

Candidacy Pathway:
Candidacy Board Resources
Vol. 2: Interview Handbook

2024



Office of / Bureau de la
vocation

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Candidacy Pathway: Candidacy Board Resources, Vol. 2: Interview Handbook (2024)



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“Conducting Interviews with Intercultural Awareness” adapted from the 2009 United Church resource of the same name, by Steve Willey, Intercultural and Diverse Communities in Ministry.

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About This Resource

This resource is the second of two volumes. It contains best practices that provide information, guidance, and advice to the Candidacy Board related to interviews conducted in the Candidacy Pathway. It recommends ways to live out the mandatory policies and procedures found under section H in *The Manual* and in the [Candidacy Pathway Policy](#) resource. Please refer to the current edition.

All United Church documents that are referenced can be found at united-church.ca.

Thank you for serving on the Candidacy Board. You are supporting the church in living out God's work in the world by helping to ensure that those who enter ministry are competent, faithful, and effective.

The Indigenous Context

The [Calls to the Church](#)¹ Preamble states:

We, the Indigenous ministries and communities of faith of The United Church, declare that we will tell our own story of what ministry means for us. We will decide for ourselves who we are, who constitutes our ministries groups and practices.

Within this context, the Indigenous Office of Vocation supports and guides those who are called by their Indigenous community into ministry in The United Church of Canada, offering the Indigenous Candidacy Pathway of discernment, formation, and preparation for those individuals.

The Indigenous Candidacy Pathway shapes the denomination's candidacy experience by informing the church's approach to call, formation, Eldership, ministry, and community accountability.

¹ The Calls to the Church were adopted by General Council 43 in Oshawa, ON, in 2018.

Understanding the Candidacy Pathway

The following is a list of resources that Candidacy Board members must review:

[*Candidacy Pathway: Policy*](#)

[*Calls to the Church \(2018\)*](#)

[*Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership*](#)

[*Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel*](#)

[*Supervised Ministry Education resource series*](#)

[*Candidacy Pathway: Roadmap*](#)

[*Candidacy Pathway: Candidacy Board Resources, Vols. 1 and 2*](#)

[*Candidacy Pathway: Circle of Accompaniment*](#)

[*Statement on Ministry \(2012\)*](#)

Seven Phases

The Candidacy Pathway includes seven phases that guide the church in developing processes that prepare individuals for ministry leadership. The seven phases are:

- Call Forth
- Identify
- Accompany
- Equip
- Assess
- Authorize
- Celebrate

No two individuals make the same journey. The Candidacy Pathway is designed to take into consideration the applicant's experiences, gifts, education, and call to ministry. For this reason, the pathway is designed to be flexible and not to insist that steps (phases) are followed in a particular sequence, over a specified duration.

Exceptions to the non-sequential nature of the Candidacy Pathway are outlined under "Required Markers of the Pathway" in [*Candidacy Pathway: Policy*](#). For example, there are particular requirements that must be accomplished in order to be approved as a candidate.

All aspects of the role of the Candidacy Board are outlined in [*Candidacy Board Resources, Vol. 1: Orientation*](#). This volume is a reference to guide the interview process.

Interview Schedule

The Candidacy Board determines the number of interviews to be conducted with the applicant. The following are possible scenarios, depending on the initial application:

The criteria for promise, suitability, and readiness, and information about the vocational assessment, are given later in this resource.

- **Promise:** During an initial interview, the Candidacy Board assesses the applicant's promise for candidacy. If the applicant demonstrates promise, they complete the remaining requirements to apply for candidacy. The applicant returns for at least one additional interview with the Candidacy Board, which assesses suitability in order to approve the applicant as a candidate.
- **Promise and Suitability:** The applicant is instructed to complete all requirements to apply for candidacy, which may include a third-party assessment. During the first interview, the Candidacy Board follows the criteria for assessing promise and suitability. The Candidacy Board determines the number of interviews with each applicant on a case-by-case basis in order to approve the applicant as a candidate.
- **Promise, Suitability, and Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education (SME):** The initial application to the Candidacy Board may include a request for assessment of readiness for Supervised Ministry Education. This scenario applies when the applicant has completed the required course of study or the applicant intends to enrol in a program of study that incorporates SME. The applicant is instructed to complete all requirements to apply for candidacy, which may include a third-party assessment. During the first interview, the Candidacy Board assesses the applicant's promise, suitability, and readiness for SME. The Candidacy Board determines the number of interviews with each applicant on a case-by-case basis in order to approve the applicant as a candidate and authorize readiness for SME.

For the remainder of the process, the Candidacy Board walks with the candidate to assess growth, readiness, and effectiveness for ministry leadership and to ensure that all of the requirements are fulfilled. The Candidacy Board conducts interviews with the applicant/candidate following the minimum guidelines in the following chart. The Candidacy Board can meet with an applicant or candidate at any time during the process to check in, address concerns, and provide guidance or support.

An additional interview may be required if the candidate intends to serve in a candidate supply appointment outside the SME framework in order for the Candidacy Board to assess readiness for ministry leadership.

Program of Study	Type and Purpose of Interviews	Scheduling of Interviews
Atlantic School of Theology: Summer Distance Program	Promise and Suitability for Candidacy	Beginning of process
	Readiness for SME	Before third year of program
	Benchmark: progress on learning goals and assess competency development based on Competencies for Formation for Ministry	Recommended before fifth year of program but not required
	Readiness for Ordination	Final year of program
Centre for Christian Studies (Diaconal Stream)	Promise and Suitability for Candidacy	Beginning of process
	Benchmark: progress on learning goals and assess the focus of learning goals for competency development based on Competencies for Formation for Ministry	Before third field placement
	Readiness for Commissioning	Final year of program
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre	Promise and Suitability for Candidacy Readiness for SME (for ordination and Indigenous DLM streams)	Beginning of process
	Benchmark: progress on learning goals and assess the focus of learning goals for competency development based on Competencies for Formation for Ministry	DLM: Halfway through program Diaconal or ordained: before fourth year of program
	Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition	Once all requirements are nearly complete—typically at least 4 months before anticipated date of celebration
Emmanuel College Atlantic School of Theology (non Summer Distance) St. Andrew's College United Church Studies at DIO Vancouver School of Theology	Promise and Suitability for Candidacy	Beginning of process
	Readiness for SME	Typically final year of program—candidates may have reason to begin SME at an earlier time (see SME section for more details)
	Readiness for Ordination	Once all requirements are nearly complete—typically at least 4 months before anticipated ordination date

Conducting Interviews

Interview teams must foster an environment of openness and trust in order to witness a true reflection of the interviewee. The physical setting, the attitudes and behaviours of the Candidacy Board members, the pace of the discussion, and the expectations of those involved will influence whether the interview truly becomes a time of discernment. Respect for the interviewee is demonstrated through accessibility courtesies and through becoming familiar with their submitted materials and referencing these in the interview.

The content of an interview is kept confidential. However, decisions of the Candidacy Board are public.

At least one interview must be conducted in person during the course of each person's Candidacy Pathway.

Be aware of potential conflicts of interest and perception of bias (see "Dual Roles and Perception of Bias on the Candidacy Board" in [Candidacy Board Resources, Vol. 1: Orientation](#)). If a Candidacy Board member is related to the person being interviewed, has a close working relationship with them, or is a member of their community of faith, that member will face the challenge of overlapping roles and may have difficulty remaining objective. When there is a conflict of interest or perception of bias, members must not participate in the interview session with the individual in question.

Compliance with human rights principles and legislation must also be considered. For example, sexist language and asking sexist questions, questions about marital status, and questions about sexual orientation, race, or neurodivergence and disabilities are inappropriate. There should be no difference between the questions asked across genders, marital status, or racial identities, for example. Information about provincial and territorial legislation can be found on provincial websites.

Conducting Interviews with Intercultural Awareness

Representing one's true self in an interview is challenging. Additional challenges and further dynamics are at play when the majority of the interview team belongs to one ethnocultural group and the interviewee belongs to another. Candidacy Board members need to engage in individual and collective self-examination to discover whether their beliefs and assumptions might create gaps in their discernment and block insight into how God is working in the world and in the life of the person being interviewed.

Candidacy Board members are expected to be trained and able to take into account a diversity of realities and experience among interviewees. These include cultural, language, physical, visual, auditory, and neurodivergent considerations. Request support from the Office of Vocation for taking these realities into account in preparing for and conducting interviews.

An interculturally aware interview team tries to look at the process from the perspective of the other person and the ways in which they are required to accommodate, as in this example:

I am a person from Korea being interviewed to assess my suitability for candidacy. I am attempting to communicate who I am in English, which is my third language. I must accommodate the interview team's requirement that English be spoken. I will similarly accommodate the interview team's conviction that a circle without a table is the best configuration for the interview, although personally, this arrangement makes me feel exposed and vulnerable.

I am doing my best not to panic at the thought of talking about myself with a group of individuals with whom I have no prior relationship, but I will accommodate this Western practice and hope that I will not be perceived as being evasive or vague.

As a sign of respect, I would like to offer a gift to the Vocational Minister, but I'm afraid that the group might think that I am trying to ingratiate myself to influence the outcome of my interview. I have learned not to cringe when a man in the circle crosses his legs and shows me the soles of his shoes, or to be offended by the apparent disinterest of a woman who knits while I am speaking. In this interview, I am in their culture, and I will accommodate to what they do and need.

Because of my neurodivergence, I have a very difficult time holding eye contact. I am able to focus better in high stress situations if I am able to close my eyes completely. One of the interviewers keeps adjusting themselves to be in my line of sight. People often think my lack of eye contact indicates lack of self-confidence, but this is not the case. I can force myself to make eye contact but it will be very difficult for me to provide my best answers.

Not all diversity is apparent. The reality of intersectionality may mean that while an interview team may assume that the intercultural experience is largely a linguistic one, it may be another lived experience that shapes the dynamic of the interview.

Recognizing how much of the responsibility to navigate cultural differences normally falls upon the individual being interviewed, a culturally aware interview team is committed to the principle of mutual or social accommodation. This commitment reflects an understanding of accommodating cultural norms and accessibility needs as a social obligation rather than a personal responsibility. As the group in control of the interview process and format, the interviewers do whatever they can to narrow the cultural gap so that the person being interviewed is less anxious and intimidated, and more able to accurately communicate their character and competencies. In a spirit of mutuality, the interview team begins by naming any social accommodations they made or needed in order for the team to conduct the interview. For example, "We have turned on the closed captioning for this interview because our team requires this feature."

A commitment to mutual accommodation requires an adaptive, flexible approach to interviewing rather than adherence to a formulaic, rigid model. To build bridges across the cultural divide and empower the person being interviewed, the interview team could employ practices such as the following:

Preparation

- Learn from the Vocational Minister about any accessibility needs requested in advance of the interview.
- Receive any needed coaching on accessibility or culture-specific sensitivities; for example, closed captioning feature, seating, lighting, formal greeting, eye contact, pacing, the meanings of silence and pause, posture toward hierarchy and authority, the meaning (or not) of speech patterns, how agreement and disagreement is expressed, or gestures to avoid.
- Acknowledge that neurodiversity is a reality of being human; all brains on the interview team are functioning differently.
- Vet the interview questions with the coach to avoid any that would put the interviewee on the spot about, for example, their personal circumstances or feelings.
- Provide the questions that will be asked in advance so the person is less pressured to think on the spot in a language that is not their first language. Remind the interviewee that some additional questions may arise from their responses.

Representation

- Ensure that the interview team is racially and culturally diverse.
- Ensure that at least one person at the interview is from the interviewee's ethno-linguistic community.

Language

- Ask the interviewee if they would like to have someone present who is fluent in both English and the interviewee's first language to help should clarification be required.
- Be mindful of pace, manner, and vocabulary best suited to the interviewee.
- If the interviewee is using an interpreter, remember to address the interviewee directly, not the interpreter.
- Communicate that the person's ability to speak more than one language is a valuable asset, and that accented English is not a problem to be overcome.
- Interviewers also need to be mindful of their familiarity with church language and traditions. Interviewees might not have the same experience and should not have to deal with unrealistic and unfair expectations about knowledge and context.

Physical Space and Process

- Acknowledge at the beginning of the interview your awareness that this is an intercultural encounter, and that everyone should feel free to ask questions for clarification, if needed.
- Begin the interview with an informal social time for personal connection.

- Confirm the interview as a space that seeks to honour cultural differences by inviting a member of the group to open with prayer in a language other than English, or by offering a prayer in English that asks God to bless your intercultural time together.
- Design and conduct the interview and interview space in a way that facilitates deep listening in a safe space: Be attentive to the other person, don't rush, communicate a comfort with silence and pauses, communicate affirmation and encouragement with your body language, show interest but don't pry, and laugh together as much as possible (but never at anyone else's expense).

Guidelines for Asking Questions

There is a Western tendency to view gathering information as the primary purpose of an interview.

While some of this information is "personal" in nature, all of it is "of the person." So, what and how a person thinks, believes, functions, relates, and knows speaks of their very heart and soul. This heart is something an intercultural church seeks to honour and to protect. It recognizes that for interviewees coming from many cultures, the interview is not primarily about information sharing as it is about establishing a relationship.

The interviewing team may ask a question that is intended to give information that will help them get to know an interviewee; meanwhile, the interviewee may be pulling away from the group because they are experiencing those questions as too direct, too personal, or too prying.

When asking interview questions, consider the following:

- The issue of saving face is always present, regardless of the person's culture or lived experience. Do whatever you can to avoid making the person feel overly self-conscious or put on the spot to answer questions that it would embarrass them to answer.
- Too broad an opening question not only makes it difficult to know where to start but may also immediately cross the uncomfortable boundary of sharing personal information. "Tell us about yourself" is too broad. "Tell us about your experience as it relates to ministry leadership" is better.
- Similarly, it is common to ask, "Do you have any questions you'd like to ask us?" as the final question. In many cultures, to ask questions is considered to not know what one should know. "Is there anything you would like to say to us before the interview ends?" is more inviting.
- Generally, Western thought patterns tend to be abstract in nature. This is not the case in many other cultural traditions, which employ concrete images and are story-based. So it is always a good idea to include scenario or case study questions that will help an interviewee connect to their lived experience and lived expertise.
- If the interviewee is a recent immigrant, avoid questions about their reasons for immigrating to Canada or how long they intend to stay. The first communicates that you think some reasons are more valid than others, and the second tends to be asked more frequently of racialized people, especially those coming from a country in the Global

South. Both questions treat the person as an outsider who might have some hidden motivation. Interviewers are not immigration officers or inquisitors.

- Interviewers do have a careful discernment to make. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, to ask questions to help get to know an interviewee's attitude toward the United Church without unfairly scrutinizing their motivations or intentions. These might include questions such as
 - "What is it about The United Church of Canada that appeals to you?"
 - "What are the similarities and differences you see between the denomination of your childhood and The United Church of Canada?"
 - "Can you tell us the story of when you heard God's call into the ministry?"
 - "In what ways have you seen God at work in your decision to seek to become a candidate for ministry?"

Accompaniment for Interviews

Interviewees are accompanied by a person of their choosing—for example, someone who has been a companion with them on their discernment journey but is not a relative or their minister. This support person does not take an active role in the interview but is an observer who can help the individual debrief and reflect post-interview.

Interview Teams

The Candidacy Board can divide into smaller groups of interview teams in order to conduct interviews. Decisions, however, must be discussed and voted on by the whole Candidacy Board. Teams of three to four people help keep the discussion interactive and informal, and give the interviewee a chance to more fully engage with each person as well as the team as a whole.

Interview Guidelines

General Process for Interviews

Before the Interview

- Carefully study any written submissions by the interviewee before the interview.
- Review the [Candidacy Pathway Policy](#) and the interview guidelines in [Candidacy Board Resources: Vol. 1 Orientation](#).
- Review guidelines on dual roles, bias, and perception of bias.
- Learn from the Vocational Minister whether any social accommodations or accessibility needs need to be attended to.
- Review the appropriate questions at the end of this handbook for the particular interview you are conducting.
- Determine the process of the interview, including which member of the interview team will begin the interview.
- For in-person interviews, ensure the interview space is accessible, comfortable, and welcoming and that everyone has water or another beverage.
- For online interviews, ensure all participants have the necessary technology and a backup plan in case of interruption or their online connection fails.
- Be aware of and follow the interview recording policy (see [Appendix](#)), including ensuring that information on the interviews includes notice that they are digitally recorded.
- Ensure the accompanying person understands their role as a silent observer.

Hosting Interviews

Online interviews can be challenging for both interviewer and interviewee. Your preparation will put the interviewee at ease. Consider ways to host online spaces with the same care and attention you use to host in physical spaces.

- Check technology and the online connection in advance, and make sure all participants are familiar with the platform, including how to reconnect if necessary.
- Create a virtual background that is calm and uncluttered or a physical environment that is warm and welcoming.
- Retrieve your interviewee personally from a virtual or physical waiting room.

For in-person interviews, give plenty of notice of time and location.

- Prepare and orient participants by including directions, information on parking, signs to the interview room, and other useful details.
- Ensure that the physical space is accessible.

Beginning

- For in-person interviews, send a member of the interview team to accompany the interviewee into the interview room.

- For online interviews, send a member of the interview team into the virtual waiting room to “bring” them into the interview.
- Introduce yourselves and describe your involvement in the church and interest in being part of the Candidacy Board.
- Outline the process and timing.
- Orient the interviewee to what the interview will be like and what it is for.
- Give the interviewee a chance to ask questions about the process, expectations, and so on.
- Pray.

During the Interview

- Refer to the interviewee’s written material during the interview.
- Be guided by the appropriate prepared interview questions in this handbook for the particular interview you are holding.
- Make a digital recording of the interview, according to policy (see [Appendix](#)).
- Have at least one member of the interview team take notes, following the policy guidelines below.

Recording the Interview

Because interviews are conducted by an interview team on behalf of the Board as a whole, and accurately remembering and reporting the content of the interviews is important, note-takers make a written record of each interview. These interview notes are used for three purposes:

1. To enable an interview team to report as accurately as possible to the committees and boards charged with deciding the outcome of the interview.
2. To write the official report or correspondence from the committee or board to the interviewee conveying the outcome of the interview. The **report or correspondence becomes the official record** of the interview and is kept in accordance with the United Church’s *Classification and Records Retention Schedule* and the [Privacy and Personal Information policy](#) in the *Human Resources Policy Manual: General Council Office and Regional Councils*.
3. To enable fact checking in cases where there is disagreement about whether the interview was accurately represented in the official report.

Guidelines for Note-Taking

- Record date, start time, and location (e.g., via Zoom) of interview.
- Record names of everyone present and their roles.
- Note name/initial of speaker.
- Paraphrase what is said.
- Focus on the vital details. Where the interview is also being recorded, note the time when significant exchanges occur.
- Use quotation marks to note key comments that are quoted verbatim.
- Ask the speaker to repeat themselves when necessary.

- Note significant non-verbal communication factually—e.g., “CC leaned forward, smiled, and looked interviewer in the eye,” not “CC was attentive”; “CC raised voice, became red in the face, and glared at DW,”—not “CC became angry.”
- Don’t doodle.
- Note end time of interview.
- When the interview is complete, transcribe notes immediately and fill in the blanks.

Vocational Ministers will provide sample notes and further resources to ensure proper written records are made of interviews. See [Appendix](#) for the policy on recording and record-keeping.

Ending

- End the time together after a period of silence to be sure all that needs to be shared has been said and heard.
- Make sure the interviewee understands the immediate next steps: who will be in touch with them and when.
- Close with prayer.
- Stop recording.

After the Interview

If digitally recording, ensure that the recording is stopped before the deliberations.

After the interviewee leaves the room, invite the accompanying person to meet briefly with the interview team to name any concerns and to share whether they believe the interview team experienced an accurate reflection of the interviewee.

The full Candidacy Board then meets to hear the recommendation of the interview team and to make a formal decision.

The interviewee either rejoins the Candidacy Board to receive their decision, or is informed in a follow-up telephone conversation of the Candidacy Board’s decision and guidance on next steps.

A written record of the decision, direction, and guidance of the Candidacy Board is shared within two weeks of an interview.

The Vocational Minister is responsible for ensuring that the recordings are saved according to the United Church’s *Classification and Records Retention Schedule* and the [Privacy and Personal Information policy](#) in the *Human Resources Policy Manual: General Council Office and Regional Councils*.

Motions

Motions are brought to the Candidacy Board as a whole and discussed and determined by vote by the full Candidacy Board. Any guest interviewers are not voting members of the Board. Motions must be minuted.

Interviews on the Candidacy Pathway

Promise

Applicant's Preparation

The applicant has been in contact with the Vocational Minister and has used the [Candidacy Pathway Roadmap](#) to become familiar with the process and begin discernment.

Candidacy Board Will Have Read These Required Documents

- Promise Application
- Police Records Check
- Résumé
- Promise Reference 1
- Promise Reference 2
- Promise Mentor Letter
- Theological school annual report, if attending

Interview Guidelines

The interview focuses on building a relationship with the applicant, discerning their call to ministry, and assessing promise. At this time, it is helpful to learn an applicant's perceptions of who they are, what they have accomplished, and what their hopes are for the future. The Candidacy Board learns about the applicant through the written and oral accounts of their personal history and spiritual journey, and through questions during the interview about significant life events and people who have been meaningful along the way.

Criteria

The Candidacy Board determines *promise* for ministry leadership based on the following criteria:

- The person is able to articulate their call to ministry and has sound reason for choosing a particular ministry stream.
- Others in the church support and affirm their call to ministry.
- The person possesses some of the basic gifts and attributes required for ministry leadership, including a deep spiritual life and self-knowledge as articulated in the [Competencies for Formation for Ministry](#).
- They demonstrate the potential for further development and have a willingness to learn and grow.

Use [Promise Interview Questions](#) in the Prepared Interview Questions section of this handbook to engage the interviewee. Incorporate knowledge of their written submissions in your interview.

Post-Interview Decision

There are three possible outcomes:

- *There is clear evidence of promise.* The Candidacy Board provides clear direction to the applicant on their next stages and what they need to do in order to demonstrate suitability and be approved as a candidate.
- *The evidence of promise is not clear.* The Candidacy Board is not yet able to affirm that the applicant demonstrates promise. The applicant needs to take time for further discernment and develop greater clarity about their call. Areas for exploration are named, and the applicant is directed to meet with the Candidacy Board when these areas have been addressed.
- *The applicant does not meet the criteria for promise.* The Candidacy Board encourages the individual to continue in lay leadership.

Prepare and file official report of interview:

- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming promise/not yet/no

Motion

That the [name] Candidacy Board affirm [name] demonstrates promise for ministry.

We approve the directions, recommendations, next steps, restrictions outlined below and have discussed these with [name]...

Or

That [name] does not demonstrate promise for ministry and we agree to discontinue their Candidacy Pathway process.

Suitability

Applicant's Preparation

In addition to meeting the requirements for promise, the interviewee will:

- a. have been actively involved in the United Church for the last 24 months;
- b. be a member of the United Church;
- c. have completed mandatory trainings;
- d. agree to become a member of the United Church pension plan and group insurance plan upon eligibility for enrolment; and
- e. have completed any required or recommended third-party personal, vocational, or leadership assessment and reflection

Further, they have a plan for beginning, or have begun, their theological education. The third-party assessment report affirms their suitability for ministry leadership, and they are prepared to articulate achievable goals for further learning and development.

Candidacy Board will have read these required documents

- Suitability Application
- Proof of Membership
- Boundaries Completion (noted in Education > Completed Professional Requirements section of D365)
- Racial Justice Completion (noted in Education > Completed Professional Requirements section of D365)
- Third-party assessment report, if any
- Third-party assessment self-reflection, if submitting report
- Theological school annual report, if attending
- Circle of Accompaniment journal entries
- Centre for Christian Studies' Reports and Field Education Evaluations (diaconal candidates only)

Interview Guidelines

The interview for assessing suitability leads to a decision about candidacy. If the applicant is approved as a candidate, a substantial investment in further training and development is required. For this reason, the Candidacy Board must ensure that the applicant demonstrates a depth of understanding of their gifts and abilities for ministry.

If this is the applicant's first interview, the Candidacy Board ensures that the criteria for assessing promise are also applied.

Criteria

The Candidacy Board determines suitability for candidacy based on the following criteria:

- The person meets the criteria for promise.
- They have a well-reasoned plan related to theological education and have started to identify potential learning goals.
- If submitting a third-party assessment, the assessment affirms suitability for a vocation in ministry; they have prepared a reflection on the report and are able to identify achievable goals for leadership development for ministry based on the assessment.
- They have met all of the additional requirements for candidacy as outlined in the Candidacy Pathway Policy.

Use [Suitability Interview Questions](#) in the Prepared Interview Questions section of this handbook to engage the interviewee. Incorporate knowledge of their written submissions in your interview.

Post-Interview Decision

There are three possible outcomes:

- *There is clear evidence of suitability, and the Candidacy Board approves the applicant as a candidate.* The Candidacy Board provides clear direction to the candidate on their next stages on the pathway.

- *The evidence of suitability is unclear.* The Candidacy Board is not yet able to affirm that the applicant demonstrates suitability. The applicant needs to take time for further discernment and develop greater clarity about their call. Areas for exploration are named, and the applicant is directed to meet with the Candidacy Board when these areas have been addressed.
- *The applicant does not meet the criteria for suitability.* The Candidacy Board encourages the individual to continue in lay leadership.

Prepare and file official report of interview:

- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming suitability/not yet/no

Motion

That the [name] Candidacy Board affirms [name] demonstrates [*promise and*] suitability for ministry and that we approve them as a candidate for (*ordained ministry, diaconal ministry, or designated lay ministry*).

We approve the directions, recommendations, next steps, and restrictions outlined below and have discussed these with [name]...

Or

That [name] does not demonstrate suitability for candidacy and we agree to discontinue their Candidacy Pathway process.

Benchmark

Applicant's Preparation

If a candidate is in a program that requires a benchmark interview, they will be guided at the appropriate time to make an application. In other circumstances, the Vocational Minister provides an application or requests necessary documentation.

The candidate should be prepared to discuss their progress relative to the [Competencies for Formation for Ministry](#).

Candidacy Board Will Have Read These Required Documents

- Diaconal Benchmark Application **OR**
- DLM Benchmark Application **OR**
- General Benchmark Application, if provided
- Theological school annual report
- Circle of Accompaniment journal entries
- Centre for Christian Studies' Field Education Evaluations (diaconal candidates only)
- SME Check-in and/or Mid-Term Evaluation (if complete prior to benchmark)

In cases where other circumstances (long period between interviews, request by candidate, etc.) lead to a benchmark interview, the Vocational Minister will prepare the Candidacy Board for the interview and provide any necessary documents.

Interview Guidelines

It is helpful to hold a benchmark interview with those in the DLM program, the AST Summer Distance program, the Centre for Christian Studies program, and the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre program.

The Candidacy Board ensures that the applicant/candidate is supported in identifying and tracking their learning and growth at this point in their pathway.

The applicant/candidate is invited to review their progress related to the [Competencies for Formation for Ministry](#) and to identify priority areas for their goals moving forward.

The Candidacy Board initiates conversation about their experience with the other requirements of the Candidacy Pathway, including with their Circle of Accompaniment and their accomplishments in theological education.

Use [Benchmark Interview Questions](#) in the Prepared Interview Questions section of this handbook to engage the interviewee, recognizing that the Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that align with the interviewee's particular circumstance.

Post-Interview Decision

There are two possible outcomes:

- *The interviewee continues to demonstrate suitability.* The Candidacy Board provides direction on the [Competencies for Formation for Ministry](#) that require further development and growth and indicate the next stages on the person's pathway.
- *The interviewee does not demonstrate suitability.* Despite providing appropriate development opportunities, the interviewee has not sufficiently demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for the vocation of ministry. The Candidacy Board can make a decision to follow the process to terminate candidacy.

Prepare and file official report of interview:

- Candidacy Board post-interview letter

Motion

That the [name] Candidacy Board approve the directions, recommendations, restrictions outlined below and have discussed these with [name]...

Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education

Applicant's Preparation

In addition to meeting the requirements for Promise and Suitability, the *candidate* interviewee will prepare a set of suitable learning goals for the Supervised Ministry Education experience in relation to the [Competencies for Formation for Ministry](#) and the [Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice](#). It is recommended that an educational advisor and/or Candidacy Board SME specialist assist them with these goals.

It is also recommended that the candidate set learning goals in response to the report from any vocational or leadership assessment they have undertaken.

Candidacy Board Will Have Read These Required Documents

- Readiness for SME Application
- SME Reference 1
- SME Reference 2
- SME Learning Goals
- Third-party vocational or leadership assessment report, if any
- Reflection on third-party vocational or leadership assessment report, if submitting
- Theological school annual report
- Circle of Accompaniment journal entries

Interview Guidelines

The Candidacy Board conducts an interview to explore readiness for Supervised Ministry Education and to discuss how the experience could facilitate learning and further growth. The Candidacy Board provides direction for the development of learning goals and identifies the appropriate context(s) for the SME.

During the interview, the Candidacy Board seeks clarity on the following:

- Does the person's proficiency in the Competencies for Ministry demonstrate that their learning would best take place within the context of team ministry, solo ministry, in a pastoral charge, or in another setting?
- Are they an independent learner, or would they thrive with an on-site supervisor?

Signs that the interviewee is *not* ready for SME in solo ministry in a pastoral charge include the following:

- Unsure of their relationship with God
- No realistic idea of what a minister does
- No experience or evidence that they are good at time management
- No recently developed skills or ideas
- No preparatory work such as reading, courses, pulpit supply, or visitation
- Not yet demonstrated an appropriate threshold of social and emotional competence suitable for the practice of ministry

- Not yet demonstrated appropriate intercultural competence for leading in diverse communities

The interviewee should come prepared to present possible learning goals in relation to the [Competencies for Formation for Ministry](#) and the [Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice](#). The Candidacy Board dedicates time to discussing these goals with the applicant/candidate.

Criteria

The Candidacy Board determines *readiness for Supervised Ministry Education* based on the following criteria:

- The person meets the criteria for suitability. Approval of candidacy is a prerequisite to readiness for SME.
- The candidate has sufficient education or training to undertake the responsibilities of ministry.
- The candidate has prepared for the Educational Supervisor a set of suitable learning goals for the SME experience in relation to the *Competencies for Formation for Ministry* and the *Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice*.
- The candidate can articulate the relationship between ministry in the community of faith and their own learning goals.

Use [Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education Interview Questions](#) in the Prepared Interview Questions section of this handbook to engage the interviewee, recognizing that the Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that align with the interviewee's particular circumstance. Incorporate knowledge of their written submissions in your interview.

Post-Interview Decision

There are three possible outcomes:

- *The Candidacy Board approves the candidate as ready for Supervised Ministry Education.* It provides clear direction to the candidate on the focus of learning goals, the context for the experience, and any additional expectations.
- *The Candidacy Board is not yet able to affirm that the candidate is ready for SME.* Areas for greater development and exploration are named, and the applicant/candidate is directed to meet with the Candidacy Board when these areas have been addressed.
- *The applicant/candidate does not meet the criteria for readiness for SME, and demonstrates that further growth and development will not be possible.* The Candidacy Board encourages the individual to continue in lay leadership. The Candidacy Board can make a decision to follow the process to terminate candidacy.

Prepare and file official report of interview:

- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming readiness/not yet/no

Motion

That the [name] Candidacy Board approve [name] as ready for Supervised Ministry Education. We agree to the directions, learning goals, next steps, and restrictions outlined below and have discussed these with [name]...

Or

That [name] does not demonstrate readiness for Supervised Ministry Education. We approve the directions, next steps, and restrictions outlined below and have discussed these with [name]...

Readiness for Candidate Supply Appointment

Applicant's Preparation

The candidate must have met the requirements for promise and suitability and discussed their application for candidate supply with their Vocational Minister and the Pastoral Relations Minister.

Candidacy Board Will Have Read This Required Document

- Readiness for Appointment Application

Interview Guidelines

The Candidacy Board conducts an interview to explore readiness for candidate supply appointment outside the context of Supervised Ministry Education.

Criteria

The Candidacy Board determines a candidate's *readiness to serve in a candidate supply appointment* based on the following criteria:

- The person meets the criteria for suitability and has already been approved as a candidate.
- They have sufficient education or training to undertake the responsibilities of ministry.
- They have sufficient proficiency in the [Competencies for Formation for Ministry](#) and the [Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice](#).
- They demonstrate strong time-management skills in order to fulfill the role in a community of faith and attend to other commitments.

Use [Candidate Supply Appointment Interview Questions](#) in the Prepared Interview Questions section of this handbook to engage the interviewee, recognizing that the Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that align with the interviewee's particular circumstance. Incorporate knowledge of their written submissions in your interview.

Post-Interview Decision

There are three possible outcomes:

- *The Candidacy Board approves the candidate as ready for candidate supply appointment.*
- *The Candidacy Board is not yet able to affirm that the candidate is ready for a candidate supply appointment.* Areas for greater development and exploration are named, and the applicant/candidate is directed to meet with the Candidacy Board when these areas have been addressed.
- *The applicant does not meet the criteria and demonstrates that further growth and development will not be possible.* The Candidacy Board encourages the individual to continue in lay leadership. The Candidacy Board can make a decision to follow the process to terminate candidacy.

Prepare and file official report of interview:

- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming readiness/not yet/no

Motion

That the [*name*] Candidacy Board approve [*name*] as ready for ministry leadership in a pastoral charge appointment. We agree to the directions, recommendations, and restrictions outlined below and have discussed these with [*name*]...

Or

That [*name*] does not demonstrate readiness for ministry leadership in a pastoral charge appointment. We approve the directions, next steps, and restrictions outlined below and have discussed these with [*name*]...

Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition

Applicant's Preparation

Before making an application for Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition, the candidate will have submitted all Supervised Ministry Education (DLM, ordained) or Field Education Evaluation (diaconal) reports.

Diaconal and ordained candidates must have completed, or be in the final term of the program in which they complete, United Church requirements for ordered ministry (testamur). DLM students must have successfully completed their DLM certification program.

They should review all official correspondence from the Candidacy Board and have attended to all the requirements outlined there.

Candidacy Board Will Have Read These Required Documents

For completion of SME

- SME Check-in Evaluation
- SME Mid-Term Evaluation
- SME Final Evaluation
- SME revised learning goals (if required)

Or for diaconal students

- Centre for Christian Studies report
- Field Education Evaluation Year 3 (in addition to Year 1 and 2)

Additionally:

- Readiness for Ordination Commissioning Recognition Application

- Final theological school annual report
- Third-party leadership assessment report, if any
- Circle of Accompaniment journal entries

They will also review all of their official correspondence:

- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming promise/not yet/no
- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming suitability/not yet/no
- Candidacy Board post-benchmark interview letter, if any
- Candidacy Board post-SME readiness interview letter—affirming readiness/not yet/no
- Candidacy Board letter after SME Check-in and Mid-Term Evaluations, if any
- Candidacy Board letter noting completion of SME requirement (required)

Interview Guidelines

The assessment is intended to elicit the information needed to determine whether the candidate is ready for commissioning, ordination, or recognition. The focus is on the realities of

ministry and needs of the church in society: Does the candidate demonstrate a calling and competence to offer ministerial leadership in this context?

It is the responsibility of the Candidacy Board to determine whether the candidate is in essential agreement with the doctrine of the United Church. Interview questions should be set with the intention to make this determination.

Use [Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition Interview Questions](#) in the Prepared Interview Questions section of this handbook as guidelines to engage the interviewee, recognizing that the Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that align with the interviewee's particular circumstance. Incorporate knowledge of their written submissions in your interview.

Criteria

The Candidacy Board determines *readiness for commissioning, ordination, or recognition* based on the following criteria:

- The candidate is at or near completion of the equipping phase of the pathway.
- The candidate demonstrates sufficient competence for each of the [Competencies for Ministry Formation and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#) goal areas.
- The candidate is able to articulate a functional understanding of the [Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice](#) and name why these standards are important in ministry leadership.
- They demonstrate self-awareness and intercultural competence, and can identify appropriate and particular areas for growth for the sake of their ministry leadership in community.
- They demonstrate a commitment to, and plan for, lifelong leadership development and can articulate ongoing learning goals that reflect their experience and the church's needs.
- They have a well-developed sense of pastoral identity in service to the church.
- They agree to comply with the polity of the United Church.
- They are in essential agreement with the statement of doctrine of the United Church.

Post-Interview Decision

There are three possible outcomes:

- *The Candidacy Board authorizes the candidate as ready for commissioning, ordination, or recognition.*
- *The Candidacy Board is not yet able to authorize readiness for commissioning, ordination, or recognition. Areas for further development and exploration are named, and the candidate is directed to meet with the Candidacy Board once these areas have been addressed.*
- *The applicant does not meet the criteria and demonstrates that further growth and development will not be possible. The Candidacy Board encourages the individual to*

continue in lay leadership. The Candidacy Board can make a decision to follow the process to terminate candidacy.

Prepare and file official report of interview:

- Candidacy Board post-interview letter

Motion

That the [*name*] Candidacy Board approve [*name*] as ready for commissioning, ordination, or recognition subject to successful completion of [*name what applies—may include Supervised Ministry Education, theological education, etc.*].

Note: IF a pending motion is made, minutes of the following meeting MUST include an update on completion of outstanding requirements:

That the [*name*] Candidacy Board affirms that [*name of candidate*] has completed the requirements for readiness for commissioning, ordination, or recognition and that this confirmation be forwarded to the [*name*] Regional Council.

Note that certification of completion of the testamur is required for commissioning and ordination. The final school report may or may not include this certification. If not, be sure to minute the Candidacy Board's reception of notification from the school of completion of the testamur.

Resigning from or Terminating Candidacy Interview

Applicant's Preparation

If a candidate wishes to resign from the Candidacy Pathway process, they must notify the Candidacy Board in writing, indicating the date of and reasons for their voluntary withdrawal.

When the Candidacy Board initiates the resignation/termination interview, the candidate follows the process outlined in the [Candidacy Pathway Policy](#), including preparing a response to any investigation related to pending termination or remedial measures.

Candidacy Board Preparation

In case of resignation:

- Candidacy Board letter acknowledging receipt/confirming withdrawal

In case of pending termination, follow process outlined in [Candidacy Pathway Policy](#), including:

- Documents: The Candidacy Board reviews the candidate's file and all relevant documents that may inform the decision to terminate candidacy.
- Notification: The Candidacy Board informs the candidate about the concerns and that there are two possible outcomes, including that their Candidacy Pathway process may be terminated.

Interview Guidelines

This interview must be recorded.

The Candidacy Board interviews the candidate to discuss the concerns that have been raised. Representatives from the body that raised the concerns (e.g., Circle of Accompaniment, governing body, regional council) may be included as required to provide information on the context of the concerns. The candidate may bring an accompanier to the interview to debrief with after the interview. If the interview arises from an investigation of a complaint, the candidate is invited to respond to the findings of the investigation as well as the remedy determined by the Candidacy Board.

Post-Interview Decision

There are two possible outcomes:

- *Termination of candidacy:* If the concerns are not adequately addressed in the interview, and if the Candidacy Board discerns that the candidate lacks the skills, calling, or ability to change their behaviour, then the Candidacy Board makes the decision to terminate candidacy.
- *Remedial work:* If the concerns are adequately addressed and the Candidacy Board is satisfied that the candidacy process can continue, then the Candidacy Board identifies remedial work for the candidate.

Prepare and file official report of interview:

- Candidacy Board letter naming termination of Candidacy Pathway process

OR

- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—detailing decision, including any remedial expectations

Motion

Withdraw

Upon the request of *[name]*, the *[name]* Candidacy Board approves the withdrawal of *[name]* from the Candidacy Pathway process.

Terminate

That the *[name]* Candidacy Board terminate the candidacy of *[name]*.

Prepared Interview Questions

Hosting Interviews

Interviews can be challenging for both interviewer and interviewee. Your preparation will put the interviewee at ease. Consider the following:

- For in-person interviews, prepare and orient participants by including directions, information on parking, signs to the interview room, and other useful details.
- Use the same care and attention for online interviews. Check technology and the online connection in advance, and make sure all participants are familiar with the platform, including how to reconnect if necessary.
- Create a virtual background that is calm and uncluttered or a physical environment that is warm and welcoming
- Send a member of the interview team to accompany the interviewee into the interview room.
- For online interviews, send a member of the interview team into the virtual waiting room to “bring” them into the interview.

Beginning

- Introduce yourselves and describe your involvement in the church and the Candidacy Board.
- Orient the interviewee to what the interview will be like and what it is for.
- Give the interviewee a chance to ask questions about the process, expectations, and so on.
- Pray.

Ending

- End the time together after a period of silence to be sure all that needs to be shared has been said and heard.
- Make sure the interviewee understands the immediate next steps: who will be in touch with them and when.
- Close with prayer.

Note: The following section contains interview questions that are being revised to reflect the Office of Vocation’s equity standards. Updates may be available through your Vocational Minister.

Promise Interview Questions

Prepare for your interview by reviewing the information on the [Promise interview](#) in the Interviews on the Candidacy Pathway section of this handbook. Incorporate knowledge of the interviewee's written submissions in your interview.

What follows are general guidelines. The Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that more closely align with the interviewee's particular circumstance.

Introductory Questions

Incorporate what you have learned from the written submissions into the introductory questions. For example, "We read that you were inspired by your experience as a Climate Motivator to explore ministry; tell us more about the desire you feel to explore your call." Or, "Your references are from a camp leader and your current minister; would you say these are the people who helped you discern your call?"

- Tell us about your spiritual journey and how it has led to your desire to explore a call to ministry.
- What events or people have been important for you in learning about your call?
- What gifts do you bring to ministry? How have these gifts been affirmed by others either within or outside the church?
- How did you go about discerning your call to ministry?

Questions Based on the *Competencies for Formation for Ministry*

Spiritual Practices and Development of Identity in Ministry

- Where do you find spiritual nurture?
- How do you currently express your spirituality? What are familiar ways? Are you are exploring new expressions?
- Describe an experience in a faith community setting that was particularly meaningful for you. What made it so?
- Are there people who have been role models in your life? If so, what qualities or abilities do they have that you most appreciate?
- What helps you to be at your best with and for others?

Integrate, Articulate, and Facilitate Learning of Christian Faith

- What is your preferred way to learn? Or, what is your learning style?
- Describe a recent learning experience. What was most challenging about it? most rewarding?
- What influence has the Bible had on your life and faith formation?
- What knowledge and skills do you especially want to learn to equip yourself for ministry?
- How do you go about finding out how you are perceived by others?
- In your experience, what helps communities of faith to learn? What gets in the way?

Expand Cultural and Contextual Knowledge and Analysis

- How has your Christian faith shaped your values, decisions, and actions?
- What helps you stay open and consider other points of view, especially about issues you really care about? What gets in the way?
- What are some social justice issues currently present where you live?
- What are the social justice issues that speak to you most directly? Describe any experience you've had with these issues.
- What are the opportunities and challenges for the church as it seeks to become an intercultural church?

Demonstrate Leadership Skills for Community Life

- Describe a time when you were part of a rewarding team or group experience. What role did you have on the team? What made the experience so positive?
- How do you usually go about planning and priority setting to achieve your goals?
- How do you manage significant change when it affects you directly? Where do you find support in these situations?
- How do you go about making difficult decisions?
- When you encounter disagreements or conflicts, how do you usually handle them?
- In your opinion, what is the role of the church in the world today?

Additional Questions

Choose something from the written submissions to highlight, affirm, or discuss.

- What do you still want to discover and learn as you continue in discernment?
- Is there anything we didn't discuss today that you would like to mention or ask about?

Suitability Interview Questions

Prepare for your interview by reviewing the information on the [Suitability interview](#) in the Interviews on the Candidacy Pathway section of this handbook. Incorporate knowledge of the interviewee's written submissions in your interview.

What follows are general guidelines. The Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that more closely align with the interviewee's particular circumstance.

Introductory Questions

- *(If this is not a first interview)* How has your sense of call developed since our last session together?
- Tell us about your selection of a ministry stream. How has your understanding of this choice developed *(since our last meeting)*?
- What have you learned about yourself *(over this time period)*?

Questions Based on the *Competencies for Formation for Ministry*

Spiritual Practices and Development of Identity in Ministry

- Tell us about your current spiritual practices and why they have been important.
- In your experience in a faith community, what congregational or group spiritual practices have been most meaningful for you? What practices do you think have been most meaningful for others?
- What helps you deal positively with personal challenges in your life (e.g., other people, journaling)?
- How do you typically handle praise? criticism?
- How would you describe Christian beliefs to someone from another faith tradition or with no faith tradition?

Integrate, Articulate, and Facilitate Learning of Christian Faith

- Describe a time when you felt highly motivated and engaged in a learning situation. What do you think made it so rewarding?
- From what you have discovered so far, how do you feel about the educational requirements of your preferred ministry stream?
- What supports do you have in place that will facilitate undertaking this education (e.g., personal circumstances, finances)?
- What are you most excited about learning?
- In your experience, what are some of the learning needs and priorities within communities of faith?

Expand Cultural and Contextual Knowledge and Analysis

- How do you go about establishing relationships of trust?
- Have you engaged in reflecting on experience with others in a group setting? If so, what was most positive about that experience? most challenging?

- What do you think communities of faith can do to become genuinely intercultural?
- What does “being part of God’s purposes in the world” mean to you as an individual and as a member of a faith community?
- What skills and knowledge do you think ministry leaders need in order to support their faith communities in increasing awareness and action for social justice?
- Can you share a specific experience where you successfully navigated cultural differences in a ministry setting? What did you learn from that experience?

Demonstrate Leadership Skills for Community Life

- What would you say are important characteristics of effective ministry leaders?
- How do you define cultural competence, and why is it important for a minister serving a multicultural/intercultural congregation?
- Tell us about your experience in planning and priority setting with others to achieve shared goals.
- When you are working with teams, how do you manage others’ expectations?
- What do you think are some of the biggest challenges in managing church administrative affairs? Describe any experience you’ve had that illustrates these challenges.
- What does accountability mean for organizations, like the church, that rely on volunteers?

Additional Questions

- What gifts do you think you will bring to ministry? Has this list changed over the course of your discernment for ministry? How have these gifts been affirmed by others either within or outside the church?
- What are your hopes for the Circle of Accompaniment? What format do you think will be most beneficial to you, and why?
- What did you learn about yourself in the assessment you undertook? What are you learning about your intercultural competencies?
- Is there anything we didn’t discuss today that you would like to mention or ask about?

Benchmark Interview Questions

Prepare for your interview by reviewing the information on the [Benchmark interview](#) in the Interviews on the Candidacy Pathway section of this handbook. Incorporate knowledge of the interviewee's written submissions in your interview.

What follows are general guidelines. The Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that more closely align with the interviewee's particular circumstance.

Beginning

- Interviewers introduce themselves.
- Outline the process and timing.
- Give the interviewee a chance to ask questions about process, expectations, and so on.
- Pray.

General Questions

- Since we last met, how has your sense of call been confirmed or unsettled?
- What are your learning goals? At this time in your journey, where do you see your need to learn and grow in your preparation for ministry?
- What courses or learning circles have challenged and developed your faith so far? How and why? Are you having any challenges with your course load and other requirements of your program of study?
- How are you handling your finances?
- Give us an update on your Circle of Accompaniment.
- What do you think needs to be the focus of your learning to complete your program of study?

Questions Based on the *Competencies for Formation for Ministry and the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel*

Spiritual Practices and Development of Identity in Ministry

- What is your current understanding of the Trinity, salvation, and grace? How might this understanding have changed through your ministry experience so far?
- What excites you about the possibility of being commissioned, ordained, or recognized? What makes you apprehensive?
- What sustains/inspires your faith or spiritual life?
- What components of your program of study have taught you the most about yourself and your style of ministry? How and why?
- How have you dealt with conflict?
- How do you plan to continuously educate yourself on issues related to cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion to enhance your effectiveness as a minister in a multicultural/intercultural environment?

Integrate, Articulate, and Facilitate Learning of Christian Faith

- What are you learning about the ethos and doctrine of the United Church? How have you seen it expressed in your field placement or Supervised Ministry Education context?
- Have you facilitated learning experiences within a community of faith? What was that like for you? How did you prepare? How did you reflect on and evaluate the experience?
- How have you experienced scripture being used in the contexts you have served so far? Has this approach resonated with you or presented you with challenges?

Expand Cultural and Contextual Knowledge and Analysis

- What have you experienced in your role in supporting the community's discernment and decision-making about its call to participate in God's purposes in the world?
- How have you encouraged diverse voices and perspectives—for example, with different generations, cultures, or socioeconomic circumstances? Please share an example.
- In your experience, what is the best way to deal with lack of awareness arising from privilege and prejudice?
- What skills and knowledge have you applied to support a community of faith in increasing awareness and action for social justice? What challenges have you encountered, and how have you responded?

Demonstrate Leadership Skills for Community Life

- Given that stress management is important, what are your insights into what causes you stress in ministry? What coping tools have you developed so far?
- How are you managing your time? What strengths, weaknesses, and challenges are you discovering in your time management?
- How have you been able to offer the gifts and abilities you have for ministry leadership? How have your gifts of leadership been received by others?
- How have you managed personal and professional boundaries? What has been the most challenging aspect of this for you?

Possible Outcomes

- *The interviewee continues to demonstrate suitability.* The Candidacy Board provides direction on the *Competencies for Formation for Ministry* that require further development and growth and indicate the next stages on the person's pathway.
- *The interviewee does not demonstrate suitability.* Despite providing appropriate development opportunities, the interviewee has not sufficiently demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for the vocation of ministry. The Candidacy Board can make a decision to follow the process to terminate candidacy.

Readiness for Supervised Ministry Interview Questions

Prepare for your interview by reviewing the information on the [Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education interview](#) in the Interviews on the Candidacy Pathway section of this handbook. Incorporate knowledge of the interviewee's written submissions in your interview.

What follows are general guidelines. The Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that more closely align with the interviewee's particular circumstance.

Beginning

- Interviewers introduce themselves.
- Outline the process and timing.
- Give the interviewee a chance to ask questions about process, expectations, and so on.
- Pray.

General Questions

- What do you think a typical day in the life of a minister is like? What about a typical week, month, or year?
- What are your hopes, concerns, and questions as you consider beginning SME?
- What learning goals have you and others identified? What Competencies for Formation for Ministry need the most attention?
- In your experience, what are the opportunities and challenges involved with being supervised? How do you think you can make the most of the opportunities? best deal with the challenges?
- Do you have personal needs that should be considered before you undertake SME (e.g., family obligations, health issues)?
- What context for SME do you think would best support your learning goals?
- You are beginning in your first pastoral charge. You can take only three books for your library (assume there are Bibles already). Which three books would you take, and why?

Questions Based on the *Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel*

Spiritual Practices and Development of Identity in Ministry

- How has your theology evolved, and how will this development inform your ministry in the SME? What will your approach be when churchgoers' theology differs from your own?
- How do you seek feedback to ensure your words and actions are perceived positively and as you intended?
- How do you deal with conflict if you encounter it? Describe occasions when you've dealt with conflict in the past.
- How do you support people who are dealing with loss and grief? How will you manage the impact that these situations could have on you personally?

- In your opinion, what strategies can ministers employ to foster inclusivity and create a sense of belonging for individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds?

Integrate, Articulate, and Facilitate Learning of Christian Faith

- In your experience, what is the best way to make scripture accessible and engaging for a learning community?
- How do you facilitate learning when there are different understandings of the Christian faith; for example, some have been Christians their whole lives, and others are brand new to the faith?
- What have you learned about your effectiveness as a preacher, and how will you use that knowledge during the SME?
- How will you process your experience and learning with your educational supervisor and the lay supervision team?
- Can you provide an example of a time when you encountered a cultural misunderstanding or conflict within the community of faith? How did you address it?
- How do you plan to incorporate elements of diverse cultural traditions and practices into your ministry while respecting the core beliefs and values of the United Church?

Expand Cultural and Contextual Knowledge and Analysis

- How will you go about establishing mutual relationships of trust?
- What do you see as your role in supporting the community's discernment and decision-making about its call to participate in God's purposes in the world?
- How will you encourage diverse voices and perspectives—for example, with different generations, cultures, and socioeconomic life circumstances?
- In your experience, what is the best way to deal with lack of awareness arising from privilege and prejudice?
- What skills and knowledge do you bring to the SME to support the community in increasing awareness and action for social justice?
- What steps would you take to ensure effective communication and engagement with members of the congregation who may not speak English as their first language?

Demonstrate Leadership Skills for Community Life

- What kind of a leader are you? When is your style most effective? least effective?
- What is your understanding of the purposes of the church?
- How do you learn how decisions are made and how work gets done in the community of faith?
- How will you establish and manage expectations for your time in ministry?
- How will you ensure that you are managing personal and professional boundaries? What has been the most challenging aspect of managing boundaries for you?
- How do you envision collaborating with leaders and volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds to strengthen the church community?
- Describe your experience working with marginalized or underrepresented communities within a religious context. What initiatives did you implement to support their needs

and concerns? How do you approach the challenge of addressing spiritual needs and beliefs that may vary across different cultural groups within a congregation?

- Ministry personnel are subject to the discipline and oversight of The United Church of Canada. What does the exercise of this discipline and oversight mean? What are your views on being subject to this discipline and oversight?

Case Studies

Scenario 1

You are a candidate for ministry who is providing weekend supply in a pastoral charge (leading worship and providing pastoral care for a limited number of hours) while the minister is away because of illness. It may be some time before the minister is able to return. You've noticed that a long-time active member of the congregation is rude and dismissive if anyone has questions or offers suggestions about the volunteer work this member is involved with. This behaviour is discouraging others from getting involved, including newcomers to the congregation. What will you do?

Scenario 2

You are providing pulpit supply in a pastoral charge (leading worship on Sunday mornings) while the minister is away on summer vacation. A member of the congregation comes to you with complaints about the music director and her choice of music. He urges you to do something because the minister won't take any action, even though "lots of people have complained." What will you do?

Scenario 3

You are serving in a half-time appointment in a pastoral charge, and it's going well. People really like you and want you to be involved in a variety of activities and committee meetings—so many, in fact, that you realize your hours of work have grown significantly. You can't take on this extra time because of other commitments, but at the same time you feel that they really need your support. What will you do?

Presentation

Invite the interviewee to come prepared to present on one of the following:

Suggestion 1

Tell us about a ministry in the church that is near and dear to your heart (for example, children and youth, pastoral care, adult education, outreach). What is important to understand about this ministry, and what does it take to ensure it is healthy and thriving?

Suggestion 2

Present a five-minute sermonette on your favourite Bible passage or story.

Suggestion 3

You've been asked by a church council to give a short presentation on how they can begin to address the needs of the surrounding community and become more involved in this work as a church rather than leaving it to one or two members.

Candidate Supply Appointment Interview Questions

Prepare for your interview by reviewing the information on the [Readiness for Candidate Supply Appointment interview](#) in the Interviews on the Candidacy Pathway section of this handbook. Incorporate knowledge of the interviewee's written submissions in your interview.

What follows are general guidelines. The Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that more closely align with the interviewee's particular circumstance.

General Questions

- What are your hopes, concerns, and questions as you consider serving in an appointment?
- What are your reasons for wanting to serve in an appointment?
- What do you think a typical day in the life of a minister is like? What about a typical week, month, or year?

Questions Based on the *Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel*

Spiritual Practices and Development of Identity in Ministry

- What is your understanding of Christian theology, and how does it relate to the theologies that co-exist in the United Church?
- How has your theological understanding evolved, and how will this development inform your ministry in a community of faith?
- How do you deal with conflict if you encounter it? Describe occasions when you've dealt with conflict in the past.
- How do you support people who are dealing with loss and grief? How will you manage the impact that these situations could have on you personally?
- How do you replenish your energy? What role does faith play in restoring your energy? How do you maintain a close relationship with God in your life? Give some examples.

Integrate, Articulate, and Facilitate Learning of Christian Faith

- In your experience, what is the best way to make scripture accessible and engaging for a learning community?
- How do you facilitate learning when there are different understandings of the Christian faith? What will your approach be to the theological diversity that will exist in your community of faith? In what way does this diversity challenge you? excite you?
- How do you go about preparing a worship service? How much experience have you had with your approach? Where do you start when preparing a sermon? Why?
- What do you think about death, and life after death? How would you provide pastoral care to a family that has experienced loss? How would you prepare the funeral service?

Expand Cultural and Contextual Knowledge and Analysis

- How will you go about establishing mutual relationships of trust?

- What do you see as your role in supporting the community's discernment and decision-making about its call to participate in God's purposes in the world?
- How will you encourage diverse voices and perspectives—for example, with different generations, cultures, and socioeconomic life circumstances?
- In your experience, what is the best way to deal with lack of awareness arising from privilege and prejudice?
- What skills and knowledge do you bring to support the community in increasing awareness and action for social justice?

Demonstrate Leadership Skills for Community Life

- What kind of a leader are you? When is your style most effective? least effective?
- How do you learn how decisions are made and how work gets done in the community of faith?
- How do you react to stress? Do you get anxious or depressed when you are under stress? How have you managed in the past, and how do you plan to manage in the future?
- How will you ensure you are managing personal and professional boundaries? What has been the most challenging aspect of managing boundaries for you?
- Ministry personnel are subject to the discipline and oversight of The United Church of Canada. What does the exercise of this discipline and oversight mean? What are your views on being subject to this discipline and oversight?

Case Studies

The [case studies in the Readiness for Supervised Ministry Interview Questions](#) section can be used.

Presentation

Invite the interviewee to come prepared to present on one of the following:

Suggestion 1

Present a five-minute sermonette that represents the kind of sermon you would preach for your first Sunday with the community of faith.

Suggestion 2

After keeping a time planner for a busy week and a quiet week in your life, identify whom each activity is for (e.g., God, self, family, work, study). Then create an imaginary time plan of what it would be like if you were in a candidate supply appointment. The presentation should touch on the following:

- What will the effect of the appointment be on what you are doing now?
- How will that timetable affect you as a person and as a minister?
- How will it affect your family and your ongoing commitments?
- What are you going to change or do differently to accommodate your various commitments?

- How stressful will that be for you and your family, and how do you plan to manage stress?

Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition Interview Questions

Prepare for your interview by reviewing the information on the [Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition interview](#) in the Interviews on the Candidacy Pathway section of this handbook. Incorporate knowledge of the interviewee's written submissions in your interview.

What follows are general guidelines. The Candidacy Board needs to develop questions for conversation that more closely align with the interviewee's particular circumstance.

General Questions

- Please share some of the key insights and personal learning you have experienced as you have journeyed along the Candidacy Pathway.
- What have you found to be particularly helpful in terms of your well-being and resilience through this process? Where have you found support, and how do you plan to be supported in the future?
- How has your call to ministry evolved over this time?
- Are you in essential agreement with the doctrine of The United Church of Canada? What does essential agreement mean to you?

Questions Based on the *Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel*

Spiritual Practices and Development of Identity in Ministry

- How do you go about maintaining work/life balance? Describe when you've been successful in achieving balance and when you have not been successful.
- Ministry leaders are called to be authentic. What does this mean to you, and what are some of the challenges that come with authenticity?
- What have you learned about your own spiritual formation that you find useful in supporting others who seek to develop their spirituality? What other approaches have you or could you use when working with others?
- Please tell us about the role of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit in your personal life and the lives of believers.
- Tell us about a time when you felt most affirmed and upheld in your ministry, and about a time when you experienced doubts and discouragement. What did you learn from these situations?
- How do you self-manage when you are ministering to those who are experiencing suffering, loss, or anger?

Integrate, Articulate, and Facilitate Learning of Christian Faith

- Tell us about your learning style. What other learning styles have you encountered in working with others, and how have these styles influenced your approach?
- The United Church recognizes the following as doctrine: the Basis of Union's Twenty Articles of Doctrine, A Statement of Faith (1940), A New Creed, and A Song of Faith.

Which is the most meaningful for you, and why? What role do these statements have in the life of a faith community?

- How should the church go about developing disciples? What is the role of individual ministry leaders in this regard? of the wider church?
- How do you use the dimensions of reason, scripture, tradition, and experience in your educational initiatives with individuals and groups?
- Tell us about a time when you facilitated a particularly rewarding learning event with a community of faith. What happened to make it meaningful?
- What is your approach for making the Bible accessible to the community? What response have you had with this approach?
- What is your understanding of the sacraments?

Expand Cultural and Contextual Knowledge and Analysis

- Tell us about your involvement in ecumenical and/or interfaith events or projects. What did you learn?
- How would you go about helping a community of faith design and apply an ethical decision-making process to support right relationships within the church and to address issues and concerns in the wider community?
- What possibilities exist for designing worship in an intercultural setting? Describe any direct experience you've had in this area.
- Describe the involvement you've had in social justice and outreach. Is there a particular issue or initiative that has inspired and motivated you?
- How have you or would you encourage lay members to recognize needs beyond their own faith community and to become involved in seeking social justice in the wider world?
- Describe how you become sensitive to your implicit biases, unexamined assumptions, and other areas where you lack awareness. How can you and others in ministry leadership help others do the same? Share an experience that relates to your response.

Demonstrate Leadership Skills for Community Life

- What are the particular challenges involved with exercising leadership in a community of faith? Describe your leadership style. When do you find you are most effective with this style? When do you adapt it?
- How do you encourage and develop the leadership of others? Please share examples of when you were involved in leadership development.
- What have you learned about maintaining professional boundaries in a ministry role? How do you manage relationship dynamics when you are in a position of power and influence, and when you are not?
- Tell us about a time when you led a discernment process with a congregation or other group. What did you learn about leadership from that experience?
- Tell us about a time when you were directly involved in a disagreement or conflict while in a ministry role. What did you learn?

- What does accountability mean to you in the context of The United Church of Canada? How would you describe the obligations of ministry leaders in this regard?

Case Studies

Scenario 1

A member of the Ministry and Personnel Committee of your congregation has been seeing you for pastoral counselling. You have had four sessions together, and while you originally thought that the meetings were helpful, you are starting to become aware of a different dynamic. Not only does this member want to continue seeing you for pastoral counselling, but their behaviour also suggests that they may feel a romantic attraction to you. What will you do?

Scenario 2

You are the sole minister in a small but busy pastoral charge. Your spouse is a member of your congregation and is actively involved in the life of the church. Lately you've both become aware that a family that has belonged to the church for many years is seeking to become closer to you as a couple. You want to foster strong relationships at the church, but your partner senses that this family is seeking a special advantage based on the perception of having a close, intimate friendship with them. What will you do?

Scenario 3

You are a minister in a pastoral charge. A young couple who are members of your congregation have a child with a serious chronic illness. The situation is wearing them down, and they have shared with you that it is testing their faith in a loving and caring God. Why aren't their prayers for healing for their child being answered? What will you do?

Presentation

Invite the interviewee to come prepared to present on one of the following:

Suggestion 1

Tell us about your approach to faith formation and Christian education. From your experience and what you have learned, what are the main challenges involved in carrying out this ministry? What difference does context make when considering educational options? What are some current opportunities for bringing the gospel to people?

Suggestion 2

Present your ideas for how ministry leaders can best manage their physical, emotional, and spiritual health in the demanding work of serving others in ministry roles.

Suggestion 3

Your pastoral charge is in a multi-faith community setting. Members of your congregation have asked you to address why Christians believe in the Trinity, as they aren't sure how to answer questions they are encountering from friends of other faiths. Present a brief education session on the Trinity.

Note-Taking Template

A copy of this table can be used during an interview to help interviewers track their assessment and identify recommendations for next steps.

Understanding and Evidence of Competencies for Formation for Ministry			
Learning Outcome	Limited Understanding or Evidence	Evidence and Open to Learning and Development	Well-Developed Understanding and Evidence
Engage in Spiritual Practices and Development of Identity in Ministry			
Integrate, Articulate, and Facilitate Learning of Christian Faith			
Expand Cultural and Contextual Knowledge and Analyses			
Demonstrate Leadership within the Faith Community and Wider Community			

Response Form for After an Interview

This chart can be used to record the details that need to be shared with an applicant/candidate following an interview.

Decision of the Candidacy Board
Feedback Including Affirmations and Growing Edges
Next Stages and Recommendations Consider the timeline for future interviews, recommended learning goals related to the <i>Competencies for Formation for Ministry</i> , direction on the Circle of Accompaniment, and other details that the applicant/candidate will need to attend to at this point in their pathway.

Interview Documents Checklist

Documents for All Applicants/Candidates and All Streams

Promise

- Promise Application
- Police Records Check
- Résumé
- Promise Reference 1
- Promise Reference 2
- Promise Mentor Letter
- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming promise/not yet/no
- Theological school annual report, if attending

Suitability

- Suitability Application
- Proof of Membership
- Boundaries Completion (noted in Education > Completed Professional Requirements section of D365)
- Racial Justice Completion ((noted in Education > Completed Professional Requirements section of D365)
- Third-party assessment report, if any
- Third-party assessment self-reflection, if submitting report
- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming suitability/not yet/no
- Theological school annual report, if attending

Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education

- Readiness for SME Application
- SME Reference 1
- SME Reference 2
- SME Learning Goals
- Third-party assessment report, if any
- Third-party assessment self-reflection, if submitting report
- Candidacy Board post-interview letter—affirming readiness/not yet/no
- Theological school annual report

Supervised Ministry Education

- SME Check-in Evaluation
- SME Mid-Term Evaluation
- SME Final Evaluation
- SME revised learning goals (potentially)
- Candidacy Board letter after SME Check-In and Mid-Term Evaluations (potentially, not necessarily, required)

- Candidacy Board letter noting completion of SME requirement (required)
- Theological school annual report

Readiness for Commissioning/Ordination/Recognition

- Readiness for Ordination Commissioning Recognition Application
- Final theological school annual report
- Third-party leadership assessment report, if any
- Candidacy Board post-interview letter
- Transcripts (optional)
- Notification of completion of the testamur **required for ordination or commissioning**

Circle of Accompaniment

- Candidacy Board letter(s) outlining suggestions/requirements for Circle of Accompaniment
- Circle of Accompaniment journal entries

Theological School Annual Reports

- Theological school annual report
- Final theological school annual report **required for ordination, commissioning, recognition**
- Transcripts (optional)
- Notification of completion of the testamur

Documents for Only Diaconal OR Designated Lay Ministry Candidates

Field Education Evaluations (diaconal students only)

- Field Education Evaluation Year 1
- Field Education Evaluation Year 2
- Field Education Evaluation Year 3

Benchmark Application (for either diaconal or DLMs)

- Diaconal Benchmark Application **OR**
- DLM Benchmark Application **AND**
- Candidacy Board post-interview letter

Optional Applications and Documents (not applicable to every candidate)

Readiness for Appointment (optional, won't be for every candidate)

- Readiness for Appointment Application
- Candidacy Board post-interview letter affirming readiness/not yet/no

Withdrawal from Candidacy Pathway

- Letter from applicant/candidate noting withdrawal
- Candidacy Board letter acknowledging receipt/confirming withdrawal

Termination of Candidacy Pathway

- Candidacy Board letter naming termination of Candidacy Pathway process

Appendix: From Policy Concerning Digital Recordings of Interviews (Board of Vocation, September 26, 2023)

Concerning Candidacy Pathway interviews:

- c. in addition to a note-taker's written record, require that all interviews be automatically digitally recorded (where feasible and technology allows)

Further, the following is understood:

- i. *All information regarding the interviews would include notice that they are digitally recorded.*
- ii. *These recordings would be available to the interviewees upon request.*
- iii. *As the interviews are confidential, the recordings are similarly bound and may be shared only with a spouse or professional advisor.*
- iv. *The recordings would be kept for the duration of the process (candidacy pathway, admission process, case) undertaken by the Committee or Board.*
- v. *The recordings would be subject to the records retention policy applicable to these records, currently the United Church's Classification and Retention Schedule (2013) and the Privacy and Personnel Information in the Human Resource Policy Manual - General Council Office and Regional Councils (2020).*
- vi. *Only interviews are recorded; deliberations are not.*
- vii. *Recordings made on Teams (to which all participants would have access) and stored on a secure site on SharePoint (which GCO IT staff will allow) for over 15 days do not contravene current GCO storage policy.*