

Candidacy Pathway:
Supervised Ministry Education

Educational Supervisor's Orientation

2024



Office of / Bureau de la
vocation

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Candidacy Pathway: Supervised Ministry Education, Educational Supervisor's Orientation (2024)



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About This Resource

The requirements of Supervised Ministry Education (SME) intersect with many aspects of the church. This resource is for Educational Supervisors and provides orientation for all those involved in the formation of candidates during SME, including Candidacy Boards, theological schools, communities of faith, Educational Supervisors, and Community of Faith Connections. It is part of a series of SME resources available from Vocational Ministers and on the [Candidacy Pathway webpage](#) of united-church.ca.

Candidates for ordained ministry and designated lay ministry (DLM) must read this resource. It is important that the Candidacy Board discuss plans with the candidate for fulfilling learning needs through the Supervised Ministry Education experience early in their Candidacy Pathway process.

Candidacy Pathway: Supervised Ministry Education Resources

- [*Supervised Ministry Education: Educational Supervisor's Orientation*](#)
- [*Supervised Ministry Education: Community of Faith Connection Handbook*](#)
- [*Supervised Ministry Education: Learning Goals and Learning Covenant*](#)
- [*Supervised Ministry Education: Theological Reflection*](#)
- [*Supervised Ministry Education: Roles, Responsibilities, and Reporting*](#)
- [*Supervised Ministry Education: Feedback and Evaluation*](#)

The Indigenous Context

The [Calls to the Church](#) that were adopted at the 43rd General Council 2018 include the following in relation to Supervised Ministry Education:

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- a. Indigenous community and region approved ministry placement options outside of the church context;
- b. Agencies outside of the church to be educated to work cooperatively in assisting the Indigenous ministry formation accompaniers to supervise these placements;
- c. Programs to be established to provide clinical, helping, and healing skills for ministry students, and community development and networking;
- d. Reporting to and celebration from the church concerning this work of ministry students in such placements.

All United Church documents that are referenced can be found on [the Candidacy Pathway webpage](#) of united-church.ca.

Policy

The policies about Supervised Ministry Education are found in [The Manual](#) under H. Entering Ministry, section H.5.2, Developing Competency:

Each candidate for ordained and designated lay ministry must satisfactorily complete a Supervised Ministry Education program that involves learning goals based on the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership, reflection on the practice of ministry, and regular supervision and evaluation.

The Candidacy Board determines a candidate's readiness for Supervised Ministry Education.

The Candidacy Board determines completion of Supervised Ministry Education by assessing a candidate's competence for ministry leadership based on the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership.

The [Candidacy Pathway: Policy](#) includes the following additional policies:

1. Before the Candidacy Board authorizes readiness for Supervised Ministry Education, approval as a candidate is required.
2. The Candidacy Board discerns and assesses readiness for Supervised Ministry Education through an interview.
3. The candidate is responsible for developing learning goals for Supervised Ministry Education in consultation with the Candidacy Board and in relation to the [Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#), the [Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel](#), feedback/reports from their theological school/program, and any professional assessment reports.
4. The Candidacy Board recommends the type of Supervised Ministry Education program and learning site to best address the candidate's learning goals. For SME appointments that are not integrated into the program of study, the normal length of the SME is two years. The minimum length of a SME is 34 weeks at 40 hours per week. Supervised Ministry Education can be fulfilled through a pastoral charge appointment, a specialized ministry setting, or a combination of both. The minimum period in one place is 13 weeks. One exception is that the period may be shorter in the case of a Clinical Pastoral Education program.

This resource gives further policies and procedures as well as best practices and resources to support the implementation of Supervised Ministry Education.

Purpose of Supervised Ministry Education

Ministry is a complex and demanding vocation that requires depth of character and numerous competencies. The policies and procedures for Supervised Ministry Education aim to support candidates in their formation for the challenging and rewarding role of ministry leadership through a practical learning experience. They also aim to support the church in assessing a candidate's competence for ministry leadership.

Supervised Ministry Education is not simply an arbitrary period of time for a candidate to practise the mechanics or the "doing" of ministry. It is not about putting in a certain number of hours to gain experience.

The goal of Supervised Ministry Education is to develop and deepen a candidate's competence for ministry leadership based on the Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership.

This goal is achieved when SME is understood as a significant learning experience where

- learning goals are the focus
- reflection on the practice of ministry leads to learning rather than simply practising ministry itself
- the candidate develops and integrates the spiritual habit of theological reflection into their regular rhythm of life as a minister
- all involved deepen their commitment to mutuality in ministry
- the church fosters an appreciation for lifelong learning and the candidate identifies areas for ongoing growth and development
- the Candidacy Board is provided with the necessary information to measure and assess a candidate's competence for ministry leadership in order to ensure that the leadership of the church is faithful and effective

Elements of Supervised Ministry Education

A Supervised Ministry Education experience includes the following five elements:

- learning site
- Educational Supervisor
- Community of Faith Connection
- Learning Covenant
- ongoing evaluation

1. Learning Site

A SME learning site is a community of faith that has been established as an appropriate setting for a candidate's learning and where the requirements for Supervised Ministry Education can be accomplished.

Communities of faith that participate in the formation of candidates provide a valuable resource for nurturing the future leadership of the church. Supervised Ministry Education is also an opportunity for the people of God to grow in faith and in a deeper understanding of the practice of ministry.

A pastoral charge that is interested in becoming a SME learning site can refer to the [Pastoral Relations resources](#) for more information.

The Educational Supervisor and Community of Faith Connection must be trained and in place for the SME to begin.

2. Educational Supervisor

In the context of Supervised Ministry Education, the Educational Supervisor provides a disciplined opportunity for intentional reflection. The role of the Educational Supervisor is to assist the candidate in reflecting theologically on their current call and current practice of ministry. This intentional practice of reflection helps shape the candidate toward integrated faith and helps develop ministers who are aware of themselves and others, social contexts, and the big questions of theology and spirit.

The Office of Vocation sets standards and approves trained Educational Supervisors.

The Office of Vocation is responsible for appointing an Educational Supervisor for a candidate's SME.

An Educational Supervisor is expected to do the following:

- Meet with the candidate at the beginning of the SME experience to clarify what they hope to learn during the experience.
- **Meet with the candidate for the equivalent of an hour each week** to discuss, analyze, theologically reflect, and engage in shared reflection on ministry experiences that

emerge in the candidate's learning site. Meetings can take place every other week for two hours or in another equivalent manner as mutually arranged or as required by the type of SME. Meetings can be conducted by telephone or online.

- Explore with the candidate ways of analyzing and reflecting theologically on concrete experiences in ministry. Using situations brought by the candidate, the Supervisor draws on all the intuitive, emotional, analytical, and theological understanding they have developed over the years and encourages the candidate to do the same.

The qualities desired in an educational supervisor are as follows:

- self-awareness and awareness of one's learning style
- commitment to mutuality in ministry
- willingness to participate fully in an action-reflection learning process
- ability to work with the candidate's identified learning goals
- desire to cultivate the art of theological reflection

The Educational Supervisor must successfully complete a program designed to train for the ministry of supervision. The purpose of the program is to

- provide participants with a basic knowledge of and skill in the supervisory process
- enable participants to experience and identify their learning needs and prepare a Learning Covenant
- enable participants to practise supervision skills and receive feedback
- enable participants to claim and develop their skills in theological reflection
- help participants to discover their own patterns of supervision in ministry
- encourage participants to articulate a theology of ministry grounded in their experience of supervised learning

Refer to the [Theological Reflection](#) and [Learning Covenant and Learning Goals](#) resources for more information on the role and responsibilities of the educational supervisor.

3. Community of Faith Connection (CFC)

The Community of Faith Connection is a group of lay people associated with the learning site who are dedicated to the ministry and mission of the church. The team supports the candidate as they seek to develop an effective practice of ministry leadership.

Refer to the [Community of Faith Connection: Handbook for Orientation](#) for more information on the role and responsibilities of the CFC.

The learning site is responsible for establishing a Community of Faith Connection.

The Community of Faith Connection is appointed by the governing body of the community of faith.

It is recommended that there be a minimum of two, preferably three, and up to five members on the team. The team should be representative of the congregation and of the community in which ministry occurs. It should include people of various ages and genders.

It is not appropriate to appoint a paid staff person, any member of the Ministry and Personnel Committee, or anyone who may have a conflict of interest with the candidate.

The Community of Faith Connection does not replace the Ministry and Personnel Committee of the congregation. The CFC does not provide disciplinary oversight of the student minister. That is the role of the Ministry and Personnel Committee, which has oversight of all staff in the pastoral charge. In any situation where there appears to be a conflict of roles, consult the Office of Vocation for advice and guidance.

Some key skills for the Community of Faith Connection include the following:

- holding a vision of ministry as a shared endeavour between the laity and the minister
- active listening
- confidentiality
- knowledge of different aspects of the community of faith
- ability to observe behaviour and offer constructive feedback and encouragement
- interpersonal skills and good communication
- administrative skills (note-taking, record-keeping, evaluative report writing, scheduling meetings)

The Community of Faith Connection is accountable to

- the candidate to assist their process of learning
- the governing body that appointed the team
- the Candidacy Board for the quality of the education on the site, the evaluations of the work undertaken, and the oversight of the learning and formation of a person for ministry leadership

4. Learning Covenant

In Supervised Ministry Education, the Learning Covenant articulates the agreement between the participants in the experience. It is a commitment to work, learn, and grow together. It includes practical considerations, such as meeting times, the types of theological reflection models that will be used, the learning goals that shape the experience, the processes for feedback and evaluation, agreed procedures for conflict resolution, and the rituals that celebrate the participation, learning, and growth of all involved.

The [Learning Covenant and Learning Goals](#) resource provides guidelines and support for developing a Learning Covenant.

5. Ongoing Evaluation

Evaluations, assessments, appraisals, and feedback are critical to the work of the Candidacy Board, and essential to the development of the candidate’s competence and readiness for ministry.

Community of Faith	Theological School	Candidate
<p>The community of faith, through its Community of Faith Connection, provides valuable feedback about the experience of being served by the ministry candidate. The Educational Supervisor further supports and guides the candidate’s learning and capacity for self-reflection.</p> <p>Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel guide this appraisal in addition to Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry.</p>	<p>The theological school reports on progress toward completion of the testamur and provides an assessment of readiness to begin ministry.</p>	<p>Meeting with the candidate at significant thresholds on the pathway provides opportunities to assess the candidate’s knowledge and depth of faith, and to reflect with the candidate on their ongoing sense of call, learning, self-awareness, practice of ministry, and relationships in the community.</p> <p>The Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership frame this assessment.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Reports</p> <p>The Community of Faith Connection submits an evaluation report on various aspects of the candidate’s capability for ministry as experienced in the community of faith. The Educational Supervisor submits a report reflecting on the candidate’s Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry, including their progress and self-awareness in meeting their learning goals.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reports</p> <p>This report is submitted annually using the Annual Theological School Report or equivalent. Notice of completion of the testamur is required for commissioning or ordination.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reports</p> <p>The candidate completes reflective reports to prepare for meeting with the Candidacy Board. These reports articulate the candidate’s faith in relationship to the traditions of the Christian church, and at the final interview affirm their essential agreement with United Church of Canada doctrine.</p>

The parties involved in the SME follow the direction provided by the Vocational Minister on the number and timing of evaluations. Typically, there is a “check-in” report within the first four to six months of the SME. A fuller report is submitted halfway through, and a final report submitted at the end.

The Community of Faith Connection, supervisor, and candidate are required to read one another’s comments and indicate that they have read the evaluation. No new information or surprises should be presented in the evaluations. If in sharing the comments there is

disagreement about wording or an observation, the contentious point can be changed by mutual agreement, or a comment can be added to indicate the disagreement.

The evaluation takes time to complete. Time should be allotted during the SME experience. The final evaluation must be complete before the candidate leaves the learning site.

Refer to [Roles and Responsibilities in SME](#) for more information on all parties involved in SME.

Educational Supervisors report to the Candidacy Board at the beginning of the Supervised Ministry Experience to comment on the learning goals identified by the candidate, in the middle of the SME to comment on the candidate's progress toward meeting learning goals, and at the end to make an appraisal of the candidate's competence and readiness for a vocation in ministry based on [Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#).

Refer to [Feedback and Communication](#) for more information on the role and responsibilities of the Educational Supervisor in evaluating the SME.

The **community of faith**, through the person or persons serving as the contact, reports to the Candidacy Board at the beginning of the Supervised Ministry Experience to indicate that it has begun, and at the middle and end of the SME to offer the Board a picture of how the candidate is being experienced as a minister among them. The assessment is based on markers of effectiveness in the practice of ministry drawn from the [Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel](#).

Candidates report to the Candidacy Board at the beginning of their Supervised Ministry Education on their learning goals, in the middle of the SME on their progress in meeting learning goals and reflecting on the practice of ministry, and at the end of the SME on developing their pastoral identity and commitment to lifelong learning. The candidate is also responsible for ensuring that mid-term and final reports by the Community of Faith Connection and the Educational Supervisor are completed and submitted to the Candidacy Board at the appropriate times.

Theological schools, through the appointed United Church of Canada faculty member, report annually to the Candidacy Board on the candidate's progress toward the testamur (certification of completion of the program of education and formation for ministry), including areas for further work that may be incorporated into the candidate's Supervised Ministry Experience. Programs at theological schools that incorporate the SME requirement may require additional evaluation and reporting processes.

Requirements by Stream of Ministry

Supervised Ministry Education differs depending on the stream of ministry a person is pursuing and their program of study.

Diaconal Ministry

Candidates for diaconal ministry at the Centre for Christian Studies complete field placements through an integrated program of study. The policy on Supervised Ministry Education is adapted for candidates for diaconal ministry.

When a field placement is being arranged, the Centre for Christian Studies notifies the pastoral relations staff of the regional council where the learning site is located and the candidate's Vocational Minister to ensure that the community of faith is a suitable setting for the candidate's learning.

Designated Lay Ministry

Designated lay ministry (DLM) candidates complete three years of Supervised Ministry Education in a pastoral charge appointment while attending learning circles at St. Andrew's College. This appointment must be a minimum of half-time.

DLM candidates at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre complete Supervised Ministry Education requirements as part of their program of study.

A Supervised Ministry Education appointment for a DLM is a **pastoral charge appointment**. It provides a candidate with the opportunity to experience the full breadth of ministry leadership in a pastoral charge setting.

The appointment must be a minimum of half-time.

Pastoral charges must follow the United Church's minimum salary scale for salary, pension, benefits, and other reimbursements and benefits.

This type of SME experience intersects with pastoral relations policy and processes. After the Candidacy Board approves the candidate as ready for SME and indicates that the SME can take place in a pastoral charge appointment, the candidate is given access to the listing of available learning sites in ChurchHub. The candidate follows the pastoral relations process to secure an appointment to a learning site.

Before the candidate submits an application to a pastoral charge, the Candidacy Board must indicate whether the learning site is a suitable context for the candidate to fulfill their learning goals.

Ordained Ministry

There are various options for those in the ordained ministry stream to undertake the Supervised Ministry Education requirement.

Some theological schools include SME as part of their program of study. Candidates who complete a program of study that does not include SME must pursue SME as a distinct component of their formation for ministry.

The same information about pastoral charge appointments (noted above) applies to candidates in the ordained ministry stream.

Supervised Ministry Education that takes place under appointment presents a dual expectation of the pastoral charge and the candidate. The pastoral charge has a responsibility to participate in the candidate's growth and formation for ministry. Yet, the candidate is responsible for fulfilling the role of ministry personnel with the pastoral charge as outlined in the ministry position description. Navigating the vulnerabilities of learning about the practice of ministry with a community of faith while providing leadership, spiritual nurture, and pastoral care for its members requires openness, flexibility, and humility by all involved. In any situation where there appears to be a conflict of roles with the various parties involved in the SME appointment, consult the Office of Vocation minister for advice and guidance.

The following section provides additional information on the various SME programs for candidates for ordained ministry.

Supervised Ministry Education Programs for Ordained Ministry

Candidates for Ordained ministry may study at theological schools with SME programs that are integrated into the degree or program of study. They may inquire directly to the schools about such opportunities.

For example, at the **Atlantic School of Theology Summer Distance Program** candidates undertake SME as part of this five-year ministry-based education program. The program allows candidates to integrate the practice of ministry with learning from academic courses. Two years of the program, years 3 and 4, are considered to be the period of Supervised Ministry Education.

Candidates serve in a pastoral charge appointment that must be a minimum of half-time and no more than three-quarters time. The appointment must be in place no later than September 30 every year of the program.

Candidates are required to attend a six-week summer term on the AST campus. The candidate and the Ministry and Personnel Committee must negotiate the use of continuing education and vacation time to ensure that vacation time is not used to meet the demands of the program. Creativity and genuine compromise are required in order to provide the time the candidate needs for both study and vacation.

Refer to resources through AST for additional details.

Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

Candidates for ordination at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre complete Supervised Ministry Education requirements as part of their program of study.

Supervised Ministry Education Separate from Degree Program

When a candidate pursues a degree program for ordination that does not include the SME requirement, the degree is typically completed before the candidate begins SME. In rare circumstances the Candidacy Board approves readiness for SME before the candidate has completed their academic program.

The Candidacy Board determines the type and length of SME required of the candidate on a case-by-case basis in order for the candidate to develop competency based on the Learning Outcomes. The Candidacy Board keeps the purpose of SME, as stated above, at the forefront when making the determination. The Candidacy Board uses the *Guide to Competencies for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership* as the primary way to assess competencies the candidate demonstrates and competencies the candidate will work on over the course of the SME.

**The normal length of the SME is two years.
The minimum length of the SME is 34 weeks at 40 hours per week.**

Supervised Ministry Education can be fulfilled through either a pastoral charge appointment, a specialized ministry setting, or a combination of both.

The minimum period in one place is 13 weeks. One exception is that the period may be less in the case of a Clinical Pastoral Education program.

The same information about pastoral charge appointments (noted above) applies to candidates in the ordained ministry stream.

Specialized Ministry Setting

The Candidacy Board must approve the candidate's plans for a specialized Supervised Ministry Education experience before the candidate makes arrangements to pursue this.

A specialized ministry SME experience can take place outside of the pastoral relations system. Examples include a Clinical Pastoral Education program, a chaplaincy position, or an outreach setting. A specialized ministry setting provides an opportunity for a candidate to experience and deepen their understanding of particular aspects of ministry leadership.

Candidates suited to innovative or cooperative ministry settings or to SMEs tailored to a pre-existing ministry setting or bi-vocational call may require additional pastoral relations support and tailored supervision. The candidate makes arrangements for the SME in such a specialized ministry setting with the Vocational Minister, the Pastoral Relations Minister, and any other civic partners or denominational or ecumenical officers collaborating in the ministry.

Financial Support to Learning Sites

Some grants are available to support pastoral charges to participate in Supervised Ministry Education as a learning site. The funds are made available through Mission and Service. Pastoral charges can submit an application to the Office of Vocation at the General Council Office at any time.

Information about criteria and availability of grants is available on the website under [Entering Ministry forms](#).

Process for Terminating Supervised Ministry Education

In the event that the candidate displays inappropriate behaviour during the Supervised Ministry Education, their Candidacy Board is to be notified. The Candidacy Board determines the course of action for the candidate's formation for ministry. If the candidate is not able to change the inappropriate behaviour, the points outlined below may be followed to terminate the SME.

There are also times when the difficulties encountered during Supervised Ministry Education lead to a decision to dissolve the Learning Covenant and end the experience. All possible action should be taken to avoid this.

In the case of conflict between members of the covenant relationship, please refer to the [Learning Covenant](#) resource, which outlines a process for dealing with conflict during the SME. Take steps to resolve conflicts before considering terminating the SME.

During a time of conflict, the Vocational Minister should be notified. This individual ensures that pastoral care is available to all parties involved.

The supervisee can contact their Candidacy Board at any time and is strongly encouraged to draw upon the support of their Circle of Accompaniment. Candidates are also eligible for the United Church's [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#). They may want to use this valuable resource during a time of conflict or crisis.

If the conflict cannot be resolved, the following action will be taken:

- The Candidacy Board makes a decision about continuing or terminating the SME. The Candidacy Board determines the end date of the SME, in consultation with the learning site, and any other administrative details or conditions.
- The decision of the Candidacy Board is communicated to all parties involved.
- If the SME is taking place in a pastoral charge appointment, the regional council is consulted. Appropriate pastoral relations processes are followed to terminate the appointment.
- The three parties to the Learning Covenant (supervisor, Community of Faith Connection, and candidate) each write a report based on the experiences to date. A specific evaluation form for SMEs that are terminated is available from the Vocational Minister.

In the case of students in a learning program who are withdrawn, suspended, or terminated from the academic program, the school must notify the candidate's Candidacy Board. In some circumstances, candidates who withdraw from the academic program while under appointment may be eligible to continue in their appointment at the discretion of the Candidacy Board and the regional council.