



FITNESS TO PRACTICE POLICY

Introduction

A programme of study which requires a student to undertake practical training in a professional role in relation mission and ministry or where the qualification provides a route to Accreditation by the Baptist Union of Great Britain will be governed by a requirement that the student demonstrates their fitness to practise. In order to protect present or future churches, mission context vocations or placement situations the students will be expected to comply with the requirements of the College's ministerial formation and professional/regulatory bodies. The following policy has been established to deal with student-related fitness to practise issues formerly known as the Vocational Development Review.

For a student enrolled on a programme leading directly to a professional qualification which gives the right to practise a particular profession or calling, the purpose of the Fitness to Practise Policy is to consider, make a determination and take action as appropriate in respect of:

- any conduct which may render that student a person not fit to be admitted to and practise that profession or calling; or
- any health problems which may render that student a person not fit to be admitted to and practise that profession or calling.

The Fitness to Practise policy has been developed with regard to equal opportunities legislation. It is the policy of Spurgeon's College that all people, irrespective of their religion, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, gender, marital status or sexual orientation will be treated equally.

The Fitness to Practise Policy sets out the scope, application and principles to be applied in all cases. It also outlines the procedure to be followed in all cases where impairment of Fitness to Practise is suspected.

The timescales set out are the usual timescales, which the College aspires to achieve. Please note that when 'working days' are referred to, it excludes weekends, bank holidays and College closure days.

What is Fitness to Practice?

- 1.1 The College expects the highest standards of behaviour which are laid out in the Marks for Ministry Admissions criteria. The full list of the Marks of Ministry – Formation are included as appendix 1 to this document.

- 1.2 All students should understand that acceptance by the College for training does not guarantee automatic admittance to accredited ministry with the Baptist Union (BU) or a student's equivalent denomination body.
- 1.3 Students are on probation for the whole of their course and must fulfil their training satisfactorily in all its aspects before being commended to the Baptist Union, their denomination body, mission organisation or vocation.
- 1.4 For BU students the penultimate year of training is particularly important in this regard as the year in which - prior to the beginning of the settlement process - this commendation is made. This decision must be further confirmed, however, by the final year of training.
- 1.5 The College Governors delegate responsibility for student courses to the teaching staff who are responsible for the process of ministerial formation and assessment.
- 1.6 It is the practice of the teaching staff to review the progress of students on a regular basis throughout the year and at the end of each academic year.

Professional Behaviour/Conduct/Discipline

- 2.1 A clear distinction is made between disciplinary procedures and the assessment of fitness to practice. Both of these are also distinct from assessment in the sphere of academic training, although not necessarily unrelated to it.
- 2.2. Disciplinary and Code of Conduct procedures are used when students breach these policies.
- 2.3 The assessment of Fitness to Practice concerns a student's suitability for the practice of Ministry.

Health Related Concerns

- 3.1 The majority of students who become ill during their programme of study regain their health with support from their GP or health care professional. This may entail a period of interruption from study, and such situations will be dealt with under the Interruption of Study policy.
- 3.2 Students are required to take responsibility for their own health. It is also important that students are able to fulfil the rigorous demands of professional fitness to practise as laid out in the Marks of Ministry.
- 3.3 Students applying for a programme leading to registration with a professional body must declare health problems which could pose a risk to themselves or others on application.

Reporting a Concern

- 4.1 Anyone concerned about the behaviour, health and/or professional conduct of a student has the right to raise a concern. These concerns should be reported in the first instance to the student's pastoral tutor or a member of academic staff, who will notify the Director of Ministerial Formation or the Director of Practical Training in writing.

- 4.2 Where a concern is raised about a student, the student should be notified of the concern and the reasons for the concern in writing and normally within 10 working days. At the same time, the student should be provided with a copy of the Fitness to Practise policy.

Preliminary Review Meeting (PRM)

- 5.1 If in the considered judgement of the staff (against the Marks of Ministry)¹, arrived at after reviewing the student's progress, there are grounds for concern as to fitness to practice the student will be referred to a PRM.
- 5.2. The Director of Ministerial Formation and Director of Practical Training, form the Preliminary Review group and will meet with the student informally to ascertain the concerns. A recommendation is made to the Principal whether the concerns are sufficient to proceed to a formal Fitness to Practice Panel.
- 5.3 In this situation (5.2), the student will be invited to a PRM having been informed verbally and in writing as to the fact and nature of the concerns.

Fitness to Practice Panel

- 6.1 If there are sufficient concerns the Principal will write to the student, inviting them to a Fitness to Practice Panel with the time and date of the panel meeting.
- 6.2 Care is taken throughout the process to keep the Pastoral Tutor, Supervisor, Chair of Governors, Minister, Field Placement Tutor, Regional Minister, BU Ministries Team Leader (only in cases of serious misconduct or conduct unbecoming according to BUGB rules) and the teaching staff informed on a need to know basis.
- 6.3 The panel will consist of the Principal (chair), Director of Ministerial Formation and Director of Practical Training. The student's pastoral tutor will be invited as a support for the student but not as member of the panel
- 6.4 A student may be supported at the panel by their supervisor and by a friend who may be from within the student body and are invited to nominate such a person. Partners would also be welcome to attend should a student appearing before the panel so desire. Each or all of these people may speak on the student's behalf.
- 6.5 Prior to the panel the members may gather in written form such information and reports as are deemed relevant to the issues under consideration. The student should be supplied with copies of all such written material prior to the panel so that they may be aware of the issues involved and be able to consider their response.

Outcomes

- 7.1 The panel aims to identify areas of concern and to specify goals and targets for improvement within a specified period of time.

¹ See Appendix 1.

- 7.2 Each student will be dealt with on an individual basis depending on the issues.
- 7.3 A student appearing before the panel will be informed verbally and in writing of the panel's decisions. Where relevant, such decisions will also be communicated to those responsible for a student's placement.
- 7.4 The decision of the panel will in addition be relayed to the Chairperson of the College Governors in writing, and other relevant parties as mentioned in 6.2 above.
- 7.5 The panel will then reconvene after an appropriate interval of time, likely to be between six and twelve months, depending on the targets and advice given to the student.

Timescales

- 8.1. The Fitness to Practice Panel will convene at the earliest opportunity but no later than 45 working days from initial concerns raised at the PRM.

Appeals

- 9.1. Students have the right of appeal and may do this by writing to the Chair of Governors, c/o Spurgeon's College, marked Private and Confidential.
- 9.2 The Chair of Governors will convene a panel of three members of the College Council.
- 9.3 The Appeals Panel will review the outcome and will confirm in writing whether it agrees, wishes to modify or overturn the decision of Fitness to Practice panel.
- 9.4 Depending on the outcome of the Appeals Panel, the members of the original Fitness to Practice Panel will be informed and instigate point 7.3 above if necessary.

Baptist Union Students Appeals process

- 10.1 Baptist Union students will follow the appeals process above. However, in the event of any student's Baptist Union Ministerial status being withdrawn owing to unsatisfactory progress, this decision will not be reached until at least two formal panels have been convened, namely the appeals panel and the BUGB Ministries department.
- 10.2 Should a Baptist Union student elect, a second and final panel of appeal exists in the form of the Baptist Union Residential Selection Conference (RSC). By agreement with the Ministry Department of the Baptist Union, students may attend for selection and so be evaluated independently. In these circumstances, evidence is taken from the College only after the RSC's own selection procedures have been applied.

Non BU Students Appeal Process

- 11.1 There are no other appeals procedures within the College beyond those detailed above.

Completion of Procedures

- 12.1 At the conclusion of the College's procedures a student will be offered a Completion of Procedures letter signifying the end of the College's internal Appeals Procedure. A Completion of Procedures letter is required should the student wish to advance a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator regarding their appeal.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

- 13.1 Students who have exhausted the College's internal procedures for complaints or appeals may bring their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) within one calendar year of receiving a Completion of Procedures letter. The OIAHE's website (at www.oiahe.org.uk) contains full information, and the OIAHE can also be contacted at: OIA, Second Floor, Abbey Gate, 57 – 75 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AB, tel: 0118 959 9813. email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk. Anyone wishing to pursue a complaint through the OIAHE must complete a special Scheme Application Form, downloadable copies of which are available from the website.

Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

- 14.1 All records related to the procedure, the meeting and outcome of the Panels will be held in a student's file.

Appendix 1

The Marks of Ministry - Formation Baptist Union of Great Britain 08/12/17

All believers are disciples, learners, followers of Jesus Christ. The call to engage in a particular form of ministry such as Baptist ministry is a call from God to a specialised form of discipleship which brings with it a particular responsibility to oversee and enable the discipleship of others. Ministers are called to be exemplary disciples who can *indicate* by their life and example the path of Christian discipleship which God calls all believers to follow. They are also called to *activate* other disciples to play their part in making an active contribution to the mission of God. Effective ministry and mission requires a combination of Christian character and certain core skills.

The marks of formation are the characteristics, capabilities and motivations that we would expect to nurture and hone through a process of ministerial formation, both through College formation and the NAMs process. These are marks that might be demonstrated in quite diverse ways as ministry operates in different contexts, but they are marks that will nonetheless be present. This focus on the character of those called to ministry is not new, but sits within the long tradition of virtue ethics. Whilst the marks primarily focus on character they do also point to a number of capabilities or competencies that we would anticipate in those engaging in ministry. Alongside this we are retaining the core competencies which have been used by the Colleges over a number of years as part of the assessment of those being formed for ministry. By focusing on both being and doing, through the marks and the competencies, the hope is that those engaging in ministry will be better prepared to live as exemplary disciples and enable others to play their part in the mission of God.

The forms of ministry that individuals are called to are varied, and there is now a clear recognition that the type of ministry an individual is called to may change significantly through the course of their life. During the College and NAM formation stages, while there will be competencies which are common to all, there needs to be flexibility in the competencies that each individual is expected to attain based on the type of ministry they are initially being called to, rather than all being expected to fulfil the same competencies. The required competencies can be determined by the College staff engaging in ministerial formation as appropriate. The final assessment of whether a minister in training should be accredited will be determined against both the marks of formation, and the appropriate competencies.

The Marks of Formation

Mature disciple of Christ

Accountable

Relational approach to leadership

Kingdom focused

Servant hearted and sacrificial.

Taking the work done by the Ignite group the formation marks above can be

expanded to include the following areas as examples. The report itself includes a more detailed explanation of some of the points below.

Mature disciple of Christ

- Deepening relationship with Christ and clear love for God.
- Rooted in scripture
- Spiritual disciplines
- Living an authentic life
- Continuing sense of call to Baptist ministry
- A resilient faith which is able to cope with the reality of ministry
- Clear self-identity, reflective and open to constructive criticism

Accountable

- Intentional accountability to develop as a disciple of Christ and as a Baptist minister
- Engaging in peer support, watching over and walking with one another.
- Committed to ongoing ministerial development and training
- Accountable to the local church and wider Baptist family as appropriate
- Providing oversight and accountability for others.

Relational approach to leadership

- Good level of self-awareness and personal understanding
- Collaborative approach
- Inspirer, encourager and enabler of others
- Good interpersonal skills
- Ability to bring about transition and change
- Team builder
- Valuing and responding appropriately to diversity and difference
- Working with others beyond the local church

Kingdom focused

- Resident theologian or “God thinker”
- Drawing others into an awareness of God’s presence
- Committed to engaging in the mission of God in a post Christian context
- Build / maintain authentic and diverse communities of faith.
- Ability to read context to see opportunities, challenges and potential.
- Holy discontent with the status quo leading to action
- Heart for justice and prophetic voice.
- Representing the church in wider society

Servant hearted and sacrificial

- Modelling Christ like godly leadership
- Humble
- Faithful
- Generous spirit.

- Exhibiting grace in trying situations

Core Competencies ²

- The ability to study, understand and communicate the beliefs, practices, story and Scriptures of the Christian faith, within and beyond the congregation, and to live a life of Christian discipleship and witness consistent with that understanding.
- The ability to understand Baptist history, principles and practices, and to encourage the church to live in accordance with the vision and culture of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.
- The ability to communicate clearly in public and private settings, within and beyond the congregation, including small groups, written material and preaching
- The ability to offer servant leadership of the congregation/mission initiative in such a way that the ministry of the whole church/organisation is developed, establishing good relationships with others both within the church/organisation and beyond, especially in the areas of conflict resolution and the management of change and emphasising the need for good team working skills
- The ability to offer high levels of informed and compassionate pastoral care and support to individuals, within and beyond the congregation/organisation, and in particular to know the limits of what might be achieved and when to refer to others.
- The ability to lead a church or organisation in its mission, both participating in that mission personally, and enabling others to do so, with the particular ability to advocate for the Christian faith and lead people to Christ.

This includes:

- The ability to keep apprised of societal change, to reflect theologically on these and to develop appropriate missional responses.
 - The ability to read and exegete local communities, neighbourhoods and networks and to discern relevant forms of missional engagement and partnership opportunities.
 - The ability to recognise any gap between the congregation/organisation and the wider culture and where appropriate to take action to close this gap. Some 'gaps' may be commensurate with gospel values, and should be maintained.
 - The ability to recognise fresh opportunities for the congregation/organisation to engage in missional activities, including the planting of new congregations.
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- The ability to develop and maintain a spirituality that will sustain a life-long ministry, together with an ability to continue to develop personal growth and life-long learning

² These competencies are based on the missional reworked version from 2012 with the addition of the final competence, and expansion of the safeguarding competence.

- The ability to manage self, workload and the strengthening of significant other relationships, within and beyond the congregation/organisation, in order to maintain a balance of ministry and life.
- The ability to lead others in public worship, to administer the sacraments and to offer apt liturgical resources to others beyond the congregation/organisation.
- The ability effectively to use basic IT resources and media.
- The ability to welcome, affirm and include others in the life of the church in order to lead a just and inclusive church, in particular to promote racial and gender-justice and care for creation.
- The ability to manage safeguarding policies for both children and adults at risk, establishing good practice in these areas, and promoting policies that counter domestic violence. This includes the requirement to have undertaken BUGB safeguarding level 2 and 3 training with an approved BU trainer.
- The ability to exercise ministry and engage in mission in a secular, multi-faith and multi-cultural environment and to understand ministry in an ecumenical environment.
- The ability to work within the governance requirements of charities and the regulations which apply to them.

Document control box			
Title		Fitness to Practice	
Date approved	January 2017	Implementation date	
Next review date January 2020			
Version	1	<u>Supersedes version</u>	2 (April 2013) THE VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW POLICY
Approving body		Governors.	
Quality Code consulted		?	
Member of staff responsible		Director of Ministerial Formation and Training.	