

1. Welcome

This document is intended to give information about being a ministry student at Unitarian College. Here you will find some important information about how the learning and training journey is structured. This information relates to the Ministry Training Pathway which is offered to those who have been accepted for ministry training by The General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches or other associated denominations.

2. Your staff team

The key people that students will have contact with throughout your training are the Unitarian College staff team. We are here to ensure that our students get the very most out of this life enhancing experience. We put students at the centre of all that we do, and we will work tirelessly to develop strong, productive relationships which enable our students to achieve their potential as future Unitarian Ministers:

- **Rev Ant Howe, Senior Tutor** - co-ordinates the orientation and residential events, works with students to develop individual learning plans, arranges placements, delivers training along with other Unitarian experts, is available for student support, tracks the progress of students. Contact Ahowe@unitarian-college-org.uk
- **Rev Melda Grantham, Assessor** - assesses the work undertaken in placements, and delivers training in residentials. Contact MGrantham@unitarian.org.uk
- **Rev Michael Dadson** - works with students on their regular reflective statements. Contact Mdadson@unitarian-college.org.uk
- **Helen Mason, Director** - has overall supervision of training and student experience. Contact Hmason@unitarian-college.org.uk

3. Timetable

After being accepted for training, students will be invited to an orientation retreat where individual learning plans will be created. This plan describes, briefly, the activities that each student will undertake during their time with Unitarian College and the work expected. It will also give information as to when activities will happen and, in most cases, how they will be assessed.

4. Taught residentials

Ministry students participate in at least six Unitarian College taught residentials with associated pre-reading and follow-up assignments. All residentials cover spiritual practice, Unitarian Theology and Unitarian worship, self-care, time management and practical ministry skills. There is formal input on a range of competences from the staff team and visiting Unitarian and non-Unitarian experts. The residentials are a core component of Ministry Training and are compulsory. We believe that they are enjoyable and challenging and help our students to build collegiality with their peers, the visiting experts, and the staff team.

The 6 residentials broadly fit into the following pattern:

A: **Self management and reflective work**

- *Input on resilience in ministry*
- *Personal mediation and prayer life for the minister*

- *Bringing meditation and prayer into congregational life*
 - *Intergenerational engagement*
- B: Preaching / worship & Unitarian theology**
- *Sessions on Unitarian theology, with subsequent written assignment*
 - *Input on preaching, with students delivering a peer-reviewed sermon*
 - *Teaching on blended and hybrid worship*
 - *Sessions on the theology of worship, with subsequent written assignment*
- C: Leadership**
- *Input on theological ethics*
 - *Teaching on volunteer engagement, facilitation, small groups, leadership styles*
 - *Leadership of change*
 - *Children's ministry*
- D: Pastoral**
- *Pastoral care within Unitarian congregations, with subsequent written assignment*
 - *Input on personal and professional boundaries, with subsequent written assignment*
 - *Care of the dying and bereaved*
 - *Equality and Diversity*
- E: Mission and Community**
- *Input on Unitarian sense of mission, with subsequent written assignment*
 - *Use of social media*
 - *Dynamics of Unitarian communities*
 - *Ministry to the wider community*
- F: Rites of Passage, ceremonies and stories**
- *The art of story telling*
 - *Input on Rites of Passage, with students offering a Rite of Passage for peer-review*
 - *Legal issues*

5. Ministry in the Making (MiM)

Funded and developed by the Hibbert Trust, MiM is another compulsory element of the course. Ministry Students are joined by those working through their early years of Ministry. MiM is an experiential event, and the content is planned each year by the MiM staff team in response to live, current CPD needs in Unitarian Ministry.

6. External Academic Study

Ministry Students undertake a course of external academic study as part of their training. Students who come to us without a first degree will study for a degree in theology. Those who come to us with a first degree will study for an undergraduate degree or postgraduate qualification which will meet the academic competences outlined by the GA. Unitarian College will advise on suitable courses as part of the orientation event.

7. Annual Meetings

Unitarian College Ministry Students are expected to attend and help at the GA Annual Meetings held around Easter each year.

8. Placements with host congregations

Ministry Students undertake two placements with host congregations who have been approved by Unitarian College as being suitable learning settings for our students. The first placement will be working alongside an approved and experienced Minister; the second you will have more autonomy for leading congregational life. A placement plan will be developed between the student, the College, and the host congregation for both placements describing in broad terms what the student will do during the placement and the support the student can expect to receive from the College staff team and the host Minister.

Placements are an extremely rich and valuable element of learning. We will do our utmost to agree placements that are geographically convenient and theologically diverse so that our students can experience local Unitarianism as its most vibrant.

During these placements students will:

At both:

- Conduct at least three observed services of worship
- Conduct pastoral work with congregants
- Conduct or participate in a Rite of Passage ceremony if possible
- Participate in congregational life, committee meetings, midweek gatherings etc

In one:

- Lead a short RE course for adults or children
- Co-facilitate an event
- Explore a potential change with a congregation
- Look at the congregations current and potential community connections
- Study the history of a placement congregation, understanding how its community and building have changed over the years, and present this to peers at a residential

9. Assessed work

During training our Ministry Students produce three key documents:

- A regular piece of reflective writing called Taking Stock
- A portfolio containing evidence of a student's Unitarian learning journey and Ministry practice
- Evidence of what has been read, learned, and done during the course

Students will also keep a record of, and feedback from, essays and assignments undertaken with Unitarian College and external academic institutions. This will include 2 online courses:

- Administration, governance, and legal requirements in Unitarian congregations

- UK Unitarian History

10. To successfully pass training

Unitarian College Ministry Training is designed so that, on successful completion, students can evidence all 32 Ministerial Competences agreed by The General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches. We believe that the training is incredibly enriching and covers significantly more ground than these competences alone, but successful engagement with the course ensures that our Ministry Students are in a strong position to be recommended for eligibility to the GA Roll of Ministers upon completion.

11. Final Assessment

Unitarian College will not put a student forward for final assessment unless we are confident that the student has strong evidence that they can meet all 32 GA Competences. This will be evidenced in a portfolio which will be submitted to the Viva panel in advance of final assessment.

Students are then invited to a professional dialogue or Viva with a panel - The College Director, representatives from the GA, and another invited expert. Students are supported at the Viva by the Senior Tutor.

The Viva conversation will be structured to test any areas of the portfolio on which the panel want more clarification, more detail, or to hear the views of the student. There is a slight possibility that a student might be asked to create more portfolio evidence after the Viva.

12. What happens then?

The College will then make a recommendation to the GA that the student can be considered a competent Minister. The final decision to add a person's name to the Roll of Ministers rests with the Executive Committee of The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

In consultation with the College staff, students will be able to candidate for Ministerial vacancies before their final viva should appropriate opportunities arise.

Unitarian College will provide recruiting congregations with reassurance that the student is making good progress in their training and has an excellent likelihood of success.

13. What support can a student expect during their Ministry Training journey?

This is a journey that is not undertaken alone. Students can expect:

- Significant advice and guidance prior to applying and being accepted by Unitarian College about whether this is the right life choice and how to be successful in application
- A comprehensive orientation programme and support in developing an individual learning plan which will be acceptable to the GA
- Reasonable adjustments and support for any declared learning difficulties or disabilities
- An in-person tutorial at each Unitarian College residential
- Access to the Senior Tutor at any time for advice and guidance

- Support from the Senior Tutor and Placement Assessor to develop plans for the two congregational placements
- Access to a trained personal mentor appointed by the GA to give confidential support.
- Limited funding for spiritual direction and/or counselling
- Support from the Higher Education Institution with whom students are studying
- Policies surrounding student assessment, safety, and performance.

14. Statement of Assessment Principles

Assessed work and practice are key elements of programmes and courses run and managed by Unitarian College. To help students understand how and when they will be assessed we have developed the following principles:

1. The College will use a range of assessment procedures to check learning, verify achievement and provide feedback to students
2. Assessment will be flexible and varied in style to enable students to present evidence in a variety of ways and easily access success
3. Some assessment will be formative (giving student interim feedback on what they need to do to improve) and some will be summative (providing a final mark or judgement on whether the student has met the standard)
4. Relevant assessments will be second marked and/or moderated to ensure transparency and fairness
5. A range of assessment techniques will be used including:
 - a. Marked work
 - b. Observation
 - c. Peer review
 - d. Student reflection
 - e. Witness testimony
 - f. On-line tests
6. Each learning activity will be assessed in the most appropriate way and feedback will be participative and (wherever possible) delivered face to face either from other students or College staff
7. Opportunities will be taken to use naturally occurring evidence to assess competence. This means that students should not have to do extra work to produce assessment evidence
8. Assessment will be holistic, seeking connections from across the curriculum
9. Students will be able to appeal assessment decisions following an agreed procedure, but assessment decisions made by the College will be final

10. A final summative assessment will take place at the end of the programme to confirm completion. This will include a professional dialogue or viva based upon the submission of a final portfolio.

15. And finally...

We believe that training for Unitarian Ministry with Unitarian College will be an enjoyable and life-changing experience. It will be spiritually nourishing and collegial but also stretching and challenging. You will need to be prepared to give your best self to the process to get the most out of it. Ministry training changes people and you will need to be willing to ask for help and support when you need it. You will also need patience and support from those who love you at home, for whom it is a journey too. Good luck with nurturing your calling and making your application. We are excited to walk this path with you,

UC staff team