Handbook for Probation for Word and Service

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YEARS OF PROBATION AS A DEACON PROBATIONER

1. Introduction
   - The Methodist church’s system of probation before ordination stems from John Wesley’s practice of requiring of his preachers a period “on trial” before they were received into full Connexion. This reflects a deeply felt need for all Methodist Ministers to be demonstrably effective before they are affirmed as “worthy to be ordained.”

2. Length of Probation for Deacon Probationers
   - The Laws and Disciplines of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa direct that “Probation is normally four years.” (13.7) One further year (0 + 5) will be allowed to enable a probationer to complete certain academic requirements and/or internship projects not yet completed. It is recommended that this rule apply to Deacon Probationers admitted on probation from 2013.
   - Should a Deacon Probationer not complete probation within 5 years, he/she will be discontinued.

3. Formation for Ministry of Deacon Probationer
   Probation is not only a time of testing. As part of life-long learning of the Minister (Deacon Probationer and Presbyter) probation marks a shift of the balance of the learning experience. In initial training greater emphasis is placed on theoretical learning (although always in the context of practice); in probation the emphasis falls on practice, but always with the extension of theoretical knowledge and reflection on it. Probation thus focusses on three facets: Academic formation; Skills formation; and Character formation.

3.1 Academic Formation
   - A Deacon Probationer has to complete either
     o the Higher Certificate in Theology,
     o the Diploma in Theology or
     o the Bachelor in Theology
   with TEEC (or approved equivalent institution) before ordination.
   - All Probationer Deacon Probationers who have not completed their minimum qualification are required to continue their studies within the period of four years (maximum five years) during their period on probation. They must register with TEEC (or equivalent approved institution) before the 15th of January, and proof of registration must be forwarded to EMMU and the Warden. EMMU will annually reimburse Probationers on receipt of proof of study fees paid and courses passed (Probationers over 55 years of age are however required to cover their own tuition costs)
   - Methodist studies: Probationer Deacon Probationers need to complete the Methodist Studies course before being ordained. This course is registered through EMMU (normally at the January seminar). The course includes:
     o Wesleyan theology (4 essays)
     o A polity exam
     o An accountancy exam.
   - All Probationer Deacon Probationers who have candidated as Preaching Deacon Probationers, need to be fully accredited Local Preachers by the end of the probationary period.

3.2 Skills formation
   - District Internship: All Deacon Probationers in Circuit (except Ordinands) participate in the District Internship Training for the duration of their probation (a minimum of four years but no more than five years). This programme is run under the direction of the District Supervisor of Studies/Internship Convener in the District. It has a set syllabus for each year that is drawn up by the Order in consultation with EMMU.

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1 Handbook on Probation, Methodist Church of Great Britain
2 It was affirmed by the EMMU General Committee on 25 – 26 June 2013 that four years, as directed in the L&D was the most desirable period as it was evident in practice that the three facets mentioned above were not adequately covered in a period less than four years.
3 In the case of Mozambique: Khovo Theological College of the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique.
4 Laws and Disciplines 13.17
The purpose of Internship training is:
1. To continue the process of ministerial skills, character and spiritual formation.
2. Within this process, to develop further skills for theological reflection, that is, the integration of knowledge, skill and values for ministry.
3. To let all of this be driven by “a vision for Mission”.

The programme begins each year with a Connexional Seminar in January. Up to a further 8 days but with a minimum of 5 days per year are negotiated in District groups to meet for formation, learning, fellowship, worship and accountability. **Every Deacon Probationer is expected to be in attendance for the full duration of the agreed internship meetings.**

- **Convocation**: The Methodist Order of Deacon Probationers will provide an opportunity for Skills formation and attendance is compulsory for all Probationer Deacon Probationers.
- **Synod**: All Deacon Probationers in training do a Trial Service and a Synod Exam (Exegesis) arranged by the Circuit Supervisor of Studies.
  - In the case of a non-preaching Deacon Probationer, the Trial Service component will need to be replaced with another suitable activity. (i.e. This could be replaced with some other form of kerygma or proclamation, e.g. an assessment of leading a bible study group, teaching a class meeting, leading a Sunday School class etc.). This project or activity will need to be agreed beforehand with the District Supervisor of studies (and the Warden of the Order if necessary). The outcome or findings of the project, or event, must be presented to the “In Service Training” (IST) group for assessment. Where this is not possible it must be evaluated by the District Supervisor of Studies (or another Presbyter or Deacon Probationer mandated to do so by the DSS). These marks (as with the Trial Service mark) are forwarded to the SYNOD annually by the District Supervisor of studies.

### 3.3 Character Formation

a. Character Formation is assessed by measuring the Probationer Deacon Probationer’s ability to demonstrate the ability to promote the values of the Diaconal **Rule of Life** as described in the Laws and Disciplines 13.29 and their possession of virtues of Servanthood, Stewardship, Integrity and Righteousness.

b. Character formation and assessment be jointly implemented by Circuit mentors and the Vocational formation team.
RUBRICS TO BE APPLIED FOR PROBATIONER DEACON PROBATIONERS

Caution: fail 1 academic course

Warning: fail 2 or more academic courses or failed to attend or failed to complete the requirements of formational training.

Final Warning: If a probationer received a warning in the previous year and has failed 2 or more academic courses again or again failed to attend or failed to complete the requirements of formational training in the current year, he or she will receive a final warning. If the probationer does not complete all of the expected requirements by the end of the following year he or she will be recommended for discontinuance.

Recommendation for Discontinuance:
If the Deacon Probationer received a Final Warning in the previous year and fails to complete the required work, in the current year, he or she must be recommended for discontinuance. If any valid reason can substantiate why a person has not done the required work expected for the year of training, he or she must make a written appeal through the District Bishop or District Supervisor of Studies to the EMMU to reconsider the regular steps of discipline. The EMMU General Committee will then make its recommendations to the Presiding Bishop for a final decision.

NUMBER OF YEARS ON PROBATION FOR DEACON PROBATIONERS

- A minimum of 4 years. **MAXIMUM OF 5 YEARS**
- Should a Deacon Probationer not complete probation within 5 years, he/she will be discontinued.
EXIT PROCEDURE FROM PROBATION TO ORDINATION

1. A Deacon Probationer Probationer under **FINAL WARNING** may not be advanced to ordination.

2. In the fourth year of Probation, having completed **ALL** of the requirements (including **ALL** academic requirements in the third year) to exit from probation to ordination and having sought the approval of the Diaconal Order’s Convocation in April a Probationer may be considered for Ordination in the following year. If a Probationer has not completed all academic requirements, s/he need to complete them in the fourth year and will be considered for ordination in the fifth and final year of probation.

3. When a Deacon Probationer Probationer has **COMPLETED ALL** academic requirements and when the Superintendent of a Probationer judges the Probationer
   - Of sound moral and religious character,
   - As believing and teaching sound Christian doctrine as held by the Methodist Church,
   - As observing and enforcing our doctrine,
   - And as having competent abilities for the work of an Ordained Deacon Probationer in the MCSA,
   - AND the Probationer having served at least the minimum years on probation (2 years),

4. The Superintendent appoints a small listening committee made up of at least one ordained minister, a circuit steward, a local preacher and one other member to engage the Deacon Probationer probationer and make a recommendation to the Quarterly Meeting. **Please use form P 4 for this interview available from EMMU or download from www.methodistraining.co.za.**

5. The April QM then forward their recommendation to Synod and EMMU, through the DSS, commenting on the suitability of the probationer Deacon Probationer’s readiness to move to the next phase of their training, viz. the ordination year. **Please use form P 5 for this interview that is available from EMMU or download from www.methodistraining.co.za.**

6. The District Supervisor of Studies convenes a Screening committee before the District Synod including members of the District EMMU Committee to assess the personal and spiritual growth of the Deacon Probationer probationer, the Quarterly Meeting and the Listening Committee recommendation and report to the EMMU through synod. **Please use form P 6 for this interview that is available from EMMU or download from www.methodistraining.co.za.**

7. Synods receive the names of all Deacon Probationer Probationers whose advancement is recommended by the Circuit Quarterly Meetings for consideration and recommendation of advancement by the District Screening Committee.

8. Deacon Probationer Probationers submit the required Assessment Documents (content to be determined from time to time) to EMMU, **by 01 June** of the year after Synod has recommended their name for advancement to Ordination.

9. The General Committee of EMMU, having received all the reports from District Synods, shall on the basis of such reports (through its Assessment Committee) make a recommendation to the Connexional Executive pending satisfactory end of year results.

10. Based upon satisfactory reports EMMU recommends Ordination to the Connexional Executive and Conference for the following year.
Self-evaluation Assessment - Competence in every area of the assessment is required

Write a 4500-word self-evaluation of your growth, struggles, and work during Probation. **Please structure it according to the following sections:**

i. Discuss the growth of your personal spiritual discipline and of your personal knowledge of Jesus Christ throughout your Probation. (300 words)

ii. What has been your most significant area of growth in ministry skills during Probation? (200 words)

iii. What ten theological or devotional books have shaped your personal growth (other than academic text books)? Please list them, and include a 150 word reflection on how five of these have shaped or challenged you. (1000 words)

iv. Describe one event of failure, pain or hardship you have experienced in your ministry. How did you overcome this struggle? What have you learnt from this experience? Please include some theological reflection on the experience. (400 words)

v. Give a critical account of at least one evangelistic encounter or event you facilitated (e.g., describe at least one incident in which you lead an individual or a group of persons to faith in Christ. Remember to describe and critically analyse the encounter. Also give account of how this encounter developed and impacted your faith life and theology). (300 words)

vi. Describe at least one main initiative you have taken in the circuit / society, in which you labour, and programmes or actions that have resulted from this initiative (e.g., I initiated an HIV/AIDS treatment program, which launched a clinic and a children’s home. Here is evidence of this initiative and the resultant programs). **Remember all evidence must be verifiable, e.g. signed by a third party, or transcripts from persons involved in or affected by the ministry etc.** (300 words)

vii. Describe the growth in your pastoral care and counselling ministry. Please list some courses or programs attended. **Please also include some signed feedback from at least two counselees as proof of your skills in this regard.** (250 words)

viii. Describe growth in your leadership ability. Please list some courses and programs attended. **Please also include some signed feedback from at least two members of Church leadership as proof of your skills in this regard.** (300 words)

ix. Describe growth in your preaching and teaching ministry. **Please also include some signed feedback from at least two local preachers on full plan as proof of your skills in this regard.** (250 words)

x. Write notes on an actual conflict situation in which you helped resolve the issue. Demonstrate insight into your own role, an evaluation of the resolution process. (400 words)

xi. Describe how you have led the congregation in ministry in the each of the areas of poverty, transformation, and inclusiveness (e.g., gender, race, age, economics, same sex). (300 words)

xii. How do you plan to continue your growth and studies? Please be specific. (100 words)

xiii. What do you think, could be your most significant contribution to the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in the next 10 years? (100 words)

Include any other documentation you may wish to bring to the attention of the Exit Committee.
ORDINATION YEAR

Having completed probation successfully, and having completed an accepted degree or diploma, and having fulfilled all requirements expected, a Student Minister is advanced to Ordination.

Preparation for Ordination includes:

- Attending the January Ordinands' Retreat.
- Preparing three reflective essays, one on the meaning of Ordination, one on the Student Minister/Deacon Probationer/Transfer's journey through training and a further one on mission beyond ordination.
- A retreat together with other Ordinands a few days before Conference and the Ordination Service.
Form P 1

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY AND MISSION UNIT

Synod Examining Committee Report
(All Deacon Probationers)

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Date of examination: _________________________________

1. **Written exegesis:**

   Competent / Not Yet Competent / Not Competent (delete whichever is not applicable)

   Report: (this report needs to substantiate the assessment)

2. **Give evidence that the call to the Ordained Ministry is intact:**

   Call affirmed / Call uncertain / Call absent (delete whichever is not applicable)

   Recommendation: (needs to substantiate the assessment)
THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY AND MISSION UNIT

SUPERINTENDENT’S SYNOD REPORT FOR A DEACON PROBATIONER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Deacon Probationer:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Circuit name and number:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent’s name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Please comment on your observation of the Deacon Probationer’s sense of calling to the Ordained Ministry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Please comment on evidence of personal and corporate spiritual discipline and spiritual maturity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. How well does the Deacon Probationer work with the Organisations in the circuit?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. How does the Deacon Probationer show evidence of adherence to the discipline of the Methodist Church? Does she/he show personal discipline?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Please comment on the Deacon Probationer’s relationships in the church:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Please comment on the Deacon Probationer’s capacity for work:

8. Comment on leadership ability as well as response to leadership by others:

9. Give examples of the Deacon Probationer taking the lead in solving problems or initiating projects.

10. How have you observed growth in the Deacon Probationer in the past year?

11. What areas of difficulty do you think the Deacon Probationer encountered during the year?

12. What plans have been put into place to address these areas of difficulty?

13. **FOR A NON-ITINERANT DEACON PROBATIONER**
   
   (a) How is the Deacon Probationer dealing with full time employment and part time ministry and studies?

   (b) What is the response of the Quarterly Meeting on the continued appointment in the circuit?

Superintendent’s name:  
Superintendent’s signature:

Deacon Probationer’s name:  
Deacon Probationer’s signature:

Circuit steward’s name:  
Circuit steward’s signature:
THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
ASSESSMENT OF TRIAL SERVICES
(Local Preachers, Candidates, Probationers, Ordinands)

Name of Probationer: __________________________ Status of Probationers: ________
Place: ________________________________ Date: ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awarded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. THE PREACHER
What impression did the preacher convey through personality, dress, body language, gestures, inflexions of voice, mannerisms? Note should be taken of projection of voice, use of vocabulary and general demeanour.

| 10 |

2. CONDUCT OF THE SERVICE
a) General: An overall impression of the service as an act of worship. Did the congregation meet God in real worship? Were there any creative and helpful innovations which enabled worshippers to participate effectively in the service?

| 10 |

b) Use of Liturgy and Form of Service: Where liturgy was used, was this done in a way that showed an understanding of the words spoken? Was the congregation enabled to sense the progression in the service that clarified the meaning of what they were doing? Was there familiarity with the liturgy that showed careful preparation?

| 10 |

c) Hymns and Spiritual Songs: Was the choice of hymns and spiritual songs suited to the theme of worship? Credit should be given for variety of subject, appropriateness for each part of the service and good choice of metre.

| 3 |

d) Scripture: Was the scripture read intelligently, clearly and with the natural emphasis required by the passage?

| 2 |

e) Prayers: Sincerity and spirituality should be evident. There should be evidence of original work. The service should include the elements of Adoration, Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition, Intercession, Forgiveness and Invocation of God’s presence.

| 15 |

Total for service (Sub-minimum = 25/50) 50

THE SERMON
Interpretation of the Word: Did the preacher understand and interpret scripture accurately? Was a clear understanding given of the context of the passage? Was there clear evidence of applied skills in Biblical exegesis? Did the message harmonise with the Christian gospel and with Methodism?

| 15 |

Content of Sermon: What was the sermon about? How adequately did the preacher deal with the subject? Was there a clear structure? Was the congregation challenged?

| 10 |

Use of resources: Was the subject well-researched? Did the preacher understand human nature and show in the delivery a grasp of the essence of the gospel? Was the message appropriate to the hearers? Was the use of illustration creative, and did the illustrations apply accurately to the points the preacher was making?

| 15 |

Application: Did the sermon lead to a climax and did it seek to answer the question “How”? Did the preacher show a clear understanding of the context? How clearly was the content of the sermon related to the scripture lessons and the context of the congregation?

| 10 |

Total for sermon (Sub-minimum = 25/50) 50

TOTAL 100

What suggestions are there to improve the quality of this service of worship?

EXAMINERS:
Name:________________________ Signature:________________________

Categories:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>49% and under (or if any subminima not achieved)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F = Fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% - 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E = Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55% – 59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D = Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% – 69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C = Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>70% - 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = Excellent</td>
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Note:
- For Candidates for the Ministry a full written Report on the Trial Services must be submitted to the Synod with this Assessment sheet.
- For Probationers a brief paragraph for the information of the Synod and the Probationer is sufficient.
- For Ordinands a detailed written Report is also required by the screening committee and the Synod.

assessment.trialservices
THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY AND MISSION UNIT

Listening Committee Questionnaire for Prospective Deacon Ordinand

Name of Deacon Probationer: ____________________________________________

Circuit Name: ___________________________ Circuit No.: __________

Please comment on the Deacon Probationer’s responses to the following questions:

1. Do you have an ongoing sense of call to the ordained ministry and how have you
grown in this call since candidature?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Comment on your specific pastoral responsibilities and how you have integrated your
academic training with the actual experience of ministry.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. What preaching and teaching ministries have you engaged in within the Circuit?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. What leadership have you exercised in the Circuit?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

5. What cross-cultural experience have you had in the Circuit and how able are you to
minister in a variety of contexts?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Members of the Listening Committee:

Name: ___________________________ Signature: _______________________

Name: ___________________________ Signature: _______________________

Name: ___________________________ Signature: _______________________ 

Name: ___________________________ Signature: _______________________ 

Name: ___________________________ Signature: _______________________
THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY AND MISSION UNIT

Quarterly Meeting Report to Synod on Prospective Deacon Ordinand

Name of Deacon Probationer: ___________________________  Date of QM : ______
Circuit Name:______________________________  Circuit No. : ____________

Please comment on the following:

1. The Deacon Probationer’s ongoing sense of call to the ordained ministry and his/her growth since candidature.

__________________________________________________________________________

2. The actual pastoral responsibility that the Deacon Probationer has in the circuit and the successful integration of formation of ministry with the practical work.

__________________________________________________________________________

3. The preaching and teaching ministry the Deacon Probationer has been involved in within the Circuit. (The Trial Service marks to be included in the report).

__________________________________________________________________________

4. The Deacon Probationer’s exercise of leadership in the Circuit, including the conduct of meeting, involvement in organisations and any Circuit events.

__________________________________________________________________________

5. The Deacon Probationer’s cross cultural experience in the circuit and his/her ability to minister across various contexts.

__________________________________________________________________________

Superintendent Name: ___________________________  Signature: __________

Circuit Steward Name: ___________________________  Signature: __________

Quarterly Meeting Recommendation to Synod: _____________________________
THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY AND MISSION UNIT
Prospective Deacon Ordinand’s Screening interview report
This interview is conducted by a District Committee before the District Synod

1. Name of the Deacon Ordinand

2. Is the prospective Deacon Ordinand able to articulate and demonstrate an ongoing sense of calling to the Ordained ministry?

3. Does the Superintendent’s and Quarterly Meeting Reports confirm the Church’s sense of call and readiness for the Ordination?

Comment fully on the following:

4. The prospective Deacon Ordinand’s devotional discipline.

5. Social, mental and physical health.

6. What evidence is there of personal growth (skill for ministry, relevant knowledge and spiritual maturity)?
7. Comment on the prospective Deacon Ordinand's application of the Methodist Rule of Life.


9. Comment on the Deacon Probationer's competency for our work (a separate sheet may be attached, if required, but must be signed by the chairperson of the screening committee).


Date of interview: _______________________

Name and signature of Committee chairperson: _______________________

Names and signatures of the Committee: _______________________

______________________

______________________

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