

UUA Religious Education Credentialing Program

What to Expect from the Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC)

Interview Meeting

The Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC) is a committee appointed by the UUA Board to evaluate Credentialed Religious Educator and Credentialed Religious Educator, Master Level candidates who seek credentialing status in the Religious Education Credentialing Program. The members represent various perspectives on parish life, and there is a representative from the UUA Board and one from LREDA. The current members of the Committee may be found online here:

<http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/board-appointedcommittees/religiouseducation/7996.shtml>

There may also be a Credentialed Religious Educator or Credentialed Religious Educator, Master Level attending the RECC meeting as a non-voting Observer. What follows is a guide to what a Candidate can expect from an Interview Meeting with the RECC.

Process

Several weeks before the RECC meeting, the Credentialed Religious Educator Level or Credentialed Religious Educator Master Level Candidate will be notified of the date, time, and the building location of the RECC Interview Meeting. An indication of the location of the Candidate waiting area will also be given. The Candidate will be asked whether s/he has any special needs to be considered during the meeting. Flowers may be present during the meeting to help create a more worshipful space, so any allergies or sensitivities to smell should be indicated. Candidates will be invited to bring additional items of personal significance to display on the “altar.”

Also at this time, the Office of Religious Education Credentialing will make available electronic copies of the Candidate’s portfolio, reflection paper, or generative project, personal photograph, and other completion materials to the Committee members and Credentialed Observer. The purpose of having the personal photograph is to give the Committee an additional way in which to know the Candidate, and to give them a sense of familiarity when they meet the candidate at the time of the interview. The photograph will be retained with the Candidate’s file.

One member of the Committee will be identified as the Candidate’s Presenter. Although all Committee members, as well as the Credentialed Observer, will review the candidate’s submitted materials, the Presenter will be charged with a detailed reading and analysis of the materials, including any audio or video materials submitted, will flag any potential issues for the Committee that may arise from this analysis, and will develop a set of initial questions to be asked of the Candidate during the interview. The Presenter will be the only Committee member to receive the Candidate’s academic transcripts, when submitted.

In the days before the Interview Meeting, at the suggestion of the Presenter, the Committee may review any video or audio materials that were included by the Candidate as part of her/his submitted materials.

On the day of the Interview Meeting:

About forty minutes to an hour before the scheduled interview, the Presenter will “present” the Candidate to the Committee, identifying any issues that may have been raised in the Presenter’s review of the materials and transcripts. The Committee will begin discussion of the Candidate, based on the submitted materials, and the Presenter’s review and analysis. They will review the Presenter’s suggested questions and will begin to formulate any additional questions based on the Candidate’s submitted materials that they would like to ask the Candidate during the interview meeting.

The Candidate should plan on arriving in the Candidate waiting area at least 15 minutes before the designated meeting time. It can be helpful for the Candidate to bring a supportive friend or colleague to help ease the anxiety of waiting, and to be present at the end of the experience, especially if the outcome is other than what had been anticipated. Soon after the candidate arrives the Presenter will greet the Candidate where s/he is waiting in the designated waiting area. The Presenter will also collect any special objects that the candidate would like to have put on the “altar”.

Unless the Candidate is a Master Level candidate giving a ½ half hour presentation that had been previously approved by the RECC followed by ½ hour of evaluative questions, the candidate will give a question to the Presenter that the Candidate would like the Committee to ask her/him. The question might relate to some information or knowledge that the Candidate would want the Committee to know about her/him. This will be the first question asked of the Candidate. It is meant to help put the Candidate at ease, engage the Candidate in the process, and set a positive tone for the interview.

The Presenter will return to the meeting space. Any first question given by the candidate will be shared with the Committee and integrated into the discussion. The Committee Chair will then determine in what order the questions based on the candidate’s submitted materials will be asked, and who will ask them. The Credentialed Observer may also participate in this process.

The RE & Music Leadership Credentialing Director will greet the Candidate in the waiting area, ask who the Candidate would like to light the chalice and if there are any other needs for the worship and the interview, and lead the Candidate to the Interview room.

The Interview Meeting Format

For the Credentialed Religious Educator Candidate, the RECC will meet with the Candidate for an approximately one-hour interview meeting; For the Credentialed Religious Educator, Master Level Candidate, the RECC will meet with the Candidate for an approximately sixty minute interview meeting, or a thirty minute presentation and thirty minute interview period (if that option is chosen).

When the Candidate enters the meeting room, a UUA Staff-member will offer to take any coat or bundles that the Candidate may be carrying. The Committee and Credentialed Observer will be seated in a semi-circle facing a podium and a small “altar” table with a chalice and flowers and a chair for the Candidate (for the question and answer period.) The Candidate may use the podium for the element of worship and the presentation. In most cases the Presenter will have added any of the Candidate’s personal worship objects to the table before the Candidate enters the meeting room. The Candidate will notice that there is a UUA Staff-member off to the side at a laptop computer. This staff-member will

be recording the questions asked of the Candidate, as well as any formal motions made by the Committee during its deliberations. The Candidate's answers will not be recorded.

The Committee members and the Credentialed Observer will rise as the Candidate is introduced to them. The Candidate will be invited to greet each Committee member and the Credentialed Observer individually as she/he introduces her or himself. The Candidate will then be led to the podium.

All Candidates will plan and conduct a brief worship service involving the RECC. At the beginning of the worship, indicate whether the worship is intended for children, youth, or a multi-generational setting. Your worship should have an arc such that it has a beginning, middle, and end. The worship should be 8 to 10 minutes. Please bring with you all items you will need for worship.

The Candidate will give a presentation:

- Credentialed Religious Educator Candidates (non-tenure track) will give an 8 - 10 minute presentation on some aspect of their Religious Education Credentialing Portfolio.
- Credentialed Religious Educator Candidates (tenure track) will give an 8 - 10 minute presentation on a topic that has been previously approved by the RECC.
- If the Credentialed Religious Educator, Master Level Candidate has chosen a competency-based evaluative interview (or if the candidate has chosen to follow the previous program plan), the candidate will give an 8-10 minute presentation on some aspect of religious leadership.
- If the Credentialed Religious Educator, Master Level Candidate has chosen an extended presentation plus evaluative questions, the candidate will give a 27-30 minute presentation on a topic that has been previously approved by the RECC. During the presentation, the RECC may take notes on questions that have been elicited by the extended presentation.

The presentation need not be exclusively verbal, but a significant portion of it must demonstrate the candidate's oral communication skills.

The Presenter will ask the Candidate the Candidate's question where one has been provided. Concise, "to-the-point" answers to this and all other questions are appreciated. Overly long or rambling answers will work against the Candidate.

The Committee members will ask the Candidate the Committee's previously prepared questions formulated from the Candidate's completion materials, indicating who will be asking the next question. For the Master Level Candidates who have chosen the extended presentation plus evaluative interview option, the Committee members then will ask any questions elicited by the extended presentation.

The following are examples of the types of competency based questions that may be asked:

Master Level

- What is your understanding of how oppression works as a system, and how do you address oppression as a system in your work as a religious educator?
- Using Fowler's stages of faith development as a framework, share with us your understanding of how faith develops over time, and how do you apply that in designing your RE program?
- Name, and then compare and contrast, three RE models found at any time throughout the history of UU religious education; which one are you aligned with, and how does it inform your work?
- If you were going to develop a curriculum for 4th graders to compare and contrast the Jewish & Christian scriptures, what points would you be sure got lifted up for the kids, and what would be some of the ways you would help them learn about them?
- What are the three most important elements of a safe congregation policy, and why are they the key elements?
- Choose a liberal theology, such as process theology or liberation theology, and tell us about its concepts and its values. How might it or another liberal theology be relevant to current RE programs?
- Articulate some strengths and weaknesses of UU Polity.
- Using a systems lens, talk about the changes that occur during a period of rapid congregational growth, and about how those changes will need to be managed by the congregation's leadership. Contrast that with a period of congregational decline.
- Describe an experience of conflict within a congregation that you have been involved in, what you learned from it, and what you might do differently in a similar situation to prevent that conflict from happening?
- Give an example of how you would integrate one of the six components of youth programming into an RE program for youth.
- How would you assess the feasibility of weekly multigenerational worship in a particular congregation, and, if you felt it was appropriate, how might you approach making that happen in the congregation?
- How would you use your knowledge of human development to involve children and youth in an ongoing process of stewardship?
- You have a class of 10 yr olds; pick a male UU historic figure and create a lesson plan for them using some format other than Spirit Play.

Credentialed Level

- What rituals and ceremonies are important to faith development and why?
- Identify one critical event in the history of Unitarianism in America, and one in Universalist history in America, and one in UU history and talk about why these made an impact on you.
- Where are you in your personal understanding of anti-racism work, where is your congregation, and what are you doing to get the congregation to where you are?
- Do you or the RE Committee set specific goals and desired outcomes for the RE program? If so, what are some examples of such goals? How do you evaluate results against those goals?
- What teaching strategies or teaching methods would you use in a religious education class to balance the need to impart information with the need to be different from an academic program?
- Regarding Essex Conversations, what would you say are the three vital components of RE in Essex Conversations, and if those aren't your three vital components, then what would those be for you?
- What would you say are the keys to staying in right relationship?
- Tell us 3 things that you know about UU polity.
- What is your relationship with the RE Committee in setting agendas, priorities, and distribution of workload?
- Describe the characteristics of a 10 year old and how would you support their Faith Development?
- Tell us about a religious educator who influenced your religious education philosophy, and give us examples of how that is reflected in your program?
- How do you talk with your youth about ways to engage in conversation with peers who have a traditional Christian background?
- How would you present the curriculum Holidays and Holy Days?
- Choose two developmentally appropriate activities to explore UU Identity one for early elementary and one for teenagers.
- What is primary role of the DRE in volunteer management?
- How do you lead teachers through a teacher training?
- How might you go about building community in a youth group?

The Candidate and Committee will take a quiet moment together midway through the meeting.

After all questions are asked, the Candidate will be thanked. The Candidate will be led back to the waiting area to wait while the Committee deliberates on the interview meeting and its evaluation of the Candidate. The deliberation may take as long as thirty minutes to an hour, or even longer.

When the Committee has finished its deliberations, the Candidate will be led back to the meeting. The Presenter will inform the Candidate if s/he has been granted the Religious Education Credentialing status sought (please see Note.) The Candidate will then be excused from the meeting and led back to the waiting area.

Note: In the event that the status has not been granted, the Candidate may request to resubmit amended materials that address deficiencies. The Candidate may also request a different level of credentialing. This may or may not require a return visit to the committee. The candidate may also be discouraged from requesting further consideration. In all cases, the request for further consideration may or may not be granted.

Strategies for Success

Seeing the RECC is an evaluative meeting and can be a pressure filled situation. The following are strongly recommended:

- Before the RECC interview, hold one or more “mock” or simulated interviews with trusted colleagues. This group may include a minister, other RE people, district RE consultant, and lay people. It would be especially helpful to include someone who has been through the credentialing process. Practice speaking (planned and extemporaneous) and answering questions under pressure, including articulating your accomplishments and beliefs in a coherent and efficient way. **The practice of having questions given to a candidate and the opportunity for a candidate to practice articulating responses can be invaluable.**
- Time your presentations, including worship, and make sure they fall within the stated guidelines.
- Communicate any particular needs you might have for the interview to the RE Credentialing office well before the time of the interview.
- Dress appropriately for a professional occasion.
- Arrive to the interview on time; if possible, bring a supportive friend or colleague to wait with you.
- Make sure you are familiar with all your completion materials.
- Remember to bring any worship materials you would like to have placed on the altar.
- Focus on being centered, grounded, and articulate. Be confident in your professional religious education leadership abilities.