

Policy, Guidelines, and Criteria for Examination Process Provisional and Full Membership

Board of Ordained Ministry The New England Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

*Transformed by the Holy Spirit, united in trust, we will respond to God's call
to proclaim Christ boldly to the world.*

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Policy for Candidacy Examination Process

Key Terms:

“Fit”: standard for dCOM

“Ready”: standard for Provisional Status

“Effective” : Standard for Full Membership

Since these terms encompass progress within the fullness of a Candidate’s ministry and character, to create an accurate verbal description would be inadequate. For this reason, the BOM has chosen images with attendant concepts to help guide examiners as they evaluate.

Because candidate “fruitfulness” has been a term of choice in the *Book of Discipline*, the image is of a fruiting tree at various stages of maturity.

Throughout the exams, teams will be looking for healthy character in the candidate, including authenticity, willingness to learn, creativity, grace, humility, self-discipline, and awareness of the need for self-care.

“Fit” : dCOM



“Budding tree” The tree is healthy. What is there needs tending and time to grow.

Statements of call, statements of faith, recommendations, interest inventories, psychological assessments, and background and credit checks are the material considered in this interview by the dCOM. Explorations of the Candidate’s call to ministry, relationship with God, and the ability to relate to people are fundamental. A Candidate is evaluated on the potential they have for developing into an effective clergy leader. The substance of this interview provides a reference point in later interviews.

[Required Materials for Examination \(Certified Candidacy\)](#)

“Ready” : Provisional Membership



“Flowering Tree” The tree is healthy, has evidence of faith and leadership that is attractive to others, and skills that are continuing to grow.

Determination of readiness for provisional membership and service in appointive ministry is the focus of this interview by BOM. The Candidate shall demonstrate fundamental personal and academic resources to grow sufficiently from professional experience under supervision. Attention is given to the applicant’s academic background, theological statement, and seminary reports, including field education internships. Although skill development is ongoing, those applying for provisional membership are evaluated on whether or not they are fit and ready to serve an appointment and are developing the needed skills for effectiveness.

[Required Materials for Examination \(Provisional Membership\)](#)

Annual Check-In for Provisional Members

In addition to reading paperwork submitted by the candidate, exam teams

- Look at recommendations from prior interviews and seek evidence the Candidate has addressed these recommendations, looking for areas of progress.
- Ensure the health and active nature of the Candidate’s mentor relationship.
- Confirm participation in Provisional Leadership Academy.
- Provide feedback and approval or recommendation to revise Fruitfulness Project proposal if timely
- Inquire about progress and take appropriate next steps on the Fruitfulness Project.

“Effective”: Full Membership



“Fruiting Tree” The tree is healthy, has attractive faith and leadership, and shows skills for ministry that are both life sustaining and self-replicating.

When a provisional member applies for full conference membership, the Candidate demonstrates to the BOM interview team effective pastoral ministry at various essential tasks of ministry. Primary documentation is the DS’s and S/P-PRC’s (or supervisor if appointment is beyond the local church) reports and evaluations. In addition to the Disciplinary questions for Full Membership, participation in the Provisional Leadership Academy is confirmed, along with a Fruitfulness Project.

[Required Materials for Examination \(Full Membership\)](#)

Guidelines for Exam Teams

Before Exams

- Full preparedness is essential; all materials must be read/viewed.
- Plagiarism is direct lifting or heavy dependence on the work of others without attribution. It is not uncommon; look for it.
- Dress code: professional as a matter of respect for process and Candidates.
- Ensure the room is comfortable (temperature, good chairs, etc).
- Assign team member roles to keep time, take notes, etc.
- Attend to cultural differences related to writing and reasoning style.
- Make sure a team member has had a chance to review the Candidate file.

During Exams

- Pick up the Candidate from the Candidate’s designated space. Do not enter the room.
- The note taker should not sit next to the Candidate.
- To begin, provide the Candidate an overview of interview and team members assignments (note taker, timekeeper, etc).
- Resist the temptation to disarm with humor during the interviews out of awareness of the power dynamic and cultural differences.

- Don't signal to the Candidate that the exam is difficult.
- Allow time at the end of each interview for the Candidate to revisit a subject, or use in a way they choose; 10 minutes is common.
- When asking the Candidates to offer the closing prayer, ask each Candidate to pray in the language or style of their choice.
- Offer to walk the Candidate back to their space after the interview is over, if they would like.

After Exams

- Review recommendations from previous year's team to address recurring issues/themes.
- Look for consistent theology, rather than a specific theological stand. If it is outside your own theology, use guide of "do no harm" or "Wesleyan" to determine if the theology is problematic.
- Do not use terminology listed as criteria for "readiness" or "effectiveness" if saying "not yet" ready/effective. To avoid misleading feedback to Candidates who have work to do, avoid excessive compliments out of a desire to encourage.
- Be plain, direct, concise and clear in your writing to the Candidate.

Following the completion of all Team reports, the interview team reads their report to the full Board. The team answers any questions with discussion open to the entire Board. Following the discussion, the Board prays and the floor is open to voting. When the voting results in a decision, the candidate is called and informed of the Full Board's decision by a BOM representative on the designated day. In the next couple weeks, the Registrar communicates the Board decision and the team reports.

Criteria for Evaluation of Candidates

1. Fruitfulness Project

Those seeking ordination will implement "a project that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." The Fruitfulness Project is an opportunity for the Candidate and ministry site to move beyond technical fixes (improvements in format, technique, or style) toward adaptive changes that can usher in new ways of doing ministry that connect with the community, grow a congregation spiritually, or equip disciples with the skills to engage an unchurched population.

The Candidate will spend time carefully analyzing the cultural and community context of the congregation, and reflecting on their own gifts and passions. They will create a project that can meet the contextual needs of the community, determine community partners, and determine the fruits the Candidate wants the project to yield. The project should have credible potential to extend in some form beyond the Candidate's tenure under appointment in that location.

The scope of the project for Elders will be approximately 300 hours. Recognizing the nature of their work connecting the church and the world, and potential needs for credentialing in addition to the

denomination's requirements, Deacon Candidates whose ministry setting is employment outside the local church may request a scope of 150 hours upon written request to the Registrar.

Commissioned Elders and Deacons will submit a Fruitfulness Project Proposal to the Board any time after commissioning, generally at the Spring BOM meeting. Hours may be counted toward their work for the Board only after Project approval. Subsequent Spring interview teams will ask about progress on the Fruitfulness Project.

Candidates for Full Membership will be evaluated on their reflection upon their own learning about self and ministry during the project, rather than the perceived success of the endeavor itself.

In addition to the interview with the Board to reflect on the Project, the Candidate will present a 5-minute summary of the project to the full Board. This presentation is not for use by the interview team or full Board in their consideration of the Candidate's exam. It is intended to be a celebration and sharing of this ministry Project and the Candidate's work in ministry.

[FP Interview Guidelines](#)

2. Autobiography

General Questions for the Exam Team

1. How has the Candidate experienced God, and how has that experience influenced his/her/their call to ministry? Is there a Biblical character or story that best describes the Candidate's experience of God?
2. Make sure that the Candidate has clarity about the relationship of conversion and call in their life. Can they write about and articulate that relationship?
3. Does the Candidate love God, exhibit a healthy love of self, and a genuine love of the people with whom they are in ministry?
4. What evidence does the Candidate exhibit throughout the examination process:
 - of a true passion for ministry,
 - of being made new by a growing, joyful relationship to God in Christ,
 - of being sustained by spiritual disciplines?

3. Theology

General Questions for the Exam Team

Is the Candidate grounded in Wesleyan theology, specifically in the understanding of Wesley's definition of grace? Can they articulate a personal experience of grace, and able to share the meaning of grace with others, i.e. how is grace expressed in their own life? Do they have an integrated understanding of the quadrilateral providing an example of how it has been used in their ministry?

4. Proclamation of the Word/Sermon and Worship Leadership

Elder: Sermon Manuscript and video

Deacon: Choice of Sermon Manuscript OR an alternative creative expression demonstrating an act of proclamation of the Word appropriate to their particular setting.

General Questions for the Exam Team

1. How does the Candidate go about the preaching/proclamation task (length of time and method of preparation)?
2. Does the Candidate articulate how scripture is central to and integrated into their ministry in ways appropriate to the ministry site/congregation?
3. What resources are used in proclamation/sermon and worship preparation?
4. How does the Candidate personally arrive at the insights around which the proclamation of the Word is built and integrated into the design of the worship service (as applicable)?
5. How does the Candidate typically choose the text used for the emphasis of the sermon or proclamation of the Word (does the Candidate use the lectionary, or a thematic approach)?
6. How does the Candidate craft an order of worship or structure an opportunity to proclaim the Word? What resources and inspiration do they use? Why have they designed it the way they did?
7. Does the Candidate include teaching/interpretation of the Sacraments? In what ways?
8. How does the Candidate understand their particular role of “servant-leader” with grace and authority?
9. Does the Candidate show awareness of the immediate needs of the world and relate these needs to the church, in their appointment?
10. How does the Candidate experience/encounter the Holy Spirit in the preparation of a sermon/proclamation of the word/worship service? How does the Candidate experience/encounter the Holy Spirit in proclamation/preaching and worship?
11. Is the Candidate able to bring people into the living presence of God with a response of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise?
12. Do the material and method chosen by the Candidate to proclaim the Word demonstrate integration of their understanding of their role as an elder or a deacon with their work in their ministry site and the wider community?

5. Bible Study

General Questions for the Exam Team

1. Ask the Candidate to comment on their ability to derive insight from the text used in the study.
2. What is the purpose of Bible Study, in the context of “transformation”?
3. Did the Candidate encounter/experience the Holy Spirit in the Bible Study process? If so, where, and in what ways?

4. (For full membership Candidates) Based on the written summary of the evaluations of the Bible Study by the study participants, how will the Candidate approach the next study?

6. Alternate Application (pre-Fruitfulness Project) Materials

- a. **Ethics/Case Study (full membership)**
- b. **Reflection on Quadrilateral (full membership)**

General Questions for the Exam Team

1. How did the Candidate arrive at their personal ethics statement?
2. Ask the Candidate to describe how they applied their ethics within the context of the Case Study.
3. How did the Candidate use the quadrilateral to reflect on this Case Study, or on another situation in their ministry?
4. How well does the Candidate demonstrate an understanding of the quadrilateral in addressing this situation?
5. How does the Candidate practice “fruitful ministry”?

7. Supplemental Materials for Deacons

- a. **Evidence of Peace with Justice Ministry (provisional membership)**
- b. **Describe your Work as a Deacon (provisional membership)**

General Questions for the Exam Team

1. How does the Candidate understand the role of the church and the role of the community in working for Peace and Justice?
2. How has the Candidate engaged people from the ministry site into the work of Peace and Justice?
3. How well does the Candidate describe their appointment and why this task is the work of a Deacon? How does the Candidate help the dCOM/BoOM understand their appointment beyond the local church?
4. How does the Candidate connect the church and the world in this appointment?
5. How does the Candidate help the people with whom they work understand and feel invited as appropriate into the life and ministry of the church?)