

POLICIES OF THE MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE REVISED 2008

1. NOTIFICATION OF RULES AND POLICIES

Rules and policies currently in effect are those posted on the website at www.uua.org.

2. POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION

The MFC declares and affirms its special responsibility to value all persons without regard to race, color, gender, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, family structure, age, ethnicity or national origin in making its credentialing decisions.

3. PREPARATORY STAGES

The following outline describes the stages of preparation for UU ministry and some of the policies and procedures associated with each stage.

A. APPLICANT STATUS

Applicants are those who have:

Contacted the Ministerial Credentialing Office or a Regional Subcommittee on Candidacy (RSCC) Administrator indicating intent to pursue fellowship as a UU minister. The local RSCC Administrator will maintain a record of applicants.

B. ASPIRANT STATUS

A person in Aspirant Status has submitted the following forms to the RSCC Administrator:

1. Initial Inquiry Form (RSCC-1)
2. Interview Forms- from a UU minister and a UUA Field Staff member or designee (RSCC-2)
3. Essay on ministerial aspirations and relevant biography (1-2 pages) in which they say something about who they are and the ministry they feel called to do.
4. Transfer/Plural Standing Form (if applicable) (MFC-7)
5. Evidence of acceptance to a theological school or another approved program, or graduation from theological school.

C. CANDIDATE STATUS

In addition to 1 through 5 above, a Candidate has also:

6. Completed an approved career assessment program and released the report to the RSCC, Ministerial Credentialing Office and the MFC. (The report should be mailed to the RSCC only.)
7. Completed at least one year of theological education;
8. Agreed in writing to abide by the Rules and Policies of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and
9. Agreed in writing to defer accepting any ministerial position other than internships and student ministries unless approved by the Ministerial Credentialing Director. Violation of this policy shall render the candidate ineligible for an interview with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee or Ministerial Fellowship for four years from the commencement of the position.
10. Been interviewed and approved for Candidate Status by the RSCC.

D. PRIOR TO THE MFC INTERVIEW

In addition to 1 through 10 above, a Candidate should have:

11. Obtained congregational sponsorship.
12. Completed a criminal background check.
13. Completed and submitted an appointment request at least ten months prior to the desired appointment date. (Please see Policy 9 for additional details)
14. Completed the following paperwork required for the interview packet.
 - Biographical Information Sheet/ Application for Fellowship
 - Biographical background
 - Recent 2" x 2" photograph
 - MFC Reading List
 - Criminal Offense Disclosure/False Representation Statement (This form is not shared unless there has been a conviction.)
 - Consent for Release of Information for Transfer and Plural Candidates (as appropriate)
 - Essay on "What is the theological context of your call to Unitarian Universalist ministry? Refer to at least one theologian, one personal experience and one sacred text." (maximum length: 4 pages, double-spaced)
 - Essay or short reflection paper explaining how your analysis of anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism is reflected in your ministry. (maximum length: 4 pages, double-spaced)
 - Essay: Describe a personal experience of ministering with children or youth and how this experience informs your philosophy of religious education. (maximum length: 4 pages, double-spaced)
 - Consulted with the Ministerial Credentialing Director regarding the Candidate File Review
 - RSCC letter(s)
 - 5 Letters of Recommendation. (All letters of recommendation **must** clearly indicate that they have been shared with you.)
 - 1) _____ from _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____
 - Internship Learning/Serving Agreement
 - Internship evaluations: ___ Self evaluation; ___Supervisor's; ___Committee's
 - CPE Evaluations: ___Self ___Supervisor's
 - All MFC Statements of Competency
 - Career Center Report
 - Graduate transcripts
 - Undergraduate transcripts

4. INTERNSHIP SEEKER STATUS

All interns must minimally be in candidate status in order for the MFC to recognize an internship as potentially meeting MFC requirements.

5. INTERNSHIPS

Candidates, supervisors, and intern committees must use the evaluation forms provided or alternative forms which provide an equally broad range of information. Evaluative letters may also be included.

When the Ministerial Fellowship Committee grants a Candidate Preliminary Fellowship, the Candidate is expected to have developed a competency to serve in any of the specialties of ministry. Internships must be created with this in mind. Interns are required to develop a written learning and service agreement with their supervisors and intern committees before, or at the beginning of, any internship. Internship learning and service agreements must be approved by a staff member at the Ministerial and Professional Leadership Staff Group at the UUA.

Candidates are strongly discouraged from undertaking internships in their home congregations or current places of employment, and must seek a waiver of this policy from the MFC when considering such an internship.

Having served a congregation as an intern, student minister, summer minister, or contract minister, individuals are ineligible for settlement in that congregation under Rule 18.

All interns must have interviewed with a Regional Sub-Committee on Candidacy prior to the commencement of their internship. (Effective September 2009)

Guidelines for Offsite Supervised Internship Sites

In those rare situations where on-site supervision is impossible, the following guidelines must be met:

- a. That the offsite supervisor and intern meet face to face weekly
- b. That the offsite supervisor be supervising only one intern at a time
- c. That the offsite supervisor must be in full and final fellowship
- d. That the offsite supervisor preferably not be a District Staff member
- e. That the supervisor and intern be in consultation with the Internship Clearinghouse Coordinator in design of the Learning/Service Agreement.
- f. At the discretion of the Ministerial Credentialing Director, offsite supervisory arrangements may be referred to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for approval.

The MFC discourages congregations from offering internships during the minister's sabbatical year.

6. POLICY ON WAIVERS FOR CPE EQUIVALENCY AND INTERNSHIPS

All candidates who wish to request a waiver of the CPE and /or internship requirement must arrange to have the waiver request considered at a meeting held in advance of their MFC interview. Waiver requests must include at least two letters of recommendation that address work in a previous ministerial role and grounding in UU congregational life. In addition, where applicable, please include recent ministerial employment evaluations, and any certificates noting professional licenses, current membership and good standing in a relevant professional organization.

7. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

At least five letters of recommendation are required, one each, from:

1. The candidate's faculty member or advisor at theological school if candidate is enrolled in or a recent graduate of a theological school;
2. A religious educator;
3. A Unitarian Universalist minister **other** than one's internship supervisor;
4. Anyone of the candidate's choice who has known him or her for at least six years;
5. Anyone of the candidate's choice.

One of these letters must satisfy the rule requirement of describing the extent of participation in a Unitarian Universalist congregation.

8. CANDIDATE FILE REVIEW

The Ministerial Credentialing Director will provide to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee a written review of the material in the candidate's file prior to the candidate's interview. The review will be written by the Ministerial Credentialing Director in mutual agreement with the candidate, whenever possible. If not possible, that fact will be noted in the written review.

9. SCHEDULING OF INTERVIEWS

Persons seeking Fellowship in the Unitarian Universalist Association must request an interview in writing using the Ministerial Fellowship Committee Appointment Form.

Candidates should be approximately two-thirds of the way through their preparation for ministry at the time of their MFC interview. Final evaluations of either Clinical Pastoral Education or the internship must be available by the time of the interview, with CPE preferred.

Those who have previously received a Category IV or V decision by the MFC must receive MFC Executive Committee approval before scheduling a re-interview. Please see Policy 3D for additional requirements.

In order to balance the number of interviews at any one meeting, appointments will be made in consultation with, and at the final discretion of, the Ministerial Credentialing Director.

Five months prior to each meeting, a materials checklist and a reconfirmation form will be mailed to each candidate. A candidate canceling his or her appointment less than four months before the meeting will be put on the waiting list for a future appointment. Notification of interview date, time and place will be made at least six weeks before the Committee meeting.

Candidates who fail to submit all materials to the Ministerial Credentialing Office by the deadline (approximately six weeks prior to the Committee meeting), may have their appointments canceled.

10. TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR CANDIDATES

It will be the candidate's responsibility to pay transportation and other expenses incurred in meeting with the Committee. If a candidate has special accessibility needs, the MFC will cover any additional expenses necessary for candidate to appear before the Committee.

11. CONTINGENCIES AND REQUIREMENTS

The Ministerial Credentialing Director shall determine whether a contingency or requirement has been completed satisfactorily.

12. CANDIDATES RECEIVING IVs and Vs

A candidate who receives a V will be removed from candidate status, and a candidate who receives a IV will be removed after 4 years. Candidates who receive a Category IV or V shall not be eligible for scholarship aid from the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group.

13. REMOVAL OF CANDIDATE FILES

Any candidate file which has been inactive for seven (7) years may be destroyed by the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group.

14. MENTORSHIPS

All active ministers in Preliminary Fellowship are required to have mentors, whom they may choose themselves. The mentee shall discuss matters of professional concern with their mentor for at least an hour monthly preferably in person. The mentor must receive all completed forms for renewal of Preliminary Fellowship, but will not be called upon for evaluations or for information about the mentee. Every year, along with other forms for renewal of Preliminary Fellowship, the mentee shall arrange for their mentor to certify the existence of the mentor relationship to MFC. The mentor shall be in Final Fellowship, within the specialty in which the minister is working.

15. POLICY ON MINISTERS IN PRELIMINARY FELLOWSHIP SERVING NON-UU CONGREGATIONS

Ministers serving a non-UU congregation will be considered serving in a community setting and must comply with the requirements of Rule 13.D.

16. FINAL FELLOWSHIP AND RECOGNITION OF A SPECIALITY

Final Fellowship will be awarded when three successful renewals of Preliminary Fellowship are completed. When renewals are submitted for three years in a particular specialty of ministry, the minister will be granted "Final Fellowship with a Specialty in" either Parish, Community or Ministry of Religious Education.

Final Fellowship may be awarded without reference to any specialty when three renewals have been completed for years involving different specialties.

These renewal submissions need not be in three successive years- and a minister may remain in anyone of the renewal periods for up to three years. Each renewal is based on evaluations of one church year.

Ministers in Preliminary Fellowship must seek out a mentoring relationship. Mentors must be ministers in final fellowship with recognition in the same specialty of ministry that the mentee is seeking.

Ministers seeking Final Fellowship in two specialties at the same time must not only submit renewals for half-time compensated work in each specialty, but must also have a mentor in final fellowship for both specialties. The MFC is willing to consider mentors outside the ordained UU ministry for ministers seeking final fellowship in any specialty. In such cases, this mentorship would have to be in addition to an existing mentorship involving a UU minister in final fellowship, and must be approved by the Settlement Working Group.

17. POLICY ON WAIVERS OF RULE 18

In support of affirmative action, the MFC will look favorably upon waiver requests of Rule 18 in cases of appointed representatives of UUA anti-racism anti-oppression multi-cultural programs. Such waivers can be granted by the Executive Committee.

18. MINISTER'S FILES

Ministers may have access to their files except for information transmitted in confidence or

otherwise deemed confidential by the MFC. Ministers will be charged for a photocopy of their file at a cost which covers staff time and copying.

19. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES AGAINST MINISTERS

A. Initiating a Complaint.

Complaints involving alleged unprofessional/unbecoming conduct of a minister or other violation of the rules of Fellowship shall be received and reviewed by the Director of Congregational Services. Complaints should be from a person or persons with first-hand knowledge of the circumstances, the congregational, institutional, or agency board with whom the minister works, or the UUA Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group. Except in cases involving children or dependent adults, the Director of Congregational Services will not generally advance complaints to the MFC that were filed by persons who were not directly involved in the circumstances covered by the complaint. Complaints must be in writing and signed by the complainant(s) or Board and shall contain a brief statement of the facts upon which the complaint is based. If necessary, the Director of Congregational Services will assist the complainant in reducing the complaint to writing.

B. Timeliness and Stale Matters.

Complaints should be received by the Director of Congregational Services within a reasonable time period following the circumstances giving rise to the complaint. Unless the Director of Congregational Services determines otherwise for good cause, complaints regarding events occurring more than six years prior to the date of the complaint will not be considered. Good cause shall include, but not be limited to, complaints involving abuse of children or particularly egregious behaviors or repetitive actionable behavior.

C. Resolution of Complaints

Upon receipt of a complaint, the minister may be invited to meet with the Executive Committee of the MFC and is expected to be accompanied by a UUMA Good Offices person in Final Fellowship. The cost of meeting with the Committee will be borne by the Committee.

The Executive Committee may determine that no further action is warranted, may propose to the full Committee a mutually agreed upon course of redress, or may determine that further investigation and a full Committee Fellowship Review is warranted.

Written confirmation of a resolution agreement shall be sent to the minister within 14 days. A copy will be placed in the minister's file. Additional copies may be sent to other persons or institutional representatives as deemed appropriate by the MFC.

D. Complaint Investigations

The type of investigation required by a complaint will depend upon the alleged circumstances and the type of additional information required.

1. When the Executive Committee calls for a full Fellowship Committee Review, it will charge the Executive Secretary to determine the type and scope of

the investigation and appoint an investigation team in consultation with the MFC Chairperson.

The following are guidelines which are to be used by the investigators in conducting its investigation.

a. In consultation with the Executive Secretary and the MFC Chair, it is the responsibility of the investigators to develop a full and complete record of the facts and circumstances surrounding the complaint and any other relevant information which may be useful to the Committee in its deliberations.

b. Each individual appointed to be an investigator is expected to maintain neutrality and an open mind throughout the investigation. All information obtained through the investigation must be held in the strictest confidence.

c. In consultation with the Executive Secretary and the MFC Chair, the investigators should determine what, if any, additional information is required to assist the Committee in its deliberations and the most efficient method for obtaining that information.

d. If it is determined that personal interviews would be appropriate, the appointed investigators will interview the complainant, the minister against whom the complaint has been made, and as many other individuals with knowledge of the issues or circumstances raised by the complaint. Any summary of an individual's statement must be approved by that individual to be included in the report.

2. The appointed investigators will file a report and all information collected with the Executive Secretary promptly after the conclusion of the investigation. All notes and other information gathered by the investigators should be transmitted to the Executive Secretary for archiving as soon as possible following the completion of the investigation.

3. Review of the Report

The MFC Chair and the Executive Secretary should review the report. If it is determined that additional information is required, the investigators shall obtain the additional information before the report is forwarded to the Executive Committee.

E. Recommendation for Fellowship Review

Once the report is complete, the Executive Committee shall determine whether or not there is sufficient concern to believe that the minister has engaged in unprofessional/unbecoming conduct or other conduct in violation of Rule 24.

1. If it is determined by the Executive Committee that there is insufficient grounds for a Fellowship Review, the Executive Secretary shall so notify the minister, complainant, and other interested parties. The determination by the Executive Committee to not recommend a Fellowship Review may be appealed by the complainant to the full Committee. The appeal should be written and contain a review of the reasons why the determination to not recommend a Fellowship Review should be overturned and must be received within one month of the receipt of notice of the no cause determination. As soon as an appeal is received, the Executive Secretary should give notice to the minister involved and the minister may file a response.

2. If it is determined that there is sufficient grounds for a Fellowship Review, the Executive Secretary shall so notify the minister, complainant, and other interested parties and schedule a Fellowship Review before the full Committee.

F. Fellowship Review

The Fellowship Review before the Committee shall follow the guidelines set forth in Rule 21 of the MFC Rules.

20. PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS AGAINST CANDIDATES

1. Complaints and Notification. Any individual wishing to file a complaint against a candidate must contact the Ministerial Development Director. Complaints must be in writing and contain first hand knowledge or experience. As soon as appropriate after receipt of a complaint, the Ministerial Development Director will notify the candidate. With the initial notification, a request shall be made to the candidate to provide a written statement of the candidate's position on the allegations in the complaint within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the notice of complaint. At the "intake" stage, the Director for Congregational Services hears the complaint, provides information on the process, responds to questions from the complainant and conducts an assessment to determine whether the complaint should be referred for further investigation. The Ministerial Development Director will determine if further investigation is warranted and keep the complainant informed of the ongoing process and any actions.

2. Investigation. If an investigation is warranted, the Ministerial Credentialing Director will be notified to conduct the investigation, which will generally include consultation with all involved parties (candidate, Ministry and Professional Leadership staff, complainant(s), theological school, supervisor, etc.) and review of any additional information, including the candidate's file, etc. If the complaint involves either a candidate or complaint from a traditional marginalized community, the UUA Identity Based Ministries Staff Group will also be consulted. The candidate may be invited to meet with the Ministerial Credentialing Director and the Director of Ministry and Professional Leadership to discuss the complaint. In consultation with the Ministerial Development Director, the Ministerial Credentialing Director will prepare a written report of relevant findings and recommendations that will be presented to the Executive Committee of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

3. Resolutions. The Executive Committee may consider a range of resolutions to the complaint, including, but not limited to, a letter of reprimand, suspension, counseling, return to aspirant status or removal from candidate status, etc. The Executive Committee

will inform the candidate of the resolution and a copy of the letter will become part of the candidate's permanent file and sent to the complainant.

4. Removal of Candidacy Status. If the Executive Committee believes removal of candidacy status is warranted, they shall make a recommendation to the Full Committee.

5. Consideration of Recommendation. The candidate must be notified at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting of the Full Committee at which the recommendation for removal will be considered. The candidate should be advised of their right to request a meeting with the Full Committee and to bring a minister in Final Fellowship as a support person. All costs and expenses involved in the travel and appearance of the candidate and the support person shall be borne by the candidate. The meeting with the Full Committee shall be for the purpose of providing the candidate with an opportunity to provide any additional facts of mitigating circumstances regarding their candidate status.

6. Determination of the Full Committee. The Full Committee shall consider all relevant information, including the complaint, the candidate's file, written documents, the recommendation of the Executive Committee, and if requested, the meeting with the candidate. If the Full Committee decides to remove a candidate from candidate status, such decision shall be based on a determination that the continuation of the candidate's status is not in the best interests of the Association or its ministry.

7. Notification of the Decision of the Full Committee. The decision of the Full Committee shall be communicated as soon as possible to the candidate.

8. Readmission to Candidate Status. A candidate whose candidate status is removed may, upon furnishing appropriate evidence that the concern no longer exists, apply to the Executive Committee for readmission to candidate status.

21. PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS AGAINST ASPIRANTS

When a complaint is received by the Ministerial Credentialing Director regarding the conduct of an aspirant, the Ministerial Credentialing Director will conduct an investigation and may consider a range of resolutions, including, but not limited to, a letter of reprimand, suspension, counseling, or removal of aspirant status, etc. The Ministerial Credentialing Director will draft a letter regarding the complaint and the resolution (s) and send it to the aspirant and the Executive Committee of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. A copy of the letter will become part of the aspirant's permanent file and will also be forwarded to the administrator of the Regional Sub-Committee on Candidacy where the aspirant is expected to interview.

22. NOTIFICATION OF TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP

The Committee shall inform all ministers and congregations, by letter, of cases of fellowship termination when (B) or (C) of Rule 24 apply and shall publish such terminations in the UU World.

In the event that a minister voluntarily resigns from Fellowship during a Fellowship Review falling under Rule 24 (B or C), notification of the resignation will include a statement describing the stage of the review process at the time of resignation. For example, the statement shall read: Resigned (complaint pending); Resigned (after failure to comply with probation).

23. PROCEDURES FOR RE-ADMISSION

1. A minister seeking re-admission shall submit a Re-admission Application on the approved form.

2. The MFC shall review such application and determine whether or not to readmit the minister to Fellowship, or to require further consideration of the application subject to conditions which the MFC shall prescribe.
3. An assessment by a mental health professional, ministerial career center counselor, or other specialist may be required. The focus of such an assessment shall be determined by the Executive Committee. A release for the disclosure of the findings of the assessment, including any recommendations for follow up work by the applicant, must be given in writing in advance and such reports will be the property of the MFC and filed in the minister's MFC file. The minister shall also receive a copy of the findings.
4. Upon receipt and review of the findings, the Executive Committee will determine whether or not to further consider the applicant for readmission. If the Executive Committee finds in favor of the applicant, cooperation with the recommendations of the assessment process and progress reports or other appropriate documentation will be required. A release for this information must be given in advance and will be the property of the MFC and filed in the minister's MFC file. The minister shall also receive copies of such reports.
5. If the MFC determines to review further the application it shall notify the appropriate officer(s) of the congregation(s) affected, any original complainant(s), and appropriate field staff that such application has been received. The MFC will receive their comments and determine if the re-admission process shall continue.
6. Upon the applicant's successful completion of the plan approved by the MFC, the MFC shall determine whether or not to readmit the applicant to Ministerial Fellowship. If re-admission is granted, a re-entry plan and/or conditions shall be designated by the MFC in conjunction with the Ministry and Professional Leadership.