

Effective Leaders for a Healthy Missional Church

The Synod of South Australia has re-shaped its processes of theological education and formation with a focus on developing 'effective leaders for a healthy missional church.' Formation Panels are an essential part of making this a reality. In order to help you participate fully as a member of a Formation Panel, this information flyer outlines the nature, structure and operations of panels.

Our Purpose

Educating courageous disciples and leaders for a healthy missional church.

Our Vision

A vibrant, growing learning community equipping and encouraging students in the way of Jesus, through high quality education, wherever they are.

Our 4 year Strategic Signposts

There are four signposts that point toward this Vision being realised:

1. **High Quality Education**
2. **Deeply Formed and Educated Candidates**
3. **A Growing Learning Community**
4. **A College for the Whole Church.**

Each Signpost has a list of outcomes. Specific strategies for each will be outlined in an action plan.

Formation Panels

Formation Panels participate in the Uniting Church's processes for the theological education and formation of members of the church as ministers of the Word or Deacon.

In the Uniting Church, theological education and ministerial formation is approached in four phases:


- **Phase One – Period of Discernment (POD)**
- **Phase Two – Core Phase**
- **Phase Three – Three years after ordination (For more information see the Assembly document on Phase 3 here)**
- **Phase Four – Continuing Education**

Each Signpost has a list of outcomes. Specific strategies for each will be outlined in an action plan.

Standards of theological education, in all four Phases, are set by the Assembly and are overseen by the national Education for Ministry Working Group (formerly the Ministerial Education Commission). In South Australia the Leadership Development Council (MLDB) is responsible for ensuring that our system of theological education meets the national standards of the Uniting Church. The MLDB reports annually to the Education and Ministry Commission, and every six or seven years a Visitation Panel reviews and assesses our practices in theological education.

What is formation?

Every Christian who is growing as a disciple of Christ and serving God in the world is being formed in Christ's image through the work of the Holy Spirit. Formation implies transformation, taking on the likeness of Christ as we respond to, and participate in, God's work of renewing creation. A biblical word for formation is sanctification – making us holy, fit for purpose to be God's people in the world God loves. Ministerial formation – being formed for ministry – is a particular subset of Christian formation.



It's an intentional process of accompanying, guiding and encouraging people as they become leaders who themselves will guide and encourage the church and model what Christian service is. Through ministerial formation, we assist candidates to become integrated, mature and effective leaders of the ministries of the church, who faithfully and imaginatively respond to the context in which they minister.

Ministerial formation is a lifelong process. It involves the whole person – integrating our spiritual life, knowledge, skills, values, personal priorities and health. Formation is grounded in baptism into Christ. It has begun before a person applies to become a candidate. It continues throughout a person's ministry.

The Core Phase of theological education (Phase 2) builds on the formation for ministry that has already taken place and concentrates on certain specific formational goals. These are set out in the Uniting Church Assembly's document on Theological Education and Formation on Faith, Life and Knowledge. They include the development of the attitudes and skills that the person will need for their continuing formation in the future. You can view this document [here](#).

Ministerial formation also involves the initiation of candidates into an order of ministry, which is about building relationships with other ministers. In this process the Holy Spirit grounds the individual's personal experience of call in the shared set of accountabilities to the church and to ministerial colleagues. The processes of ministerial formation in Phase 2 enable a candidate to become a Uniting Church Minister (a Deacon or Minister of the Word), but the processes continue on in Phase 3, under the guidance of Formation Panels, and also in Phase 4, under the guidance of the Presbyteries.

What is A Formation Panel?

Formation Panels play a primary role in overseeing the formation of candidates for the Ministry of the Word and

Ministry of Deacon in Phase 2 (Core Phase) and in the first three years of Phase 3 (the First Placement).

A Formation Panel is made up of 3–5 experienced, effective missional leaders. It oversees the progress of up to 6 candidates in the Core Phase, meeting with each of them individually at least 3 times each year. It continues to oversee the formation of those ministers for the first 3 years of Phase 3, normally meeting with them every second panel.

The Formation Panel will engage in on-going discernment with the candidate to ensure that the course meets their formational needs. This process will be guided by the 14 attributes of formation in Assembly document Standards for Theological Education and Formation: Phase 2 for Ordained Ministers.

The Formation Panel will determine when the candidate has satisfactorily completed the requirements of the Core Phase and recommend to the Presbytery that the candidate be ordained, subject to being called to a Placement.

After every Formation Panel, a candidate will be sent an email outlining agreed actions from the meeting. Candidates are always welcome to bring a support person to any Formation Panel. Candidates are asked to inform their Formation Panel Chair if they are going to bring a support person.

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