



# Handbook for Probation Word and Service

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## **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.

## **DISTRICT INTERNSHIP**

Probationers who have completed the seminary training will spend the remainder of the probation in a full-time circuit station. They shall participate in the District Internship Training for the duration of their probation (except Ordinands). 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 EMMU.

The purpose of Internship training is:

1. To continue the process of ministerial and spiritual formation.
2. Within this process, to develop further **skills for theological reflection**, that is, the integration of knowledge, skills 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. The attendance is compulsory for all probationers in circuit. 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 Probationer is expected to be in attendance for the full duration of the agreed internship meetings.** The internship assignments are distributed at the seminar.

## **JANUARY SEMINAR OUTLINE**

The seminar, among other activities, consists of:

- a session to meet with DSSs/IST conveners
- sessions for presentation of the projects (including speaker input if required). Also to include workshop on skills required for the project (e.g. how to journal for pastoral care; how to lead a workshop; how to do social needs analysis, etc.)
- sessions for specific skills development and character growth:
  1. Pastoral care practical electives (e.g. grief, bereavement, marriage prep, narrative therapy). Multiple sessions will run concurrently and probationers will elect 1 to attend each year.
  2. Spiritual / contemplative focus (e.g. retreat, guided self-reflection)

## **DISTRICT IST MEETINGS**

DSSs or IST Conveners will organise meetings for all probationers for a minimum of 5 days and up to 8 days. A day must comprise a minimum of 6 hours of activity.

Compulsory common IST Meeting content:

- 1 day must be designed around the contemporary issues common assignment (Assignment 3). In the morning there should be an interactive presentation/workshop by a speaker on the issue identified for the assignment. The afternoon should consist of small group work-shopping of questions/problems offered by the speaker as well as discussion of the specifics of the assignment task.

- 1 day must be devoted to visiting a mission project in the district. The visit must be arranged so that the people who began and/or operate the project engage with the probationers. The intention is to provide an opportunity for the probationers to obtain practical information on how to start and run projects of different kinds.
- 1 day must be devoted to Spiritual Health and Personal Mastery. Probationers must be guided through a deep examination of 'how it goes with their souls'. There must also be a small group session in which probationers reflect on their journey with their Probationer Mentoring Committees.
- 1 day must be devoted to creating meaningful opportunities for Accountability Groups (see below) and the conveners to have feedback discussions on the common assignment (assignment 3).

### **PROCESS FOR THE MARKING OF THE ASSIGNMENTS:**

The probationers in the districts are divided into *Accountability Groups* of five or six and are led by a coordinator (this could be the IST Convenor, DSS or an ordained minister that is involved in the training of the student ministers in the district). In cases where there are few probationers in a district, the Convenor and DSS will use a suitable process which will involve and empower probationers.

At the January Seminar probationers in each Accountability Group will be elected as *Assignment Facilitator* for the assignments (i.e. each of the assignment will have a different facilitator from the group; every probationer should serve as facilitator at least once during the course of their probation).

For every assignment, the probationers in the group will e-mail their projects to the assignment facilitator who will ensure that he/she has everyone's projects and then email all of the projects to each member of the group and the group coordinator. All probationers are required to review their colleagues' assignments and send comments for the whole group and facilitator to read. This review and engagement process forms part of the assignment assessment.

For the common assignment (assignment 3) the all assignments must reach the facilitator at least a month before the Internship meeting designated to engage with the assignment. This is to enable group members and the coordinator to assess the assignments and send feedback to the individuals prior to the meeting. (No marks or competencies are awarded in this review process, rather this feedback would include things such as parts of the projects they have not dealt with, areas they need to think a deeper about, or alternatives to try – e.g. "we cannot see that they have reflected theologically" or "maybe you should try applying another approach to social development for that a specific aspect of the assignment").

The purpose of this review process is so that probationers don't have to present their full assignments at the IST Meeting because everyone in the group has engaged with every assignment already. The meeting thus will provide an opportunity to add value to each other's ministry through reflection on how the probationer has grown through this assignment, what they learned out of their failure or out of their success, how the project has affected their ministry and those they minister to, etc. Each project would naturally lend itself to a variety of specific questions that could be asked with regards to reflections.

The feedback that was given will be checked by those who gave it (and the student has an opportunity to defend their original work, although this would have hopefully taken place at the time the feedback was given or they would show that they have received the feedback, reflected and made the required changes).

Part of the purpose for the marking of projects by the probationers is that a student who hasn't thought deeply enough about something, or had misunderstood an aspect of the project would have picked this up when they reviewed the other projects and would have some idea of what is expected or of alternatives they could try before getting to the internship meeting.

The final mark for the assignment will be determined by the Assessor at the meeting, incorporating the original submitted assignment, the revised assignment and the probationers' engagement with their peers' assignments before and during the meeting.

### **IST CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**

Each Probationer is assigned a **Probationer Mentoring Committee** (PMC) comprising at least 5 people (plus the Superintendent as an ex-officio member), appointed by the Superintendent at the first CQM of the year.

This committee is chaired by a member of the society or section in which the probationer is designated to serve (appointed by the Superintendent) and must also comprise various leaders of the society/section in which the probationer serves along with, so far as possible, an ordained minister with whom the probationer works closely.

The intention of the Probationer Mentoring Committee is to allow the probationer to be in continuous conversation with a consistent committee throughout the duration of her/his time within the circuit and not simply in the year of recommendation for ordination. This allows for a more holistic approach to the assessing of the probationer and a pastoral space to assist the probationer to develop in areas of weakness and strength.

The PMC must meet with the probationer on a quarterly basis. Before the second and fourth CQM each year, in committee (or consultation), the PMC will compile the **Circuit Probationer Report 1 (form P2A or P2B)** for submission to the Superintendent and DSS. The report assesses the holistic character, spirituality and growth of the probationer. The reports focus on three keys areas of relationship – with God, Others and Self – as well as the values of Stewardship, Leadership and Moral Integrity. The Superintendent will complete the relevant additional sections.

These reports will be kept on file by the DSS as a record of the Probationer's character formation throughout IST. If a probationer moves districts during probation, the record will be transferred to the new DSS.

In the year a probationer may be recommended for ordination, and the year of potential ordination, **Circuit Probationer Report 1 (form P2B) & Circuit Probationer Report 2 (form P3)** must be completed before the April CQM.

### **IST REQUIREMENTS FOR SYNOD**

- b. **Synod Exam** (please see the yearbook for details) (**Form P1** submitted to DSS by Synod Examining Committee).
  - i. Part one: Written exegesis submitted to DSS
  - ii. Part two: Oral defense of exegesis and engagement with exegeses of peers with synod examining committee.
- c. **Circuit Assessment Report (Form P2A)** submitted by superintendent to DSS.
- d. **Trial Service (Form P4)** submitted by superintendent to DSS).
- e. **Grade for 1<sup>st</sup> IST assignment**
- f. *If in year of being recommended for Ordination – **Circuit Assessment Report 1 (Form P2B), Self-Assessment Assignment, Circuit Assessment Report 2 (Form P3), CQM Recommendation (Form P5), and District Screening Committee Interview Report (Form P6).***
- g. *If in Ordination year – **Circuit Assessment Report 1 (Form P2B), Circuit Assessment Report 2 (Form P3), CQM Recommendation (Form P5), and District Screening Committee Exit Interview Report (Form P7).***

## **RUBRICS TO BE APPLIED FOR 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.

## **EXIT PROCEDURE FROM PROBATION TO ORDINATION**

1. A Deacon Probationer under **FINAL WARNING** may not be advanced to ordination.
2. A Deacon Probationer shall have completed -
  - **Either** the Basic Certificate in Theology (Khovo) [*Mozambique only*]; or Higher Certificate in Theology (TEEC/SMMS), or the Diploma in Theology (TEEC), or Bachelor Degree in Theology (TEEC); plus
  - Methodist Studies – Wesley, Polity and Accounting, plus
  - Be a Local Preacher on full plan.
3. 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.
4. When a Deacon 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 in the MCSA,
  - AND the Probationer having served at least the minimum years on probation (4 years),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 and make a recommendation to the Quarterly Meeting. **Please use form P 2b and form P 3 for this interview available from EMMU or download from [www.methodisttraining.co.za](http://www.methodisttraining.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.methodisttraining.co.za](http://www.methodisttraining.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, 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.methodisttraining.co.za](http://www.methodisttraining.co.za).**
7. Synods receive the names of all Deacon Probationers whose advancement is recommended by the Circuit Quarterly Meetings for consideration and recommendation of advancement by the District Screening Committee.
8. Deacon 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.

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 five theological or devotional books have shaped your personal growth (other than academic text books)? Please list them, and include a 150 word reflection for each of five of these books that describes how 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. (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). (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)

## ORDINATION YEAR

Having completed probation successfully, and having completed an accepted degree or diploma, and having fulfilled all requirements expected, a Probationer 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.

### Synod Requirements in year of Ordination

1. The PMC conducts an interview with the probationer and make a recommendation to the April Quarterly Meeting. **The Interview questions and reporting are Form P 3** (available from EMMU or can be downloaded from [www.methodisttraining.co.za](http://www.methodisttraining.co.za).)
2. The April CQM receives the **P 2b** and **P 3** reports then votes to recommend the probationer for ordination to synod. The CQM (Superintendent) should forward the reports along with the recommendation to Synod and EMMU, through the DSS. **Please use** form P 5 for recommendation to Synod. It is available from EMMU or can be downloaded from [www.methodisttraining.co.za](http://www.methodisttraining.co.za).
3. Ordinands must conduct a Trial Service in front of at least two, but preferably three ordained ministers and one lay member of the district. This team of assessors will provide the DSS with a report of the service (**Form P 4**) plus an attachment with a brief outline of the sermon and a general description of the service.
4. The District Supervisor of Studies convenes a District Screening Committee before the District Synod including members of the District EMMU Committee. This committee will review the Probationer's Circuit Assessment (**Form P 2b**) and CQM recommendation and then conduct an **Exit Interview** to assess the Probationer's readiness for ordination. **Please use Form P7 for this interview**. It is available from EMMU or can be downloaded from [www.methodisttraining.co.za](http://www.methodisttraining.co.za).