



Ministerial Recognition Rules

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PREFACE

THE PURPOSE OF THESE RULES

Baptists have always searched for ways to express their relationships in Christ, more recently adopting a covenantal understanding of the relationship between ministers and the Baptist Union of Great Britain through accreditation. Those who are accredited by the Baptist Union have tested their call by God to ministry in the church through submitting that conviction to the wisdom of the wider church. They have been formed in character, understanding and life to the extent that the Baptist Union can commend them to its churches. They have entered into a covenant with the Baptist Union to live in conformity with the way of life this high calling demands and to receive from the Union such support, recognition and trust as befits those who serve Christ in this way. Accordingly, their names are included in the *Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers*. This covenantal understanding is one of mutual submission to one another as sisters and brothers in Christ (Ephesians 5:21), seeking to serve Christ through ministry in church and world (2 Timothy 4:1-2, 5) in ways that faithfully embody the gospel of Jesus Christ. These rules set out the way in which such women and men are recognised, enrolled, and, where necessity requires, removed from the Register in order to maintain its integrity. All is pursued in order to deepen the life and extend the ministry of the churches, Associations and Colleges of the Union, to the glory of Jesus Christ and the building of his Kingdom.

THE NAMES ON THE REGISTER

Included on the Register are the names of those who are Accredited Ministers. This includes those who are still serving their probationary period. The names are placed there by the Council of the Baptist Union acting through its Ministerial Recognition Committee. All enrolments and removals are made by the Ministerial Recognition Committee. The criteria for including a Minister in Category 4 are set out in Appendix 1. This appendix is not part of the Rules, and may be varied by the Committee.

ENROLMENTS

The qualifications in terms of office and the circumstances in which people serve, are set out in Rule 3. The move from being a Newly Accredited Minister to becoming fully accredited is explained in Rule 5. Arrangements for transferring between categories are set out in Rule 6.

REMOVAL OF NAMES

Names can be removed from the Register for a number of reasons and the way in which this is dealt with is explained in Rule 7 and Appendices 2, 3 and 4. The careful steps required when this is initiated by the Baptist Union are made clear. Appendix 2 sets out some guidelines relating to capability. Appendix 3 sets out the Disciplinary Procedures for Accredited Ministers. Appendix 4 relates to safeguarding and risk assessments relating to an Accredited Minister's suitability to work with children, young people and / or adults at risk.

CLARITY OF PURPOSE

The hope is that these Rules are clear and that they express one part of the relationship in which Ministers serve with churches for the glory of our God.

THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN
MINISTERIAL RECOGNITION COMMITTEE

MINISTERIAL RECOGNITION RULES

RELATING TO

**THE REGISTER OF NATIONALLY
ACCREDITED MINISTERS**

Adopted by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain
on 24 October 2024

These Rules incorporate and supersede the previously adopted rules.
Correspondence relating to them should be addressed to the
Ministries Team Leader.

Baptist House
129 Broadway
Didcot
Oxfordshire

1 PREAMBLE

The purposes of the Rules are:

- to encourage candidates for the Baptist ministry to fit themselves for their vocation by means of suitable courses of study and learning, undertaken whenever possible in a Baptist College recognised by the Baptist Union;
- to award to those Ministers who have so fitted themselves and whose qualifications and spheres of service are approved, the recognition of the Baptist Union and to commend them to the churches;
- to encourage Ministers by all possible means to honour the ministry and to lay upon them the disciplinary ideals of their calling;
- to enable the Ministerial Recognition Committee to take action in cases when behaviour is contrary to that expected of Accredited Ministers;
- to facilitate ministerial settlement, and
- to meet the requirements of Denominational Schemes, Funds and Trusts.

2 DEFINITIONS

In these Rules the expressions noted below have the meanings assigned to them unless the context otherwise requires.

Association means an Association of churches (“Regional Association” “Regional Team”) in membership with the Union

Baptist Church means a church or group of churches in membership with the Union and/or an Association

Baptist Union of Great Britain means the charitable incorporated organisation registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales under charity number 1181392 (“the Union”, “the Baptist Union”, “BUGB”)

College (s) means a Baptist College in membership with the Union

Committee means the Ministerial Recognition Committee of Council (“the MRC”) given authority to manage and administer the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers and all matters concerning the relationship of Ministers to the Union or any sub-Committee appointed by the Committee for a particular purpose

Council means The Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Covenanted means the person and the Union are committed to support each other in expressions of Baptist faith and practice in a consistent fellowship

Criteria for unsuitability means the criteria for unsuitability for working with children, young people and/or adults at risk adopted by Council

Declaration of Principle means the Declaration of Principle contained in the Constitution of the Union

Ecumenical partnership means a partnership of churches of different traditions including for example Baptists in membership with Churches Together in England or Cytun (Churches Together in Wales)

Minister means an individual called by God to Christian ministry and accepted into Covenanted relationship with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and governed by these Rules

National Safeguarding Team means the specialist team of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Newly Accredited Minister means a Minister enrolled for the first time in Category 1, 2 or 3 in accordance with the procedures agreed by the Committee

Qualifying Office means service in any of Categories 1, 2 or 3 of ministry as defined by the Rules

Regional Minister means a Minister who is part of a Regional Team appointed by an Association.

Register means the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers established by the Rules

Rules means the Ministerial Recognition Rules set out in this document

Special Vote means a vote of at least two thirds of the members of the Committee who are present and voting at the meeting at which the Special Vote is taken¹

Trustees means the Trustees of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

3 THE REGISTER

The Register shall have five categories and Ministers shall be enrolled in only one category. A Minister placed on the Register for the first time shall be enrolled as a Newly Accredited Minister unless this requirement is waived by Special Vote.

The categories within the Register:

Category 1 shall comprise:

Ministers

It shall be divided into sub categories as follows:

- 1.1 Ministers of Baptist Churches, including those serving as children, youth and families ministers.
- 1.2 Ministers serving as chaplains with the approval of the Committee

¹ For an MRC to be quorate BUGB custom and practice requires 50% of the members of the Committee to be present, and for a Special Vote, 66% of those present at the meeting voting in favour constitutes approval of a decision.

- 1.3 Ministers serving as pioneers or evangelists
- 1.4 Ministers serving in ministerial appointments of the Union, the Associations and the Colleges
- 1.5 Ministers serving the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS – World Mission) in ministerial appointments on its home staff or overseas assignments
- 1.6 Ministers serving with international Baptist Networks associated with the Baptist World Alliance
- 1.7 Ministers serving in other appropriate ministries, with the approval of the Committee
- 1.8 Ministers serving in Ecumenical Partnerships

Category 2 shall comprise:

Youth Specialist Ministers. (Closed to new enrolments who are not already in process – October 2018)

Category 3 shall comprise:

Evangelists (Closed to new enrolments who are not already in process – October 2018)

Category 4 shall comprise:

Ministers not serving in Categories 1, 2 and 3 but whose names are retained on the Register on terms agreed by the Committee

Category 5 shall comprise:

Ministers who retired while serving in any other Category

4 ENROLMENT ON THE REGISTER

- 4.1** All Ministers who at the date of the adoption of these rules were on the Accredited List of Ministers of the Baptist Union of Great Britain shall be enrolled in the appropriate Category.
- 4.2** All applications for enrolment on the Register in any category shall be determined by the Committee by Special Vote.
- 4.3** All Ministers on the Register must accept the Declaration of Principle.
- 4.4** All Ministers on the Register undertaking regulated activity must have an enhanced disclosure issued by the Disclosure and Barring Service, or its appointed agent, stating that the Minister is not unsuitable for work with children or young people and with adults at risk and shall undertake to renew that disclosure on taking up each new appointment and at such regular intervals as the Committee shall determine. All Ministers must also have appropriate training in Safeguarding,

which is renewed at regular intervals. The training requirements will be determined by the Committee.

4.5 All Ministers on the Register in categories 1-4 must undertake all mandatory training that is set by the Committee from time to time.

4.6 A Minister shall not be enrolled on the Register unless:

4.6.1 the Minister is a baptised member of a Baptist Church; or a baptised member of an Urban Expression team.

4.6.2 normally the Minister is at least twenty-one years of age at the date of enrolment, and

4.6.3 the Minister has received and accepted a call to serve in category 1 with the exception of 1.7

4.6.4 the Minister has achieved the appropriate minimum theological qualification

5 TRANSFER FROM PROBATIONARY TO FULLY ACCREDITED STATUS

5.1 In all categories the probationary status will be removed when the Minister has satisfied the Committee that all aspects of the probationary requirements specified by the Committee have been completed satisfactorily.

6 TRANSFER BETWEEN CATEGORIES

6.1 All transfers between Categories shall be subject to the approval of the Committee by Special Vote and the Committee may impose conditions for such transfers.

6.2 Transfer to Category 5 shall be noted by the Committee it being understood that the covenantal nature of the list pertains to this category.

7 REMOVAL OF NAMES

7.1 The name of a Minister shall be removed from the Register if any of the following circumstances are found to exist:

- The Minister no longer accepts the Declaration of Principle or is found in clear breach of it.
- The Minister fails or refuses to renew a Disclosure and Barring Service Enhanced Disclosure as required by the Committee.
- The Minister fails or refuses to undertake safeguarding training or other mandatory training required by the Committee.
- The Minister ceases to serve in a Qualifying Office.

- The Minister, in the opinion of the Committee, has failed to demonstrate adequate covenantal relationship with the Union.
- In the opinion of the Committee, it is not appropriate for the Minister to be transferred to or remain in Category 4.

Before removing the Minister's name for any of the reasons set out in Rule 7.1, the Committee shall normally give the Minister an opportunity to make representations in writing to the Committee. Upon written notice being given to the Minister, the Minister shall have fourteen days in which to respond and provide such written representations or decline to do so. Failure to respond within the fourteen day period will be taken to mean that the Minister does not intend to make written representations and has accepted the removal of their name from the Register.

7.2 Other grounds for removal are:

- The Minister has asked for their name to be removed from the Register.
- The Minister has not completed the Newly Accredited Minister Programme to the satisfaction of either their Association Ministerial Recognition Committee or the Committee.
- The Minister has been found to lack sufficient capability to be able to commend them to churches as provided for in Appendix 2.
- The Minister has been found to have engaged in gross misconduct or conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, by a subcommittee of the Committee as provided for in Appendix 3.
- Following a safeguarding risk assessment undertaken by the National Safeguarding Team, the Minister is found not to be suitable for working with either children and young people or adults at risk, or both as provided for in Appendix 4.

If a Minister is removed from the Register under any of the processes set out in Appendices 2, 3 and 4, the Minister shall have a right to make such representations as described in the relevant appendix.

8 REINSTATEMENT ON THE REGISTER

8.1 The Committee shall determine all applications for reinstatement on the Register in any category by a special vote.

8.1.1 The Minister must accept the Declaration of Principle and meet the requirements laid out in section 4 above, regarding safeguarding and DBS disclosures.

8.1.2 The circumstances that led to removal from the Register will determine the process to be followed.

8.1.3 A Minister who left in good standing and is now seeking to be reinstated may be interviewed by the Association MRC, (or a subcommittee), for the Region where they are living; who will make a recommendation to the national MRC.

- 8.1.4** A Minister whose name was removed for gross misconduct or conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, or who resigned part way through an investigation, or where there were questions over their suitability for ministry will need to attend a reinstatement sub-committee of the national MRC. (Where there is a question over the appropriate route this should be raised with the Ministries Team Leader, or their deputy, who with the Moderator of the MRC will determine which committee should consider their application)
- 8.1.5** The Minister will have the right to be accompanied by a Minister or another person during a reinstatement sub-committee meeting. This includes, where appropriate, a Trade Union representative, but excludes legal representation.
- 8.1.6** The reinstatement sub-committee will have access to all relevant information held within the Minister's file, so that they can be as aware as possible of the concerns and circumstances which led to the Minister being removed / resigning. If there are subsequent concerns which are known about by the Ministries Team / Regional Teams which would be relevant to the decision to reinstate these will also be made available.
- 8.1.7** If the Minister was removed due to a safeguarding issue, the National Safeguarding Team will provide the sub-committee with a report and recommendation. On occasion in order to produce this recommendation an independent safeguarding panel may be convened, or an independent risk assessment may be commissioned at the applicant's expense. An expert with relevant safeguarding experience must be part of the sub-committee in these circumstances.
- 8.1.8** The sub-committee must be satisfied that all the requirements of the disciplinary process have been met, and that there are no ongoing causes for concern.
- 8.1.9** The decision to reinstate should only be made if the sub-committee are clear that in their opinion the individual is once again someone who is suitable to be commended to the churches for ministry. A decision can be deferred to a later occasion if further clarification or work is required first.
- 8.1.10** The Committee will determine the normal time required before an individual who has been turned down for re-instatement can re-apply.

9 EXCEPTIONAL CASES

The Committee may:

- In any exceptional case vary, extend, or give exemption from the operation of the Rules by Special Vote, provided always that in exercising their discretion the Committee will abide by the Union's safeguarding policies.
- Make special arrangements with the Baptist Unions of Scotland and Wales as regards ministers recommended by these Unions.

10 ALTERATION OF THE RULES

No amendment or alteration of the Rules shall take effect unless approved by a resolution of the Council passed by the vote of at least two thirds of the members of the Council present and voting and approved by the Trustees.

APPENDIX 1

CRITERIA TO BE APPLIED WHEN A MINISTER WISHES TO BE LISTED ON THE REGISTER IN CATEGORY 1 SUB-CATEGORY 1.7 AND CATEGORY 4

- 1 **Category 1 Sub-category 1.7, Portfolio Ministry**, allows Ministers to serve in other appropriate ministries with the approval of the Committee. This will apply to Ministers who are engaging in ministry, but there is not a suitable organisation to second them to. This could include being a spiritual director, a pastoral supervisor, engaging in a portfolio of ministries....
 - 1.1 Before granting approval the Ministerial Recognition Committee shall ascertain that:
 - 1.1.1 normally, the Minister has completed satisfactorily the required period of probationary service in a Qualifying Office;
 - 1.1.2 normally, the Minister is in active membership of a Baptist Church in membership with the Union and tells the Ministries Team which church this is.
 - 1.1.3 normally, the Minister can show evidence of covenantal relationship with the Union, in the following ways:
 - Service towards Baptist congregations or Baptist ministers;
 - Ongoing relationship with their Association;
 - Attendance at Baptist events;
 - Extending the cause of Baptists Together in an intentional and explicit manner;
 - 1.1.4 the Minister is practising the five CMD habits outlined in the Baptists Together CMD framework.
 - 1.1.5 the Minister will be fulfilling a ministry that in the opinion of the Committee is a valid expression of a call from God for this season.
 - 1.2 The Committee may give approval for up to five years from the date of the meeting. As an expression of the covenant relationship between the Minister and BUGB, the Committee likes to follow the ministry of each portfolio Minister and so asks each one to submit a mid-term and an end of term report via the Ministries Team. At the end of the five-year period, the Committee may approve an extension for a further five years. There is no upper limit on the number of periods of portfolio ministry, provided that the Minister continues to meet the criteria.
 - 1.3 Having been granted approval the Minister undertakes to inform the Ministries Team of any change of circumstances, address and/or church membership.
- 2 **Category 4.1, Seconded (SEC)**, allows Ministers to be seconded to exercise their accredited Baptist ministry in another organisation e.g. a network of churches, a parachurch organisation, or a charity working in the 3rd sector with 'kingdom' values etc. This could include serving overseas with a suitable organisation.
 - 2.1 Before granting approval the Committee shall ascertain that:
 - 2.1.1 normally, the Minister has completed satisfactorily the required period of probationary service in a Qualifying Office;
 - 2.1.2 normally, the Minister is in active membership of a Baptist Church in membership with the Union and tells the Ministries Team which church this is;

2.1.3 normally, the Minister can show evidence of covenantal relationship with the Union, in the following ways:

- Service towards Baptist congregations or Baptist ministers;
- Ongoing relationship with their Association;
- Attendance at Baptist events;
- Extending the cause of Baptists Together in an intentional and explicit manner;

2.1.4 the Minister is practising the five CMD habits outlined in the Baptists Together CMD framework.

2.1.5 The Minister will be fulfilling a ministry that in the opinion of the Committee is a valid expression of a call from God for this season.

2.2 The Committee will normally give approval for up to five years from the date of the meeting. As an expression of the covenant relationship between the Minister and BUGB, the Committee likes to follow the ministry of each seconded Minister and so asks each one to submit a mid-term and an end of term report via the Ministries Team. At the end of the secondment period, the Committee may approve an extension for a further five-year term. There is no upper limit on the number of secondment terms, provided that the Minister continues to meet the criteria.

2.3 Having been granted approval the Minister undertakes to inform the Ministries Team of any change of circumstances, address and/or church membership as soon as possible.

3 **Category 4.2, Minister Without Portfolio (MWP)**, also allows accredited Ministers to remain on the register while they seek to live out their calling to ministry, but their particular circumstances mean that they are unable to undertake a role which meets the normal criteria for remaining on the register. This is distinct from Leave of Absence which allows a minister time and space to consider their future. The intention is not to simply hold Ministers who are not in qualifying office on the list indefinitely. There must be a positive reason for taking this step and this reason is to be subject to regular review. Examples of possible circumstances could be: enabling an accredited spouse to respond to a call, beginning new pioneering work before a clear role has emerged, undertaking substantial additional training or academic work to enable future ministry, fulfilling significant care duties for a close family member, etc.

3.1 Before granting approval the Ministerial Committee shall ascertain that:

3.1.1 normally, the Minister has completed satisfactorily the required period of probationary service in a Qualifying Office;

3.1.2 normally, the Minister is in active membership of a Baptist Church in membership with the Union and tells the Ministries Team which church this is.

3.1.3 normally, the Minister can show evidence of covenantal relationship with the Union, in the following ways:

- Service towards Baptist congregations or Baptist ministers;
- Ongoing relationship with their Association;
- Attendance at Baptist events;
- Extending the cause of Baptists Together in an intentional and explicit manner;

3.1.4 the Minister is practising the five CMD habits outlined in the Baptists Together CMD framework.

- 3.1.5 the Minister is seeking to live in a way that in the opinion of the Committee is a valid expression of God's call for this season.
- 3.2 The Committee may give approval for up to two years at a time from the date of the meeting. Though there is no necessary maximum number of times approval may be given, Ministers must note that the Committee do not expect a Minister will remain without a portfolio indefinitely.
- 3.3 Having been granted approval the Minister undertakes to inform the Ministries Team of any change of circumstances, address and/or church membership.

4 **Category 4.3 Leave of Absence (LOA)** is a means by which a Minister is held on the Register while not in a Qualifying Office and not actively seeking a new Qualifying Office. LOA is granted to allow a Minister time to recuperate and consider the future direction of their life and ministry.

- 4.1 LOA is granted by the Committee for 1 year initially with provision for it to be extended for a further year. In exceptional circumstances the Committee may extend it for a further year still, but the maximum total period of LOA should not exceed 3 years. LOA is not intended to be used as a way of maintaining a Minister on the Register for the longer term.
- 4.2 Normally the granting and renewing of LOA will require the recommendation of the Minister's Regional Minister who will support them through their period of LOA.

A Minister who has been granted LOA may make written representations to the Committee prior to a renewal decision at the end of years 1 and 2. Upon written notice being given to the Minister, the Minister shall have fourteen days in which to respond and provide such written representations or decline to do so. Failure to respond within the fourteen-day period will be taken to mean that the Minister does not intend to make written representations and has accepted the removal of their name from the Register.

- 4.3 During LOA a Minister is not required to be in membership of a Baptist Church in order to remain accredited.

5 **Category 4.4 Out of Pastorate (OOP)** allows a Minister who is no longer in a Qualifying Office to remain accredited while they are actively seeking a new position either through the Baptist Together Settlement Process or through applying for roles that would be deemed to be a Qualifying Office advertised in other ways.

- 5.1 A Minister is automatically allowed an initial period of 2 years OOP as long as they are actively seeking a new Qualifying Office.
- 5.2 After 2 years the Ministries Team Leader and the appropriate Regional Team Leader will meet with the Minister and may recommend to the Committee extending OOP for a maximum of 2 further years.

If they decide not to recommend extending OOP, the Minister may make representation to the Committee in writing. Upon written notice being given to the Minister, the Minister shall have fourteen days in which to respond and provide such written representations or decline to do so. Failure to respond within the fourteen day period will be taken to mean that the Minister does not intend to make written representations and has accepted the removal of their name from the Register

- 6 These criteria are not part of the Rules and may be varied as determined from time to time by the Committee.

APPENDIX 2

CAPABILITY PROCEDURES

The Union recommends to its churches an appraisal and capability procedure that enables the removal of a Minister on the grounds of incapability or incapacity. This procedure enables a fair process to be enacted that protects Ministers from unjust removal, but also enables churches to dismiss those who prove unable to meet the reasonable requirements of that church for capable ministry and have not been able to remedy such shortcomings or failings after reasonable levels of support over an appropriate time span.

The removal of a Minister from an office as pastor, youth specialist or evangelist on the grounds of incapability may also generate a Ministerial Recognition Capability Hearing to assess whether the loss of confidence expressed by the local church represents a wider concern over the capability of that Minister to offer competent ministry in any context. Such a Hearing may recommend to the Ministerial Recognition Committee that a Minister's name be removed from Categories 1 to 4 in the Register on the grounds of incapability. It may be appropriate to continue to include the Minister's name in category 5 (Retired Ministers) where age allows. This shall not normally be applied below the age of 60. The Minister will have the right to be accompanied by a Minister or another person during a Capability Hearing. This includes, where appropriate, a Trade Union representative, but excludes legal representation. While a Minister may seek legal advice at their own expense during the capability procedures we reserve the right, as the accrediting body for the Minister, to communicate only with the Minister rather than their legal advisor.

Under exceptional circumstances, a Minister's name may be held on the Register following a Capability Hearing's recommendation for removal, where infirmity or permanent ill health renders them incapable of exercising ministry, and where an act of pastoral generosity by the Ministerial Recognition Committee wishes to honour the effective ministry previously offered before the loss of capability was recognised. They will be held in Category 4 for the duration.

If a Minister wishes to appeal against the decision of the Committee to remove their name from the Register on the grounds of incapability or incapacity, they must submit their appeal within 14 days of receiving the letter informing them of the Committee's decision.

The appeal shall be heard by a sub-group of the Ministerial Recognition Committee appointed for that purpose by the Moderator of the Committee in consultation with the Ministries Team Leader or their deputy. The findings of that sub-committee shall be final.

A Minister whose name has been so removed may seek re-instatement onto the Register upon demonstration of a recovery of their ability to offer capable ministry after a minimum of 5 years has passed since their removal. A Re-instatement Sub-Committee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee shall be appointed to hear such an appeal and make its recommendations to the full Committee.

APPENDIX 3

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR ACCREDITED MINISTERS

1. Purposes and Scope

- 1.1 All Ministers are encouraged to live out their call from God in consistent patterns of conduct and appropriate professionalism. These procedures concern those who fall short of these high standards. Depending upon the context of their current appointment other disciplinary procedures may apply; this Appendix relates to the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers. The aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all.
- 1.2 This procedure is not to be used in relation to capability issues (where Appendix 2 would apply) and is separate from the risk assessment process set out in Appendix 4 which relate to a Minister's suitability to work with children, young people and / or adults at risk. For the sake of clarity, the conclusion of a disciplinary process under this Appendix 3 does not preclude the Baptist Union from undertaking a risk assessment under Appendix 4 to assess a Minister's suitability to work with children, young people and / or adults at risk where the circumstances of the disciplinary investigation demand it.
- 1.3 The procedures apply to the Ministries Team's processes, dealing with a Minister's accreditation whether a Minister is an office holder in a church or organisation or employed in a seconded ministry or retired or otherwise whose name is on the Register. There are separate procedures recommended to be applied to the Minister's relationship with the church in which office is held.
- 1.4 The procedures cannot cover every eventuality and the Baptist Union reserves the right to alter the process where appropriate depending on the circumstances of any particular case.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The disciplinary process is initiated when:
 - A formal written and signed complaint is received, or
 - A Regional Team Leader or College Principal raises serious concerns regarding conduct that would be at least serious fault with the Ministries Team Leader, or
 - A serious concern is raised with the Ministries Team Leader by the National Safeguarding Team, a statutory authority or another professional person with relevant information (counsellor, etc)
- 2.2 Formal complaints will normally only be considered from an individual directly affected by the actions of the Minister. Gossip, rumour, hearsay, and unevidenced anonymous accusations should be dismissed.
- 2.3 No disciplinary action will be taken against a Minister until the case has been fully investigated. However, if a Minister makes a self-disclosure to a Regional Minister or the Ministries Team Leader the issue of discipline may be considered without the need for a full investigation.(see 3.11)
- 2.4 The Minister will be advised of the nature of the complaint against him or her and will be given the opportunity to state their case before any disciplinary decision is made.

- 2.5 The Minister will have the right to be accompanied by a Minister or another person during an investigation interview or a disciplinary hearing. This includes, where appropriate, a Trade Union representative, but excludes legal representation. While a Minister may seek legal advice at their own expense during the investigation and disciplinary process, including the appeals stage, as the accrediting body for the Minister, we will normally only communicate with the Minister rather than their legal advisor.
- 2.6 No Minister will be removed for a first breach of discipline except in cases of gross misconduct or conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, when the penalty will be removal from the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers.
- 2.7 A Minister will have the right to appeal against any disciplinary action imposed.
- 2.8 The complainant has no right of appeal against the decision of the Committee or its representatives.
- 2.9 The procedure may be implemented at any stage if the alleged misconduct warrants such action.

At all stages, it is important to ensure that information is only given to those who need to know, and that those involved realise the need for confidentiality. Breach of confidentiality could undermine both the processes and the Minister involved.

3. Processes and Investigations

- 3.1 The purpose of an investigation is for the Baptist Union to establish a fair and balanced view of the facts relating to any disciplinary allegations against a Minister, before deciding whether to proceed with a hearing. The amount of investigation required will depend on the nature of the allegations and will vary from case to case. It may involve interviewing and taking statements from the complainant(s), the Minister and any witnesses and collating relevant documentation.
- 3.2 An investigation into complaints of serious fault, conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, or gross misconduct will usually be led by an investigator reporting to the Ministries Team Leader.
- 3.3 The person appointed to investigate, will consider with the Ministries Team Leader, or their deputy, whether the Minister concerned needs to be suspended from the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers at the outset and during the course of the investigation. The decision to suspend will be taken by the Ministries Team Leader and reported to the Moderator.
- 3.4 Suspension should not be a “kneejerk” reaction to allegations and consideration should be given as to whether the Minister can remain on the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers during the course of any investigation. Those considering suspension should weigh up the risks involved in the person continuing on the Register during the investigation.
- 3.5 Suspension from the Register will not automatically lead to a suspension from the office held by the Minister. Suspension from office would be a decision for the Church Trustees, usually guided by the appropriate Regional Minister.
- 3.6 The investigator will write a report of their investigations and findings (“the Report”) and send it to the Ministries Team Leader.

- 3.7 If the person investigating concludes that a prima facie case has been made which suggests that a serious fault, conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, or gross misconduct may have taken place, the Ministries Team Leader will normally determine whether the Minister is given the opportunity to consider accepting the investigator's preliminary finding. The Ministries Team Leader can at their discretion refer the case to a disciplinary hearing before a sub-committee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee rather than giving the Minister the opportunity to consider accepting the preliminary finding.
- 3.8 If a serious fault may have taken place, the Ministries Team Leader will allow the Minister 14 days to consider accepting a serious fault or choose to attend a disciplinary hearing before a sub-committee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee. The Minister will be informed of any appropriate requirements which may be imposed such as supervision or training, as well as the length of time that the finding of serious fault will be active.
- 3.9 If either conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister or gross misconduct may have taken place, the Ministries Team Leader will allow the Minister 14 days to consider accepting the preliminary finding and offer their resignation from the Register, or choose to attend a disciplinary hearing before a sub-committee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee.
- 3.10 Where the Minister does not accept the findings of the Report or fails to follow through on any actions in 3.8 or 3.9 above, they will be invited to a disciplinary hearing before a sub-committee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee. The sub-committee will consider whether serious fault, conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, or gross misconduct has taken place and, if so, the appropriate sanction.
- 3.11 In cases where a Minister makes a self-disclosure to a Regional Minister or the Ministries Team Leader or their deputy, the issue of discipline may be considered without the need for a full investigation. Instead, the matter may be dealt with under 3.7 but with their Regional Minister present. The notes of this meeting will remain on the confidential section of their file. If the Minister does not accept the outcome of that meeting an investigation will take place and normal process will be followed from 3.7. If the Ministries Team Leader deems it necessary, an investigation will be carried out prior to any disciplinary action. If the self-disclosure related to safeguarding concerns, the Ministries Team Leader will consult with the Safeguarding Team Leader as to whether any stage of the safeguarding investigation process, including statutory reporting, is necessary.
- 3.12 If at a later date a formal complaint against a Minister who had been disciplined under 3.11 (without an investigation) is received relating to the same incident, no new disciplinary action will be taken unless there is significant new evidence which would have resulted in more serious disciplinary action being taken. The process to determine if the complaint should be considered will be that the Ministries Team Leader will draw up a report for the Moderator and two other members of the Committee who will determine if an investigation should be undertaken.
- 3.13 If a Minister chooses to resign partway through an investigation then the Ministries Team Leader in consultation with the Moderator will have the discretion to record a decision about future accreditation, which may include presentation of the information at that point to the Committee or consideration by a sub-committee. On an application for reinstatement to the Register, this information would be made available to the reinstatement committee.

4. **Types of Disciplinary Issue**

The conduct expected of Ministers is described in broad terms in the preface to these Rules. Ministers are to live in conformity with the way of life their high calling demands and to embody faithfully the gospel of Jesus Christ. This applies both when they are serving in their capacity as a Minister and when they are away from their work. It applies to their behaviour in both physical and digital or virtual spaces, and in both private and public forums.

4.1 **Minor Fault**

Minor faults will be dealt with by a conversation with either the appropriate Regional Minister or, exceptionally, the Ministries Team Leader or their deputy after an investigation appropriate for the nature of the allegations. If the Ministries Team Leader, or their deputy, conducts the investigation, the conversation may be noted on the Minister's file. The aim is to help the minister become aware of a potential failing and assist them to address their behaviour. If the Minister holds office in a local church, these notes may also be kept by the church, normally in the keeping of the Church Secretary.

Examples of minor faults might include:

- Persistent failure to keep appointments
- Inappropriate response in a conflict situation or loss of temper on more than one occasion
- Use of improper language in public duties

This list is not exhaustive.

There is no right of appeal over a decision to note a minor fault on file as it is not regarded as a disciplinary sanction.

If the fault remains unacknowledged by the Minister and there are further incidents the Minister may be investigated to consider whether their ongoing conduct amounts to serious fault, conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, or gross misconduct.

4.2 **Serious Fault**

While the approach to dealing with minor faults is primarily intended to make a Minister aware of potential issues could lead to more serious consequences, the approach to handling serious faults may also include a reprimand for behaviour that is inappropriate. Normally, for these serious faults, dismissal from post and removal from the Register is not appropriate, and support is to be sought in post to address the behaviours identified.

Examples of serious faults might include:

- Conducting ministry while intoxicated, even if not incapable.
- Disclosure of confidential information received in the pastoral office, except where required to do so under law.
- Use of inappropriate language of a sexual nature with adults.
- Persistent loss of temper.
- The intentional use of discriminatory language.

This list is not exhaustive. Depending on the graveness of the fault, any of the above examples might also amount to conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister or gross misconduct.

Where a serious fault is deemed to have occurred, a letter will be given to the Minister. This will give details of the complaint, the improvement required, any required supervision and training, and the Minister's right to appeal. It will also state the time period during which the Minister's behaviour will be monitored and regularly reviewed. This is typically two years but may be longer. The letter will explain that, if during this period there is a failure to change behaviour or to keep to the requirements of the letter, the Minister will be invited to a hearing before a subcommittee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee. The subcommittee will consider whether, in weighing the evidence on the balance of probabilities, the Minister should be removed from the Register for either conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister or for gross misconduct.

A copy of the letter will be kept by the Union but it will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after the monitoring period is over, subject to satisfactory conduct. If the Minister holds office in a local church, a copy of the letter or an outline of its content will also be kept by the church, normally in the keeping of the Church Secretary.

4.3 Conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister

Conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister is that which may not necessarily be deemed contrary to the standards of wider society, but which is contrary to the expectations for those accredited with the Baptist Union.

Where a subcommittee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee concludes that a Minister's conduct is incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, the Minister will be removed from the Register and the Ministerial Recognition Committee will be informed of their removal. The Minister will be provided with written reasons for their removal, the date on which registration will be terminated and will be informed of their right of appeal.

The names of those Ministers removed from the Register following a finding of conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister will normally not be made public. Similarly, the names of those Ministers who resign from the Register following a preliminary finding of conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, or who resign during an investigation into what could be conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister, will normally not be made public.

The Ministerial Recognition Committee will arbitrate and determine whether the alleged behaviour amounts to conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister. The following are examples of behaviour or practice that would normally be regarded as conduct incompatible with being an Accredited Minister:

- Bringing the cause of the Gospel or the Baptist Union into serious disrepute.
- Deliberate accessing of legal pornography.
- Sexual conduct which is contrary to the agreed beliefs of the Baptist Union, provided it does not also meet the examples of gross misconduct in section 4.4. below. Sexual conduct which is contrary to the agreed beliefs of the Baptist Union specifically includes sexual intercourse and other genital sexual activity outside of marriage (as defined exclusively as between a man and a woman).

- Further examples are given in paragraphs 4.5.1 (note on divorce, separation and remarriage) and 4.5.2 (note on homosexual genital practice) below.

4.4 **Gross Misconduct**

Gross misconduct is conduct that is likely to prejudice seriously the Baptist Union's work and reputation or damage irreparably the trust and confidence placed in the Accredited Minister as one holding a position of trust in society. It denotes behaviour that is not acceptable for those entrusted with the care of others, whether within or beyond the Church.

Where a subcommittee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee concludes that gross misconduct has taken place the Minister will be removed from the Register and the Ministerial Recognition Committee will be informed of their removal. The Minister will be provided with written reasons for their removal, the date on which registration will be terminated and will be informed of their right of appeal.

The Baptist Union will normally add to a published list the name of a person who is removed from the Register for gross misconduct. The decision to publish a name will only be taken after a suitable assessment of the risks of doing so to all parties affected. No Minister's name will be published unless they have either accepted a finding of gross misconduct following a preliminary finding as outlined in paragraph 3.9 above, or a subcommittee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee has found gross misconduct following an investigation. If a Minister resigns during an investigation and the Ministries Team Leader considers that gross misconduct is a possible outcome, the investigation will still be completed and the case referred to a disciplinary hearing before a sub-committee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee.

The Ministerial Recognition Committee will arbitrate and determine whether conduct is gross misconduct. The following are examples of behaviour and practice that would normally be regarded as gross misconduct:

- Conviction or the issuing of a police caution, at any time, in respect of a criminal offence which may affect the reputation of the Baptist Union or its relationships with churches, stakeholders or the general public and/or is considered to be unsuitable for those in a position of trust.
- Sexual misconduct, i.e. actions which are of a sexual nature or are sexually motivated, that are unwanted or non-consensual, or where there is an abuse of the Minister's power or position.
- Violent, abusive or bullying behaviour towards others.
- Domestic abuse, including physical, emotional and mental abuse, financial abuse, coercion and control.
- Fraud, financial impropriety and theft.
- Assisting, encouraging or coercing someone with whom they have pastoral contact to include them as a beneficiary of their will.
- Deliberate grooming of young people or adults at risk with a view to improper conduct.

- Abusive behaviours or actions that breach the safeguarding policies and procedures of the Union or the church/employer and which do not necessitate a separate risk assessment under Appendix 4.
- Harassment (including sexual harassment) or victimisation of, or unlawful discrimination against church staff, ministerial colleagues, church members or attendees, or anyone else who comes into contact with the Minister in their professional capacity.
- Serious breach of confidence.
- Making a disclosure of false or misleading information to others, in bad faith.
- Practice that brings the Baptist Union into serious disrepute.

The list of examples is not exhaustive.

4.5 Notes

- 4.5.1 Divorce, separation and remarriage should not automatically lead to removal from the Register but should be reported to the Ministries Team Leader, or their deputy. Ministers should take note of the fact that the Committee considers a marriage to remain in force until a decree absolute has been granted, and it is not appropriate to begin a new relationship prior to that. Likewise, Ministers should not start a relationship with someone who is still married and has not completed their divorce. Both these contexts would normally be considered to be conduct that is incompatible with being an Accredited Minister. A new relationship can be defined as when a Minister becomes emotionally attached to another individual, in what is becoming an exclusive relationship, which has the potential to move on to marriage or a similar long-term relationship; or which appears to others to be such a relationship.
- 4.5.2 Homosexual orientation (whether male or female) is not of itself a reason for exclusion from ministry, but homosexual genital practice is to be regarded as conduct that is incompatible with being an Accredited Minister. As for all sexual behaviour, if this practice is also coercive or abusive, it might additionally be regarded as gross misconduct.
- 4.5.3 Ministers should note that their online behaviour such as, for example, their social media interaction, is also subject to these Rules. Words and actions online that are improper, inappropriate, discriminatory, abusive and so on will be dealt with as outlined in the rest of this Appendix, or if relevant under Appendix 4.

5. Appeals

- 5.1 Any Minister who wishes to appeal against a disciplinary decision following a disciplinary panel hearing should ensure the Ministries Team Leader has received a request in writing and within 10 days of the outcome of the panel hearing. They then have a further 11 days (21 days from the outcome of the hearing) to submit an application for appeal that outlines the basis for their appeal and the appropriate documentary evidence to support it. Appeal hearings will only be allowed if there was a procedural issue that may have led to a different outcome or where there is further evidence that was not presented to the panel that may also have led to a different outcome.
- 5.2 The Ministries Team Leader will consider the application for an appeal. If they are content that there is a basis for the appeal they will contact the Moderator of the Ministerial Recognition Committee and ask them to arrange an appeal hearing with a different sub-committee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee.

- 5.3 If the Ministries Team Leader finds no basis for the appeal they will present a report to that effect and the application for an appeal to 3 members of the Ministerial Recognition Committee who have not been involved in the case. They will determine if a new panel should be called or whether they uphold the view that there are not sufficient grounds for an appeal. If they agree to the appeal they will contact the Moderator of the Ministerial Recognition Committee and ask them to arrange an appeal hearing with a different sub-committee of the Ministerial Recognition Committee.
- 5.4 If the appeal relates to the actions of the Ministries Team Leader the appeal will be referred to the General Secretary who will follow the process of 5.2 and 5.3.
- 5.5 The sub-committee reserves the right to take appropriate legal advice and request legal representation. The appeal decision will be final.
- 5.6 This document refers only to the process for determining accreditation. Parallel disciplinary and grievance processes would determine appointment or employment of a Minister by a church, an Association; a College; or the Baptist Union of Great Britain.
6. If a Minister's name has been removed from the Register for conduct incompatible with an Accredited Minister or for gross misconduct, reinstatement will not normally be considered for a period of less than five years from the removal of the name from the Register. This period begins at a meeting with the Ministries Team Leader to acknowledge fault and to agree a process which may lead to re-instatement.

Where the reason for removal is that a Minister has had an affair and they have continued the relationship and subsequently married the individual, the re-instatement process will not normally begin until a period of 5 years has passed. If they wish to seek re-instatement they will meet with a sub-committee of the MRC, who will determine if a process for re-instatement is possible, and if so, agree the process required. The final decision will still rest with the re-instatement committee (See section 8 of MR Rules).

APPENDIX 4

POLICY FOR UNDERTAKING RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION OR NATIONAL RECOGNITION

1. Purpose

There are situations where it is necessary for a safeguarding risk assessment to be undertaken to determine the suitability of an individual either to be enrolled or remain as an accredited or nationally recognised person. This would include, but is not limited to:

- Receipt of a blemished enhanced disclosure
- Receipt of a blemished self-disclosure
- Information from a reference
- Information from the police or social services or other statutory body
- Information obtained during a complaint process

A safeguarding risk assessment will not always be required, for example where a Minister's conduct is found to be so unsuitable on safeguarding grounds e.g. by a criminal conviction, that to continue to recommend the Minister for working with children, young people and/or adults at risk would be unconscionable.

2. Process

The Ministries Team Leader will consult with our National Safeguarding Team (NST), and will if necessary ask them to undertake a safeguarding risk assessment following the process laid down for assessing blemished enhanced disclosures. (Blemished enhanced disclosures are always reviewed.) They will produce a risk assessment report outlining the impact of the safeguarding concern on the suitability of the individual to engage in ministry and, if they are considered suitable, any requirements for managing and monitoring which need to be put in place.

This process is distinct from the capability procedures and disciplinary procedures for Accredited Ministers set out in Appendix 2 and 3 respectively. A Minister's accreditation may be removed under the procedures set out in this Appendix alone. For the sake of clarity, the conclusion of a safeguarding risk assessment under this Appendix 4 does not preclude the Baptist Union from commencing a disciplinary process under Appendix 3 where the circumstances demand it.

The Minister will have the right to be accompanied by a Minister or another person during an assessment interview. This includes, where appropriate, a Trade Union representative, but excludes legal representation. While a Minister may seek legal advice at their own expense during the assessment process, including the appeals stage, as the accrediting body for the Minister, we will normally only communicate with the Minister rather than their legal advisor.

The Minister will have the right to provide relevant additional information to the NST following an interview including providing the names and contact details for individuals with information relevant to the assessment, if such individuals exist. This information should normally be provided within 14 days of the interview. It will then be for the NST to determine whether the information provided is relevant and whether any individuals identified should be interviewed.

If a blemished enhanced disclosure has been considered, the Rules require that the conclusion of the report is that they are 'not unsuitable to work with children, young people and adults at risk', in order for them to become or remain accredited/nationally recognised.

Following receipt of the report the Ministries Team Leader will take one of the following courses of action:

- If the individual is accredited/nationally recognised and the safeguarding risk assessment concludes that they are no longer suitable for ministry, the Committee will remove their name from the register. Subject to the appeal process outlined in paragraph 3 below, the Baptist Union will normally add their name to a published list of those who have been found unsuitable to work with children, young people and/or adults at risk. The decision to publish a name will only be taken after a suitable assessment of the risks of doing so to all parties affected.
- If the individual is applying and the safeguarding risk assessment concludes that they are considered unsuitable for ministry, the Association will be informed that the application cannot progress.
- If the recommendation is that actions need to be taken to manage and monitor the individual to enable them to engage in ministry, they will be given the opportunity to accept the outcome. If they fail to accept or abide by the recommendations, the Ministries Team Leader will consider this against the disciplinary process set out in Appendix 3. They will also consider suspending accreditation/national recognition/application pending the outcome of the process.
- If there is a need to manage and monitor the individual, appropriate steps will be taken to make sure that there is local knowledge and accountability and that this can be sustained over time.
- If the individual is not considered unsuitable to work with children, young people and/or adults at risk but conduct issues are identified within the report the Ministries Team Leader will determine whether further investigation should be undertaken under Appendix 3.
- If there are no concerns about the individual's conduct and suitability they will be informed of this conclusion.

3. Appealing the safeguarding risk assessment

The appeals process will normally follow the Blemished Disclosure Appeal Process. The actions above will be subject to the outcome of any appeal. Those who are already in ministry and therefore at risk of having their name removed from the Register, have 7 days from receipt of the Safeguarding Risk Assessment Report to ask the Ministries Team Leader to arrange for an appeal to take place. Normally this would involve two members of the National Safeguarding Group (which represents all of the Regional Association Safeguarding Leads) to review the safeguarding risk assessment. If the outcome of their review disagrees with the conclusions of the original assessment, the National Safeguarding Team will re-consider their original conclusion. If there continues to be a divergence of opinion the matter will be referred to a sub-committee of the MRC for decision over the question of accreditation and any conditions being put in place. If the reviewers are in agreement with the findings of the original assessment, the Minister's accreditation will be removed and there will be no further right of appeal or representation to the Committee.

Alternatively, the Minister can ask for the appointment of an independent safeguarding specialist to review the safeguarding risk assessment, at their own expense. Once a fee estimate has been obtained from a specialist and passed to the Minister, the Minister then has a further 7 days in which to decide whether to proceed with the independent assessment, with payment to be made in advance of the assessment being undertaken. If the reviewer disagrees with the conclusions of the original assessment, the National Safeguarding Team will re-consider their original conclusion. If the reviewer is in agreement with the findings of the original assessment, the Minister's accreditation will be removed and there will be no further right of appeal or representation to the Committee. If there continues to be a divergence of opinion the matter will be referred to a sub-committee of the MRC for decision over the question of accreditation and any conditions being put in place.

For clarity only one of these appeal routes can be used.

Ministries Team, Baptist Union of Great Britain, Baptist House, PO Box 44, 129 Broadway, Didcot,
OX11 8RT. Tel: 01235 517700 Fax: 01235 517715 ministries@baptist.org.uk Website: www.baptist.org.uk
Registered Charity Number: 1181392