

50. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee

Contact name and details	The Revd Gillian M Newton Chair of the Committee chair@sheffieldmethodist.org
---------------------------------	---

1. The Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC) has continued its work this year, receiving reports on 66 students in initial formation and 87 probationers, and keeping under review the processes by which we oversee the path to reception into Full Connexion and ordination. In all this, MCPOC is indebted to the two Student Oversight Committees at the Queen's Foundation and the District Probationers' Committees for the care and diligence with which individuals' progress is joyfully affirmed, difficult matters are interrogated, pastoral concerns are handled, and reports are prepared. As always, there have been joys and sorrows in the experiences reported, but it was with particular sadness that MCPOC received the news of the death of one of our probationer presbyters, the Revd Christopher J Hardy, in his first year of service.
2. In the development of candidates and probationers, supervision plays a vital part. Standing Orders 700(8) and 701(9) aver that probationers serve in a Circuit under the supervision of the Superintendent or another presbyter. Before an appointment can be considered as suitable for a probationer, the District Chair assures those responsible for initial stationing that the nominated supervisor is competent and has received the appropriate training. Whilst that nominated person is often the Superintendent, there is a number of reasons why the Circuit and District might agree that it ought to be someone else, eg, the range of other responsibilities the Superintendent has, the imminence of the Superintendent's sabbatical or move in stationing, or the particular gifts of the alternate.
3. In the reports that MCPOC has received, and particularly in some of the more difficult cases that we have been asked to consider, it has been clear that high quality supervision is critical in the development of those in their early years in ministry. Standing Orders say little about what the responsibilities of a supervisor are and therefore MCPOC proposes the following changes to the Standing Orders.

723(2A) Where a probationer is stationed in a Circuit the Superintendent shall ensure that the care and oversight required by clause (1) above are given. Each such probationer shall have a supervisor to co-ordinate and participate in that care and oversight and in particular to meet regularly with the probationer in order to review the exercise of his or her vocation and ministry. The supervisor shall be the Superintendent or a minister or suitably qualified lay person appointed by the Superintendent.

4. Where the supervisor is someone other than the Superintendent, she or he is expected to be a member of the Circuit Leadership Team or if not (if, eg, she or he is a supernumerary) regularly to report to the Superintendent and the Circuit Leadership Team; her or his judgments will then form a significant part of the report that the Superintendent submits to the District Probationers' Secretary.
5. Standing Order 484 lays out the constitution and role of the District Probationers Committee and includes the provision that "The Superintendent and a circuit steward from each Circuit in which a presbyteral or diaconal probationer is stationed shall have the right to attend the committee when that probationer is being discussed and to speak, but not to vote." (SO 484(2)). This clearly applies and is appropriate whether or not the Superintendent is the

supervisor. However, in order that the Probationers Committee can be fully informed and that the probationer can be assured that her or his position is fully represented, MCPOC concluded that the probationer's supervisor should be at the committee when the probationer is under discussion whether or not she or he is the Superintendent. Therefore MCPOC proposes the following changes to the Standing Orders:

~~484(2) The Superintendent and a circuit steward from each Circuit in which a presbyteral or diaconal probationer is stationed shall have the right to attend the committee when that~~
When a presbyteral or diaconal probationer is being discussed the following persons **shall have the right to attend the committee** and to speak, but not to vote, **namely the Superintendent and a circuit steward from the Circuit in which the probationer is stationed and his or her supervisor (if other than the Superintendent) appointed under Standing Order 723(2A).**

6. Last year the Conference received the report of the Methodist Council which included a recommendation from the Ministries Committee that the maximum period between the acceptance of a candidate for the ministry and her or his reception into Full Connexion should not normally exceed seven years. Resolution 24/8 agreed this recommendation. The Ministries Committee has consulted the Law and Polity Committee and referred back to MCPOC the implementation of this policy.

7. MCPOC therefore proposes the following amendments to the Standing Order 721:

721 Length and Form of Pre-ordination Training and Probation. (1) The length and form of pre-ordination training and probation for each accepted candidate shall be determined by the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or Conference Diaconal Committee, as appropriate, on the recommendation of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(2) Such recommendations shall be designed to ensure that the requirements of Standing Orders 722 and 724 are fulfilled and shall normally consist of a period of at least four **and no more than seven** years between acceptance as a candidate and reception into Full Connexion. Such period shall include at least two years on probation after the completion of pre-ordination training, or, where such training has been undertaken concurrently with probation, at least one further year after its completion.

(2A) Any period during which a candidate's training or probation is deferred or suspended under Standing Order 726 or clause (4) below shall not be taken into account in calculating the minimum period of four years specified in clause (2) above, but shall be taken into account in calculating the maximum period of seven years.

(3) *[unaltered]*

(4) ~~If~~ candidates ~~who~~ are permitted to continue their studies for a degree or to engage in some other activity after acceptance by the Conference shall ~~defer~~ **the** commencement of the period of pre-ordination training and probation **shall be deferred** for one or more years and it shall begin on a date to be determined by the Conference or Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, **meeting** in the connexional year next following the accepting Conference.

~~(5) The length of training and probation shall be extended by any period during which the candidate's probation is deferred or suspended under Standing Order 726~~

(5A) If an application made under Standing Order 726 or 726A for the deferral or suspension of a candidate's training or probation would, if granted, prolong the total period of training and probation beyond seven years the committee shall, in addition to any other considerations, take into account the provisions of clause (2) above, and unless it rejects the

application or can and does recommend a deferral or suspension limited to one involving no prolongation of that period beyond seven years it shall recommend either (i) both the deferral or suspension and the extension applied for, with reasons for the latter, or (ii) the discontinuance of training or probation.

And the following new clauses to Standing Order 726:

726 Deferment or Suspension of Probation

(2A) If an application under clause (1) or (2) above would if granted prolong the period of training or probation beyond seven years the application shall include an application for an appropriate extension beyond the seven year period.

726A Deferment or Suspension of Training

A candidate or student presbyter or student deacon may apply to defer or suspend training and the provisions of Standing Order 726 shall apply as nearly as possible.

8. MCPOC raised a concern with the Law and Polity Committee that the requirement in Standing Order 710(5) that all candidates can be stationed for a minimum of ten years before the normal pension retirement date might be contrary to the Equality Act 2010.
9. In practice, MCPOC ask candidates who are within ten years of the normal pension retirement age to confirm their willingness to be stationed for ten years. In light of the concerns raised, the policy has been amended to provide that MCPOC ask all candidates to affirm their willingness to be stationed in the active work for at least ten years.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

50/1. The Conference received the Report.

50/2. The Conference amended Standing Orders 723 as set out in paragraph 3 of the Report.

50/3. The Conference amended Standing Order 484 as set out in paragraph 5 of the Report.

50/4. The Conference amended Standing Order 721 and added Standing Orders 726 and 726A as set out in Daily Record 8/33/1.