem-solving ability, openness, energy, supportiveness, imagination, integrity, self-awareness, self-assurance, decisiveness, initiative.
Pastor	Biblical understanding – development of role; historical account – styles of support. General understanding based on study in some depth of psychology,	Ability to listen actively; to respond appropriately in a variety of circumstances; to know when and how to seek help from others; offering prayer; interpersonal skills; reflecting; encouraging; diplomacy	Personal contact with individuals in a variety of settings: baptism, wedding, funeral; life problems; marital, sexual, parenting, guilt, debt, dependencies; Visiting: regular, sick, housebound, hospital, prison;	Caring, calm, approachable, tolerant, sensitive, supportive, resourceful, imaginative; able to keep confidences; non-directive counselling; not impulsive, or opinionated;

	history, philosophy, sociology etc.		Older/younger; sexual/cultural orientation	Spiritual, reflecting, self-awareness; holistic approachable/ready to seek and accept support as well as provide it;

COMPETENCES ASSESSMENT FORM (FOR PLACEMENT SUPERVISORS)

This form will be available electronically and so those completing it will not be confined to the space within the paper format.

The form should be completed towards the end of a placement or immediately afterwards – the length of time will depend upon the extent of the placement.

The content should be determined through conversation between the ordinand and the placement supervisor. Where they have significantly different views, this should be noted.

The first column reflects a role within the competences framework
The second asks for observations on what the ordinand has achieved
The third for areas which either noticeably have not been addressed or where there is need for further learning or experience
The final column asks the respondent to identify an episode or set of experiences which evidence the comments in columns two and three.

ROLE	COMMENTS ON ACHIEVEMENT	COMMENTS ON DEVELOPMENT NEEDS	EXAMPLE OR CONTEXT IN WHICH JUDGEMENT MADE
Pastor			

Applied theologian			
Worship leader and collaborator			
Biblical scholar			

Mission enabler			
Educator			
Manager/ organiser			

Other			

SCOTTISH UNITED REFORMED AND CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE
PLACEMENT REVIEW FEEDBACK SHEET
[This is completed in conversation between the student, the placement supervisor and the designated college staff member. It is intended to be used both on interim reviews and final reviews]

ORDINAND
PLACEMENT
SUPERVISOR
PERIOD

The main areas covered

Roles undertaken by the ordinand [See the competences framework above]

Sacraments and rites [What opportunities did the student have to see this aspect? What contribution were they able to make and what is the assessment of performance? Note: a student may or may not be able to undertake some part, eg the celebration of a baptism, in which case there may be elements in which s/he could participate, such as a baptismal preparation visit, or a part in the service]

What were the main learning gains for the ordinand?

What were the main learning gains for the supervisor and church/organisation?

Theological reflections (including on nature of the church, its relations to the world and the nature of ministry)

Social skills and relationships

Personal management, preparation, timekeeping

Further learning needs recognised

Other notes

Date of review

PERSONAL LEARNING PROJECT

As mentioned above, a different form of practical work from the placement is where the student is commissioned to undertake a particular piece of work as part of their formational programme, such as the organisation of a retreat or the facilitating of learning or the undertaking of an applied research project.

The student will be given a brief by the college and will be supported in carrying out the work, usually by college staff, though an external partner may be brought in.   Usually, there will be interim submissions of work by the student as the project progresses and formative feedback will be given.

It has to be emphasised that such a project is intended, though having a practical outcome, nonetheless to be also a learning activity.

An actual project descriptor follows as some indication of how such projects are designed and work and the breadth of learning that might be involved.

Ordinand	
Project title	**Lay preacher development survey**
Period	**January – June 2008**
Summary	**To design and implement a survey-based review of lay preacher's work and training within the synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church**
Principal activities	**1 To design a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews plan in accordance with the research brief agreed by committee** **2 To generate, gather and analyse the quantitative and qualitative data required** **3 To prepare a survey report including as may be required conclusions and recommendations** **4 To present the report to appropriate audiences** **5 To prepare a reflective account of the research process**
Learning areas	**Awareness of the theoretical and actual place of lay preaching within the ministry of the whole people of God within the United Reformed Church** **Ecumenical considerations** **Ethical considerations** **Engagement and interaction with a range of people within the life of the synod and its churches** **Stimulating as well as reflecting and recording thinking – note: the research is intended not only to identify practice but to influence its development (in this it has an action research ethos)**
Support	**Original report to Pastoral committee, setting out background and brief** **Planning and review meetings with Principal** **Range of research design and implementation texts**

Outcomes	1 The research instruments – questionnaire and schedule 2 Raw and structured data – quantitative and qualitative 3 Drafts of data analysis 4 Draft and final report 5 Presentations 6 Research diary and reflective report
Performance criteria	The research should comply with current standards including 1 meeting the brief 2 having due regard for ethical considerations in planning and implementation 3 executing the research with due diligence 4 the research instruments being effective in gathering and allowing for analysis of relevant, valid and reliable data 5 a report on the research undertaken that is informed properly by the data, addresses the key questions and is coherent in presentation 6 a separate learning report on the research itself intended for the college in which the researcher identifies their own learning experience and issues through the research work and in particular is focused on what he has learned as an ordinand in preparation for ministry

Where a placement or an element within a placement has a particular focus, then this descriptor template offers one approach to defining the learning.

SOME ELEMENTS IN YOUR REFLECTIVE REPORTING
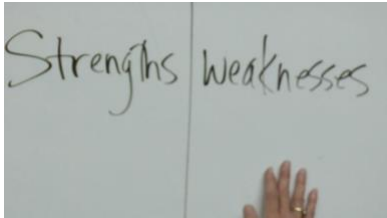
Self-awareness and self-critical capacity

Building bridges between theory and practice… between church and community life… between areas of practice… between theology and life… between contexts … between different experiences you have had

Where you feel you have made progress

Bringing together the different dimensions of who you (and other people) are: body, mind, soul, spirit; the intellectual, the effective and the spiritual.
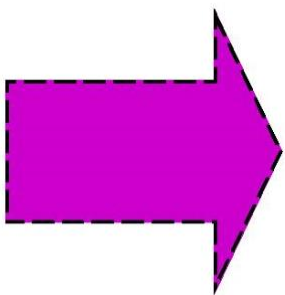
Looking forwards

HERE'S SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPERVISORS ON

OBSERVING

- Too obtrusive observation can be off-putting to the student

- Try to get an overall picture as well as detail

- If there is an issue, try to work out why and where the student is going wrong: examples are helpful rather than general criticism

- Try to look at the student's performance from other angles than your own 'professional' one or even gather comments from others: eg your perspective on a sermon might differ from that of 'the pew'

- Use the criteria that have been set down or agreed with the student

- Remember to notice and note the positive points as well to as the others: not just to be affirming, but because good points can be the starting point for building on strengths

- Look for patterns in behaviour: a mass of comment may not help the student to see the underlying problem

- Notice the things that do not happen as well as those that do

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK
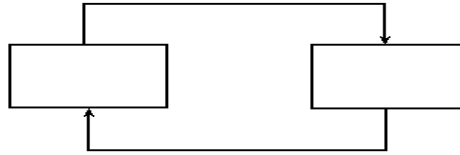
- The content and style of feedback ought to be positive, encouraging and constructive

- Be re-assuring – the student <u>can</u> do it

- The student should be treated with respect

- Don't labour a point, particularly if it has been taken

- Work through with the student the process for improvement

- Make suggestions rather than make demands or give orders

- Have empathy with the student, understand their position

- Remember that even constructive criticism can be difficult to hear, not least if you have 'always done it that way' or the approach is deeply connected to sense of personal identity

- Balance less welcome feedback with more positive

- Be honest – but not brutal

- Explain what makes you come to your judgement

- Explore alternatives with the student

- Attend to feelings

- Allow plenty of space for response to feedback

- Make the feedback session reciprocal

- Show that you too are genuinely open to feedback

BUILDING TRUST AND RAPPORT

- Show your respect for the other person and their gifts

- Value their life experience

- Meet the other person as a person, not just in their role

- Do your best to put the other person at their ease

- Use first names, but don't fall into over-familiarity or false familiarity

- Be trustworthy and trusting

- Establish the common ground you have

- Try not to express, even through body language, disapproval

- Give the other person space

- Be yourself and as open as you feel it right to be

- Don't hold back information

- Do as you would be done by!

- Gain credibility for your competence, commitment and dependability

- Don't get into a blame culture

- Be honest with yourself and others

TALKING FRANKLY

Being honest, particularly in feedback, is important for there to be effective and needful learning, but it happens most constructively in the right environment – that is, where

- ✓ Your relationship is a positive and constructive one

- ✓ The receiving person believes that you speak in good faith and with a commitment to them and their learning

- ✓ There is not a culture of blame or threat but rather an encouragement of appropriate risk-taking

- ✓ There is privacy rather than a public situation

- ✓ The recipient can see what benefits there are in the feedback for them

- ✓ You are sensitive to how the feedback may be heard/read

- ✓ You are prepared to be spoken to frankly in return

- ✓ You have built trust in your other dealings

- ✓ The style of speech and manner is friendly and supportive

REPORTING AND THE AMBER LIGHT PROCESS

This section sets out further information on the process the college and the sending denomination use in order identify and clarify situations in which the college wishes to raise concerns about a student's progress or situation.

Certain **principles** underpin the reporting process
- Report preparation ought never to be a substitute for on-going discussion between the ordinand and the college staff.
- Honesty and openness are essential.
- The college will write its reports in good faith and relying on available evidence and its best professional judgement.
- Perceptions of difficulties have to be shared at the earliest opportunity and not allowed to fester – there ought to be no 'surprises' for ordinand or institution at the report-writing stage.
- Criteria that are used in making judgements should be as explicit as possible and, whenever possible, negotiated.
- Regard should be had to any extenuating circumstances of which the college is aware.
- The ordinand should be expected to write a reflective report at each stage of the reporting process and its contents should be incorporated into or at least reflected within the institution's report.
- The ordinand will have an opportunity to comment on the institution's report, to propose amendments to it and to add a personal rider to it as the ordinand thinks fit. This does not imply that the institution is required to modify its report in the light of such representations. The ordinand is required to countersign the report but this will only certify that it is a true copy of the report that the ordinand has seen.
- The college will utilise such other reports made to it in forming its own judgements and reporting but is not required to place equal weight upon all sources.
- Ordinands should be aware that the whole of their engagement with the Education for Ministry 1 process is relevant in the assessment and reporting process and not merely formal assessment processes relating to assignments.
- The college has to have regard to any data protection laws or good practice guidelines and may modify references within its reporting in order to protect the rights of third parties.

In the assessment and reporting processes, due regard will be had to the competences framework but this is intended to be formative rather than finally determinative and it is important that all recognise that suitability for ministry can extend beyond matters and processes set out explicitly in the framework.

Reports will be submitted to
- The College Management committee
- The Convener of the Pastoral committee and members of their interviewing panel (or as may be appropriate in synods other than the Synod of Scotland)
- The Secretary of the Education and Learning committee of the General Assembly (on behalf of the Assessment Board and for liaison as appropriate with the Secretary for Ministries).

If the report does not set out concerns sufficient to instigate the amber light process set out below, then the synod will be asked to conduct a normal periodic review (in Scotland by the Synod Pastoral committee interview panel). Where there is no significant disputed territory apparent in the reports, then the Principal will participate as usual as a member of the panel. Where there is disputed territory however, the college will additionally nominate an officer of the College or member of the College Management committee.

Where there are **significant concerns** about an ordinand's progress or eventual suitability, these must be explored with the ordinand (and as far as possible some common understanding achieved), steps identified for additional support or learning/development action, criteria established (wherever possible, in negotiation with the ordinand) and a further review meeting set. The chaplain as the personal support tutor should be advised of the situation in order that appropriate personal support can be offered. The college staff member concerned, generally the personal tutor, should as soon as may be possible thereafter draft a sufficiently precise and detailed account. This should be shared with the Principal.

Where the concerns of the college raise doubts about the ordinand's capacity to move towards meeting the Church's requirements for affirming suitability for ministry, particular provision is made under an **'amber light'** process in terms of which

- Initially, the process and principles of the foregoing paragraph should be implemented
- If the tutor concerned believes that there is a continuing concern, that insufficient progress has been made and that such progress cannot reasonably be anticipated without further action, then s/he should review the situation with the ordinand and, if concern remains, prepare a report for the academic staff meeting acting as the board of examiners. The ordinand must be advised that the report is being submitted in terms of this amber light process.
- The academic staff should consider this report as soon as practicable thereafter, agree what additional support or learning/development provision should be made and resolve whether or not to sustain the designation of the situation as an amber light situation. If they do so designate the situation, the Principal should immediately thereafter set out a report and share this with the College chairperson, the appropriate officer in the sending synod and the Secretary of the Education and Learning committee of the General Assembly.
- An amber light review meeting of the Synod panel will be convened attended by Principal and such other staff members as may be appropriate in the view of the College and synod, a College officer or appointed member of the College Management Committee and a representative nominated by the General Assembly Secretary for Education and Learning. In determining which additional members of staff might be invited to participate, consideration shall be had to the contexts in which the perceived concerns have been thought to arise. The ordinand will be required to attend such a review meeting and may elect to be accompanied by a friend of their own choosing. Such a friend is to be regarded more as a companion than as a representative, though in determining this the panel shall have regard to principles of natural justice and to how best it may understand the issues, evidence and the perspective of the ordinand.

- A member of the college staff shall be entrusted with the responsibility of drafting a report of the meeting, including its conclusions and identifying areas and points of disagreement. This shall be submitted to those who participated in the meeting for the suggestion of any amendments. It shall be for the chairperson of the meeting to determine the final content of the report, though any continuing dissention should be noted. The final report will be submitted to the appropriate Church authorities for their consideration and action.
- Where an amber light process has resulted in remedial measures being taken and the ordinand has, in the view of the aforementioned panel, made progress sufficient to alleviate significantly doubts about their eventual suitability for ministry, then the amber light process may for that time being be set aside.

REVIEW FRAMEWORK

Annual or other reviews will draw upon
- Assessment outcomes for college assignments
- Assessment outcomes and/or other progress reports from partner university or other educational provider
- The ordinand's own reflective reports and self-evaluations
- Placement reports by supervisors
- Tutor reports on participation in college classes and other events
- Notes of interviews, tutorials or other interactions with the ordinand.

The purpose of the review should be to
- Recognise learning achievement and formational development
- Identify further learning and development needs
- Identify further support needs
- Recognise any significant change in personal circumstances and indicate any appropriate actions that should follow
- Plan placement engagements
- Monitor progress towards confirming suitability for ministry
- Generate feedback from the ordinand on their learning experience
- Initiate, if appropriate, the amber light process.

The ordinand and the reporting tutor should comment on the following elements
- College studies
- University/ other partner studies
- Placements
- Spiritual development and development in sense of vocation
- Performance and needs in relation to the competences framework
- Relating to others and other aspects of emotional intelligence
- Contribution to the life of the college community
- Formational/ life balance
- What has been most challenging?
- What has been most rewarding?
- What has been negative as an experience?
- Key areas for development in the next period

The report that results from the review should be
- Evaluative
- Fair and based upon evidence
- Developmental
- As far as possible, agreed between the tutor and ordinand
- Acknowledged to be a true record