

MFC Rule Change Recommendations to the UUA Board

January 2022

As a committee of the Board, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee is recommending three rule changes detailed below. [Current MFC Rules and Policies](#)

1. Rule 11 General Qualifications: Change definition of potential sponsor from “member society” to “UUA member congregation or UUA recognized Covenanting Community”

CURRENT TEXT:

Rule 11. General Qualifications

All candidates must have satisfactorily completed all educational and skill training programs and demonstrate the qualities, skills and aptitude required for Unitarian Universalist ministry as determined by the MFC. Those qualifications and requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- satisfactory completion of an approved clinical pastoral education (CPE) program and an internship (as described in Rule 12, “Internships”), or the equivalent;
- have completed the required reading;
- have undergone an approved career assessment program;
- be able to demonstrate an understanding of and experience with UU congregational life based on at least two years’ active involvement or equivalent;
- must demonstrate a strong motivation for our ministry;
- must be sponsored by a member society;
- and must demonstrate a balanced and healthy personality, a capacity for self-understanding, a concern for others, and ministerial leadership skills.

The Committee will further require that the candidate be well informed on the history and development of Unitarianism and Universalism, familiar with the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and fully committed to the purpose, objectives and guidelines of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers’ Association. A candidate for the Ministry shall also have a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent from a theological school approved by the Committee, or have had an equivalent educational experience. Any exceptions to these qualifications must be approved by the MFC.

The MFC retains the right to request and consider any and all information it deems relevant in making its determination regarding whether to accept or reject a candidate.

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE: As part of our work in widening the path to ministry, we would like to open the rights and responsibilities of sponsoring candidates for the ministry to a wider group of organizations beyond congregations. It is our hope that community organizations and those representing particular identity groups such as BLUU, TRUUST, Equal Access or others could sponsor candidates. There is not a

single category of affiliation that would include all organizations connected to Unitarian Universalism and provide the necessary covenantal relationship, but we feel that those organizations open to becoming UUA Covenanting Communities could be offered the opportunity to act as sponsors. A list of Covenanting Communities is maintained by regional staff. In addition to adding Covenanting Communities we propose changing the words “member society” to “UUA member congregation” for consistency with other rules and policies.

PROPOSED CHANGE:

Rule 11. General Qualifications

All candidates must have satisfactorily completed all educational and skill training programs and demonstrate the qualities, skills and aptitude required for Unitarian Universalist ministry as determined by the MFC. Those qualifications and requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- satisfactory completion of an approved clinical pastoral education (CPE) program and an internship (as described in Rule 12, “Internships”), or the equivalent;
- have completed the required reading;
- have undergone an approved career assessment program;
- be able to demonstrate an understanding of and experience with UU congregational life based on at least two years’ active involvement or equivalent;
- must demonstrate a strong motivation for our ministry;
- must be sponsored by a ~~member society~~ **UUA member congregation or a UUA recognized covenanting community**;
- and must demonstrate a balanced and healthy personality, a capacity for self-understanding, a concern for others, and ministerial leadership skills.

The Committee will further require that the candidate be well informed on the history and development of Unitarianism and Universalism, familiar with the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and fully committed to the purpose, objectives and guidelines of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers’ Association. A candidate for the Ministry shall also have a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent from a theological school approved by the Committee, or have had an equivalent educational experience. Any exceptions to these qualifications must be approved by the MFC.

The MFC retains the right to request and consider any and all information it deems relevant in making its determination regarding whether to accept or reject a candidate.

2. Change to Rule 12 Internships: Change requirements for one- and two-year internships to be consistent and require that internship supervisors are members of the UUMA

CURRENT TEXT:

All Candidates are required to complete satisfactorily a full-time or part time supervised internship. Full-time internships must be for at least nine months. Part-time internships

extend over a total of 18 months at a minimum of 20 hours per week. Supervision will be provided by a minister in Full Fellowship. Equivalent experience, e.g., fieldwork placements or supervised ministries, may be considered on a case by case basis.

Part A. Amend total internship hours to be consistent at 1,000 hours

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE A: The Internship Manual currently requires 1440 hours for those who pursue a one-year full-time internship and 1080 hours for two-year part-time. Both exceed what most other denominations require. We propose this change for clarity and to provide consistency in one- and two-year internships.

Part B. Require that internship supervisors are UUMA members

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE B: We want to ensure that supervising ministers are not only in full fellowship but also in covenantal relationship with the UUMA, accountable to the UUMA's code of ethics.

PROPOSED CHANGE for Parts A and B:

AMEND RULE 12. Internships

All Candidates are required to complete satisfactorily a full-time or part time supervised internship. **Interns must complete at least 1,000 hours over one to two full congregational years.**(2A) ~~Full time internships must be for at least nine months. Part time internships extend over a total of 18 months at a minimum of 20 hours per week. Supervision will be provided by a minister who is in Full Fellowship~~ **and a member of the UUMA.**(2B) Equivalent experience, e.g., fieldwork placements or supervised ministries, may be considered on a case by case basis.

3. Rule 18A Three-Year Rule

CURRENT TEXT:

A minister is not eligible for settlement in a congregation for at least three years following previous engagement in a professional capacity in that congregation. This includes but is not limited to interns, field-education students, interims, contract ministers, Ministerial Settlement Representatives, religious educators, etc. Waivers may be granted by application to the MFC.

Part A: Clarify “settlement” as any paid professional work

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE A: We propose this change for clarification. The intent of this rule was to prohibit congregations from retaining ministers who had recently served in a variety of capacities. Historically, this sort of insider candidate or succession planning served as a roadblock to ministers with marginalized identities. This rule is one effort to open those positions to all qualified candidates. However, the term “settlement” implies only called ministerial positions while the intention is to address employment in a

wider sense. We have seen an increasing confusion over the meaning and intent of this rule. We believe this wording brings the rule closer to the intent. Note that the Ministerial Settlement Rep role was removed from the list as this position no longer exists.

Part B: Add UUA Covenanting Communities

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE B: For consistency with the proposed change to Rule 11 (above) which would offer sponsorship of candidates to Covenanting Communities. We feel that including Covenanting Communities in the privilege of sponsoring candidates for the ministry also requires that they abide by responsible hiring practices.

PROPOSED CHANGE for Parts A and B:

Rule 18A. Three-Year Rule

A minister is not eligible ~~for settlement~~ to serve in a professional paid role in a congregation ~~or other UUA recognized covenanting community~~ for at least three years following previous engagement in a professional capacity in that congregation. This includes but is not limited to interns, field-education students, interims ministers, contract ministers, ~~Ministerial Settlement Representatives~~, religious educators, etc. Waivers may be granted by application to the MFC.