



Uniting Church in Australia ASSEMBLY

REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR UNITING CHURCH MINISTRY AGENTS: SCOPE

1. Executive Summary

2. The purpose of this project is to undertake a comprehensive review of professional standards for ministry in the Uniting Church. There is currently a lack of consistent clarity over the role of ministry, the relationship between the minister and the Church, and the nature of ministry as a profession. In addition there are cross border variances in systems and monitoring, and outdated notions of privacy and confidentiality (e.g. 'pastor relationship) that frustrate code of ethics breaches.
3. The review is expected to provide a clear definition of professional standards within a framework that will provide context for the application of standards within various ministries, and establish clear responsibilities for oversight and accountability.
4. Given the project objectives, it is recommended that the review focuses on three areas:
 - 4.1. Defining "professional standards" in the Uniting Church in Australia
 - 4.2. The role, responsibility, capacity of the presbytery in relation to the oversight and discipline of ministry agents
 - 4.3. Frameworks, processes and tools to support presbytery oversight and the accountability of ministry agents
5. In relation to '*professional standards*' the following issues are in scope:
 - 5.1. The range of views on 'professional standards' within the Uniting Church
 - 5.2. The extent that the basis of union, current regulations, ordination and Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice identify a standard for ministry agents
 - 5.3. Develop an understanding of the challenges of the current standards within different cultural communities
 - 5.4. The various processes and tools used by Presbytery Ministers and Synods in articulating standards and establishing expectations of ministry, particularly in congregations
 - 5.5. The extent that ministry agents engage in professional supervision and any resources that articulate the standard or approach to be taken in relation to professional supervision
 - 5.6. The extent that Codes of Conduct for lay staff make references to existing standards
 - 5.7. Comparison of the approach taken by other Ecumenical Churches in relation to articulating and enforcing professional standards for ministers, including any variations for different levels or types of ministry e.g. minister of the word compared to pastor
 - 5.8. The development of a framework for professional standards of ministry agents and supporting resources
 - 5.9. The development of regulation changes to support the framework
 - 5.10. As a result of the framework, the identification of implications for Codes of Conduct for lay staff
6. In relation to '*professional standards*' the following issues are out of scope:
 - 6.1. The Basis of Union remains the Church's foundational document and sets out the way the Uniting Church operates on a day to day basis.
7. In relation to the '*role, responsibility and capacity of Presbytery*' the following issues are in scope:
 - 7.1. The range of views on the congruence of the current approach towards discipline and the Theology of Discipline
 - 7.2. The range of views on the current ability of the Presbytery to provide oversight of ministry agents.

- 7.3. The various processes and tools used by Presbytery Ministers and Synods in articulating standards and establishing expectations of ministry or providing oversight of compliance with standards, particularly in congregations
 - 7.4. The range of views on the current processes regarding addressing concerns or breaches of existing professional standards
 - 7.5. The current approaches taken in relation to investigation of concerns or breaches of professional standards
 - 7.6. The processes used to conduct investigations in major Uniting Church Agencies
 - 7.7. The extent and nature of issues associated with standing aside of ministry agents
 - 7.8. The current approaches regarding recording outcomes of investigations, counselling or discipline regarding ministry agents
 - 7.9. The range of views on a common standard of ministry agent records and the creation of national registers
 - 7.10. Comparison of the approach taken by other Ecumenical Churches in relation to oversight of professional standards including approaches to training, support and investigations.
 - 7.11. The development of process, tools and practice standards in relation to oversight of the professional standards of ministry agents, including the identification of roles and responsibilities.
 - 7.12. The development of investigation process or guidelines that can be used in relation to alleged breaches of professional standards
8. In relation to '*role, responsibility and capacity of Presbytery*' the following issues are out of scope:
 - 8.1. An internal investigation process must cater for police investigations.
 - 8.2. Privacy Principles must be complied with in relation to records
9. In relation to the '*framework, process and tools*' the following issues are in scope:
 - 9.1. Review of regulations in relation to committees that deal with complaints, discipline of ministers and appeals
 - 9.2. How the Continuing Education for Ministry Agents has been implemented in each Synod including the current CEM payment, whether a Synod has identified a minimum level of continuing education and any accountability process
 - 9.3. An analysis of the continuing education records for ministry agents over the previous 2 years
 - 9.4. The range of views on the current effectiveness and efficiency of existing committees
 - 9.5. The range of views on committee membership as it relates to perception of procedural fairness, including membership options to address areas of speciality or cultural understanding.
 - 9.6. The identification of options in relation to committees and any principles that need to be considered to support the current or amended regulations.
 - 9.7. The development of guidelines in relation to ministry agent records including the transfer of ministry agent records
 - 9.8. Statistical analysis of complaints, discipline of ministers and appeals over a period of the last 5 years
10. In relation to '*framework, process and tools*' the following issues are out scope:
 - 10.1. Privacy Principles must be complied with in relation to records

11. Background

12. The anecdotal experience for many ministry agents across the life of the Church is a lack of consistent clarity over the role of ministry, the relationship between the minister and the Church, and the nature of ministry as a profession. Again, anecdotally, there are divergent beliefs across each of the above elements of a ministry agent's self-understanding. This divergence is expressed in behaviour of ministers with respect to: the oversight of the Presbytery; compliance of ministers with expectations of the Church; and varying standards of professional practice, to name a few.

13. The National Discipline Conversation (NDC), as part of its Terms of Reference, has some responsibility to explore the issue of Professional Standards for ministry agents within the Uniting Church. The National task Group tasked the Assembly General Secretary to write to the NDC leadership team seeking for the NDC to focus on the issue of professional standards. However, the leadership team, in conversation with the Assembly General Secretary, recognise that undertaking this work in isolation from related aspects of ministry practice oversight and support would provide inadequate outcomes.
14. With the agreement of the General Secretaries, work has been undertaken to develop a scope for a review into the professional standards of ministry agents. With assistance of NDC, all Synods were invited to participate in a workshop which meet on 8th October 2016 to discuss key issues associated with the project. The reference group consisted of:
 - 14.1. Sue Crittall (QLD);
 - 14.2. Jane Fry (NSW/ACT);
 - 14.3. Paul Mulroney (NSW/ACT);
 - 14.4. Sue Clarkson (VIC/TAS);
 - 14.5. Philip Gardner (SA);
 - 14.6. David de Kock (WA);
 - 14.7. John Cox (Assembly);
 - 14.8. Colleen Geyer (Assembly)
15. The project scope involves reviewing the Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice; Professional Supervision for Ministry Agents; the Code of Conduct for Lay people; Placement processes of the church; and Regulations related to discipline. As a result of the project Professional Standards for ministry agents would be developed; a good standing process for ministry agents in the church would be articulated; and a theology of discipline would be affirmed by the church. It is expected that an education and training framework for lifelong professional development would support the above.
16. This project proposal comes to the NTG for their engagement and affirmation (or otherwise) as a step toward commissioning the project.

17. Project Objectives

18. At completion, this project will:
 - 18.1. Have reviewed, and/or reviewed the relationship between, the Code of Ethics; Professional Supervision; Continuing education for ministry; Code of Conduct for lay people; Discipline Regulations; and Placements Processes
 - 18.2. Have developed a consistent national approach to and understanding of Professional Standards for 'ministers' within the Uniting Church in Australia underpinned by a theological foundation and consistent with our Polity and Ethos.
 - 18.3. Have articulated the relationship between the Code of Ethics for Ministerial Practice and Professional Standards for ministry agents.
 - 18.4. Have developed an overarching framework for compliance with Professional Standards and accountability of ministry agents to the Church within current polity
 - 18.5. Have developed robust processes for ensuring pre-service and continuing education of Professional Standards from candidature through completion of ministry
 - 18.6. Have explored and implemented strategies for engagement in Multi Cross Cultural and Indigenous contexts
 - 18.7. Make recommendations for Regulation changes which support the implementation of Professional Standards

19. Project Scope:

20. The following issues were identified to support the development of a detailed project scope:
 - 20.1. Our current codes of ethics and conduct do not speak to each other. It is believed that a consistent national approach is needed to enhance the Churches ability to bear witness to the gospel.
 - 20.2. Our current Code of Ethics and our current discipline processes do not provide a consequences framework. A consequences framework offered to ministry agents as part of their ongoing commitment to the discipline of the Church enables ministry agents in their professional conduct.
 - 20.3. There is not consistent educative process for engagement with the Code of Ethics, nor is there a mandated responsibility for that education nationally to maintain a minister's good standing. Ensuring consistent educative process as a regular function of maintaining ministry is key to consistent (high) standards.
 - 20.4. Current culture of ministry agents, as experienced across Synods through complaints and discipline processes, is of varying levels of competence and compliance with the expectations of ministry agents. This is in part the responsibility of the Church in not articulating expectations of ministers and not supporting ministers to meet those expectations.
 - 20.5. Presbyteries are the council of the Church responsible for the oversight of Ministers within their bounds. Presbyteries are not (well) resourced to fulfil this function. This project would seek to provide a framework that enabled Presbyteries in their oversight role.
21. Given the project objectives, it is recommended that the review focuses on three areas:
 - 21.1. Defining "professional standards" in the Uniting Church in Australia
 - 21.2. The role, responsibility, capacity of the presbytery in relation to the oversight and discipline of ministry agents
 - 21.3. Frameworks, processes and tools to support presbytery oversight and the accountability of ministry agents

22. Defining "Professional Standards"

23. The following issues were considered in relation to what constitutes a 'professional standard' in the Uniting Church of Australia:
 - 23.1. How do we understand the 'profession' of ministry in the UCA?
 - 23.2. What expectations does the church have of its ministers?
 - 23.3. What do I understand as a "standard"?
 - 23.4. What does Good Standing mean in the UCA?
 - 23.5. Existing standards?
 - 23.5.1. Basis of Union, Constitution, Regulations
 - 23.5.2. Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice
 - 23.6. What is the relationship between the CEMP and any other current UCA Codes?
 - 23.6.1. What are the issues?
 - 23.7. What are the Church's expectations of Ministry Agents?
 - 23.8. Any standards that should be considered when engaging in a Multi-Cross Cultural and Indigenous context?
24. The term '*profession*' has a wide meaning within the church and the community. Being a minister has vocation at its heart and through ordination, the minister is trusted to live out the story of Jesus. This is expressed through the covenantal relationship. The community frames profession in a more conventional manner, with reference to professional associations, requirements to be registered with statutory authorities and a requirement for ongoing training and development. In some instances, the requirement of professional development is a condition of ongoing registration. A General Practitioner provides a good example of the community understanding of a profession. The key issue in defining 'profession' is trust, i.e. the community and individuals having trust in the professional and

the capacity of the professional to work through this trusting relationship. In this context, it may be appropriate to define the profession of ministry as a vocation, which incorporates the sense of calling.

25. The diverse nature of ministries provides a challenge in how one defines a 'standard'. As a concept, a standard may be:
 - 25.1. What is expected of people fulfilling a role in the life of the community
 - 25.2. The inherent conduct of a ministry agent
 - 25.3. A system through which we hold people to account

26. The standard can also be defined by processes and documents, such as ordination, the regulations and the Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice. The challenge is not only to define the standard, but expressing the standard in a coherent way so that ministry agents can be proclaimers of the word within different cultural communities. In other words, how do you express the standard in such a way that the church can enable a ministry agent to fulfil their ministry expectation.

27. The discussion regarding profession and standard leads to two important concepts. A framework and the need for oversight. It has been suggested that the approach of developing a 'framework' may provide an appropriate balance in establishing the standards for the vocation of ministry and providing context for how the standards should be applied. The framework should:
 - 27.1. have its basis in defining the required culture of the Uniting Church in Australia
 - 27.2. make a clear statement on the ministry agent relationship if ordained, including clear statements on the practical application of the Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice
 - 27.3. result in a new story of what it means to be a ministry agent within a modern community that can and is willing to exercise discipline.
 - 27.4. include new models and processes for defining professional standards and establishing clear responsibilities for various councils and bodies, including the use of technology to support ministry practice and ethical issues
 - 27.5. be resourced, with explicit tools that will support the framework
 - 27.6. be acknowledged at induction, ordination and throughout education

28. A well-defined and structured framework would facilitate 'oversight' of professional standards. Defining responsibilities of councils, individuals and bodies within the framework gives meaning to the trust that is placed in each council, individual and body to provide oversight and how each will hold a ministry agent to account during their faith journey; from discernment, through formation, to ordination and beyond. There is an assumption that individuals and bodies would have the capacity to exercise their oversight and resources should be considered to build and maintain capacity. Oversight will also clarify consequences and penalties. While there will always be behavior that on its own would justify a disciplinary response, it is also important to note that oversight should provide the ability to take preventative action e.g. when continuing education obligations are not met or when concerns over preaching are identified. Oversight should be cognizant of cultural perspectives to making complaints and implementing consequences e.g. notions of shame, delays in making complaints. Any process that involves complaints should have a focus on supporting the victim.

29. In relation to 'professional standards' the following issues are in scope:
 - 29.1. The range of views on 'professional standards' within the Uniting Church
 - 29.2. The extent that the basis of union, current regulations, ordination and Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice identify a standard for ministry agents
 - 29.3. Develop an understanding of the challenges of the current standards within different cultural communities
 - 29.4. The various processes and tools used by Presbytery Ministers and Synods in articulating standards and establishing expectations of ministry, particularly in congregations
 - 29.5. The extent that ministry agents engage in professional supervision and any resources that articulate the standard or approach to be taken in relation to professional supervision
 - 29.6. The extent that Codes of Conduct for lay staff make references to existing standards

- 29.7. Comparison of the approach taken by other Ecumenical Churches in relation to articulating and enforcing professional standards for ministers, including any variations for different levels or types of ministry e.g. minister of the word compared to pastor
 - 29.8. The development of a framework for professional standards of ministry agents and supporting resources
 - 29.9. The development of regulation changes to support the framework
 - 29.10. As a result of the framework, the identification of implications for Codes of Conduct for lay staff
30. In relation to 'professional standards' the following issues are out of scope:
- 30.1. The Basis of Union remains the Church's foundational document and sets out the way the Uniting Church operates on a day to day basis.
31. Role, Responsibility and Capacity of Presbytery
32. The following issues were considered in relation to the role, responsibility and capacity of the presbytery in relation to the oversight and discipline of ministers:
- 32.1. What is the current (range of) presbytery practices and tools available for the exercise of oversight?
 - 32.2. What is the impact of the relationship between the presbytery and the body responsible for the placement (esp. in corporate settings)?
 - 32.3. What's missing or where can it be improved?
 - 32.4. Resources to provide oversight?
 - 32.5. Do we need a framework for compliance and accountability?
 - 32.6. What is the role of the presbytery in relation to Good Standing?
 - 32.7. How does the current model of supervision support and promote professional standards?
33. It is important to first consider the theology that underpins discipline in the church because this will provide insights into the purpose of oversight and processes that support oversight of ministry agents in relation to their professional standards. As part of the workshop, Chris Budden was asked to provide his insight on the theology of discipline (Attachment A). The key issues from his paper are:
- 33.1. The church is properly understood as a distinctive community. The church's worship, teaching, pastoral care, and engagement in their community seek to form people in the practices of such a community.
 - 33.2. The heart of Ministry is more about covenant relationships and location – the placing of a person within a particular community and people, where they are also located in relationship to the traditions of the church. The Minister's task is to help people engage with their community in the light of the broader tradition of the church. Ministers also link people to God; they hold a connection which people may not be able to hold. Ministers are to embody and hold a story of the enormous grace and love of God.
 - 33.3. The relationship that exists between Minister and people is a covenantal one, based in offering and responding to call, in which people promise to seek together the presence of God in their place.
 - 33.4. Discipline is not simply about the individual, but what needs to be done for the good of the community. Any conversation about discipline needs to be a conversation about what enables us to be a community, and the way in which call is central to Ministry – and the obligations that carries.
 - 33.5. Discipline arises when Ministers do not faithfully tell and enact the story of the God revealed in Jesus, who calls us to love God with our whole lives, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Discipline arises when Ministers break the covenantal bond and the call that places them in a sacred relationship to tradition and people, and when they serve their own needs rather than the needs of the community.
 - 33.6. Discipline is about creating an opportunity to stand aside from ministry while re-learning the story and practices of the Christian life. It is about restoration and new beginnings.
 - 33.7. One issue is where oversight is located e.g. with a council that is less obviously part of the covenant. Another is whether those who exercise oversight have real authority to enact

- appropriate discipline. In taking on this task the church needs to be clear about what are the practices that the church expects, and it needs ways to remind people of the expectation.
- 33.8. Of course there may be times when discipline is about removal from Ministry. This occurs when the person shows no awareness or remorse, and when they cannot acknowledge that they need to re-learn the story and practices held by the church. It is done to protect the church and those persons who have been harmed. This should be a rare occasion.
 34. Based on the above, it is suggested that the purpose of oversight is to ensure that the ministry agent is of good standing i.e. that the covenantal bond has not been broken and that the ministry agent continues to serve the needs of their community. Within the context of this project, this also includes an agreed understanding of the professional standards that forms part of the obligations of being a ministry agent for the Uniting Church in Australia.
 35. The presbytery provide a critical role in the oversight of ministry agents within the Uniting Church. However, it is important to ensure that the presbytery role in relation to the oversight and accountability of professional standards is well defined and adequate resources are provided.
 36. It is important that the process of oversight consists of guidelines, tools and templates that collectively provide a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Presbytery and the ministry agent. The use of practice standards that provide examples and insights into what "good standing" may look like for a ministry agent may assist in demonstrating insights and understanding.
 37. Oversight may include the following elements:
 - 37.1. An intentional engagement with Presbytery to increase the capacity of ministry agents to serve with the goal to help ministries flourish
 - 37.2. Appropriate training to Presbytery and ministry agents to manage the intentional engagement, with an emphasis on collaboration
 - 37.3. A plan of professional development for a ministry agent
 - 37.4. A more structured approach towards supervision with a minimum level of competence of the supervisor, an expression of the willingness of the ministry agent to participate and sufficient resources at a Presbytery level to support the supervision process. Where supervision is associated with discipline, adequate resourcing is required
 - 37.5. A process involving self-evaluation as well as a some form of audit
 - 37.6. A resource structure that is matched to the types of ministry agents i.e. ordained verses non-ordained
 - 37.7. Training for Presbyteries to engage in critical conversations
 - 37.8. A review of Presbytery roles to identify any tasks that could be reallocated to other councils or positions, which would increase their capacity to provide greater oversight
 - 37.9. A sensible process to deal with concerns, including when the Presbytery should escalate a concern and what do if progress on addressing the concern is stalled. Consideration should be given to ensuring sufficient authority is given to deal with instances where is a denial of the ministry agent in the face of the evidence
 38. A key part of any oversight process is an investigation into concerns or breaches of professional standards. There needs to be a well-articulated investigation process. A definition of a complaint or the type of issues that warrant an investigation is required. The investigation process should provide guidance on the depth of investigation that is required, who should investigate and who makes decisions in relation to both initiating an investigation and decisions during the investigation. The investigation must consider whether any legislative obligation has been breached and be flexible where a concurrent external investigation has commenced (e.g. police). Consideration must be given to when a ministry agent should be stood aside and guidance provided on practical matters associated with such a decision, for example:
 - 38.1. What can be said to a congregation
 - 38.2. Who pays the ministry agent (e.g. the body responsible for the placement or the Synod)
 - 38.3. Occupation of the manse
 - 38.4. Forgiveness and reformation back into the community

39. If oversight is about ensuring ministry agents are of good standing, then the approach taken must be nationally consistent, particularly regarding training and resourcing. Only through national consistency, can the Church adopt a common approach of maintaining records in relation to the good standing of ministry agents and address the current practice of word of mouth on past history or events. The records must be relied upon when moving placements or when there is interstate movement. Such records might include “flags” or a national person of concern register. Access to such records will need to be controlled.
40. In relation to the ‘*role, responsibility and capacity of Presbytery*’ the following issues are in scope:
- 40.1. The range of views on the congruence of the current approach towards discipline and the Theology of Discipline
 - 40.2. The range of views on the current ability of the Presbytery to provide oversight of ministry agents.
 - 40.3. The various processes and tools used by Presbytery Ministers and Synods in articulating standards and establishing expectations of ministry or providing oversight of compliance with standards, particularly in congregations
 - 40.4. The range of views on the current processes regarding addressing concerns or breaches of existing professional standards
 - 40.5. The current approaches taken in relation to investigation of concerns or breaches of professional standards
 - 40.6. The processes used to conduct investigations in major Uniting Church Agencies
 - 40.7. The extent and nature of issues associated with standing aside of ministry agents
 - 40.8. The current approaches regarding recording outcomes of investigations, counselling or discipline regarding ministry agents
 - 40.9. The range of views on a common standard of ministry agent records and the creation of national registers
 - 40.10. Comparison of the approach taken by other Ecumenical Churches in relation to oversight of professional standards including approaches to training, support and investigations.
 - 40.11. The development of process, tools and practice standards in relation to oversight of the professional standards of ministry agents, including the identification of roles and responsibilities.
 - 40.12. The development of investigation process or guidelines that can be used in relation to alleged breaches of professional standards
41. In relation to ‘*role, responsibility and capacity of Presbytery*’ the following issues are out of scope:
- 41.1. An internal investigation process must cater for police investigations.
 - 41.2. Privacy Principles must be complied with in relation to records
42. Framework, Process and Tools
43. The following issues were considered in relation to the frameworks, processes and tools to support presbytery oversight and the accountability of ministry agents:
- 43.1. Royal Commission – how have community expectations changed for ministers and the church?
 - 43.2. What shortcomings of the UCA Discipline Regulations and processes have been exposed by the Royal Commission?
 - 43.3. How practical are the current Discipline processes in a church of diminishing capacity or where the ministry agent is in multiple placements?
 - 43.4. What improvements are needed for existing processes?
 - 43.5. Are there existing relationships between Code of Ethics, Professional Supervision, CEM, Code of Conduct for Lay People, Discipline Regulations and Placement Process?
 - 43.6. Approaches towards Education and Training of Ministry Agents?
 - 43.7. What should be nationally consistent?

44. There will clearly be outcomes from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that the church will need to respond to and this may include compliance with new or amended legislation.
45. It was considered that the Royal Commission will raise community expectations in relation to professional standards of ministry agents and that national consistent frameworks will need to be adopted, particularly in relation to the selection of candidates including background checks and assessment. This would be accompanied by consistency in roles and responsibilities for key roles.
46. Guidance on the interpretation of regulations would reinforce consistency. This may include explanatory notes, training and how the regulations may need to be applied in relation to matters specifically covered by the Royal Commission such as trauma informed counselling or examination of children in investigations. There could also be value in creating a broader narrative on changing societal norms to reinforce the need for national consistency.
47. The church cannot be a community of faith if we do not engage our community. This means that a greater investment will be required to change in response to the changing community expectations. We will need to convince congregations to also engage, particularly in responding to questions that the community or families might ask about the church and our position on the findings of the Royal Commission.
48. The Royal Commission gives impetus to the need to provide oversight and to work with ministry agents to correct their behaviour and reduce the risk of adverse outcomes later in the placement. The church also needs to take a strong position where a ministry agent is not engaging in restoration.
49. As indicated in the previous section, record keeping is an area of focus in relation to professional standards. Consideration may include:
 - 49.1. Clarification on what each record of a ministry agent should contain (and what the record should not contain)
 - 49.2. What records are required at the commencement of a placement
 - 49.3. How to deal with personal or verbal knowledge not in a formal record and who should be made aware of such knowledge e.g. General Secretary or Presbytery Minister
 - 49.4. A national standard on ministry agent records
 - 49.5. Storage of records and whether digital records should be adopted
 - 49.6. If records are transferred between Synods, what records should be retained in the former Synod
 - 49.7. How to address missing records
50. Key documents that support nationally consistent professional standards need to be promulgated and version control must be maintained. The framework for documentation management maybe one borrowed from an existing Synod or Agency, due to the need for these entities to maintain policies, sometimes in a regulated industry. Consideration should be given to including documents that relate to lay staff or councils as they may have an association to professional standards or conduct e.g. the Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders and Code of Conduct for Lay Staff
51. The project scope has already identified some processes that need to be considered during the project, including oversight, investigations, supervision, discipline and candidate selection. Another process that is highly relevant to professional standards is Continuing Education for ministry agents. At the 1997 Assembly, the Uniting Church affirmed the importance of continuing education and asked all its ministry agents to enter into Continuing Education Learning Agreements to foster their faith and understanding. In the Assembly's document "*Seeking a Heart of Wisdom*" the following goals have been established to guide continuing education for ministry agents:
 - 51.1. Growing faith and spirituality that will sustain life in ministry;
 - 51.2. Conscious and critical commitment to ministry and mission;
 - 51.3. Knowledge and appreciation of the tradition of the church;
 - 51.4. Skills appropriate for particular ministry; and

51.5. Critical imagination

While the current scheme requires a ministry agent to enter into a 3 to 5 year continuing education agreement with their Presbytery (or other appointing body), the extent that the process has been implemented as envisaged by the Assembly, or how accountability is implemented in respect of the agreement or the funds associated with continuing education remains unclear.

52. Committees play an integral role in processes concerning complaints, disciplining of ministers and dealing with appeals. The role and function of each committee needs to be reviewed to verify any issues with resourcing, procedural fairness or the constitution of the committee that may limit its effectiveness. This may require updating the regulations for example, whether the National Appeals Committee has the authority to remit matters back to the Synod Committee for Counselling. There may also be opportunities to reduce the number of committees and simplify the process, for example whether the Synod Committees for Counselling could be combined with the Synod Sexual Misconduct Complaints Committee. Memberships of the committees should also be reviewed, in particular processes that deal with selection of members, requirements for gender, requirements for expertise/skill, the ability to seek specialist input (including cultural awareness) and any specific requirements in relation to the committee chair. There may be merit in a process that includes a 'pre-hearing' review to establish the mechanism of a review and to verify that the matter falls within the jurisdiction of the committee.
53. The regulations may need to be supported by appropriate policies that identify the principles that a Synod processes needs to comply with. This would give Synods a degree of flexibility to suit local requirements while still achieving national consistency.
54. Clearly, any review into framework, process and tools would include developing an understanding of the current use of existing processes, how the processes are applied and the outcome of the processes. This may be challenging where legislative obligations in relation to the Privacy Principles exist and appropriate measures need to be implemented regarding consent to hold data and records, or the de-identification of specific data, for example redacting some information from copies of written records. Information that may be sought in the review include:
 - 54.1. Types of matters that have been addressed by Presbyteries and Synod Committees
 - 54.2. The extent that matters have been referred to Synod Committees
 - 54.3. Outcomes
 - 54.4. Material used during considerations
 - 54.5. Training materials that have been developed
55. In relation to the '*framework, process and tools*' the following issues are in scope:
 - 55.1. Review of regulations in relation to committees that deal with complaints, discipline of ministers and appeals
 - 55.2. How the Continuing Education for Ministry Agents has been implemented in each Synod including the current CEM payment, whether a Synod has identified a minimum level of continuing education and any accountability process
 - 55.3. An analysis of the continuing education records for ministry agents over the previous 2 years
 - 55.4. The range of views on the current effectiveness and efficiency of existing committees
 - 55.5. The range of views on committee membership as it relates to perception of procedural fairness, including membership options to address areas of speciality or cultural understanding.
 - 55.6. The identification of options in relation to committees and any principles that need to be considered to support the current or amended regulations.
 - 55.7. The development of guidelines in relation to ministry agent records including the transfer of ministry agent records
 - 55.8. Statistical analysis of complaints, discipline of ministers and appeals over a period of the last 5 years
56. In relation to the '*framework, process and tools*' the following issues are out scope:

56.1. Privacy Principles must be complied with in relation to records

57. Project Plan

58. A draft project plan has been developed to provide the Assembly Standing Committee with an indication of typical project stages that may be undertaken. The project plan should be updated to identify the status of each project stage and project activity.

59. Communication and Reporting

60. A draft communications plan has been developed to assist the Project Officer and Project Sponsor in providing consistent communication messages to key stakeholders. A draft Agenda Document has also been prepared that can be forwarded to meeting secretaries when the Project Officer will attend a meeting in relation to the project.

61. There must be regular meetings with the Project Officer and a designated Project Sponsor, the latter nominated by the Assembly Standing Committee. The frequency of the meetings may be higher in the early stages of the project, particularly in finalising project plans and developing an understating of the project scope.

62. A draft project update has been developed to provide a formal reporting mechanism from the Project Officer. The update will include progress against the project plan, project expenditure against budget and the identification of any project risks, including an assessment of the risk.

63. Consideration may be given to the identification of a Stakeholder Reference Group that the Project Officer can use as a resource to help formulate project outcomes, or as a sounding board for matters and issues identified during the course of undertaking the project. The reference group would have no decision making ability in relation to the project and may be an existing committee, such as the NDC.

64. Resources and Budget

65. Human resource, physical and technological resources will need to be identified for the project. The following table can be updated to reflect the resource allocations and budget allocations.

Details	Info	Cost

66. Expected Benefits

67. The following benefits are expected from the project and can be as measures of success of the project outcomes:

- 67.1. Agreed consistent professional standards for ministry practice across the Uniting Church
- 67.2. Education and training framework to support ministry agents and Presbyteries to maintain professional standards.
- 67.3. Clarity with respect to what is required to maintain good standing as a minister within the Uniting Church
- 67.4. Clarity with respect to what is required for ministers to come under the discipline of the church
- 67.5. Greater clarity of the role of the Continuing Education for Ministries (CEM) with respect to Professional Standards
- 67.6. Presbyteries resourced to provide oversight to ministers.

- 67.7. A consequent rise in the overall quality of ministry offered by ministry agents of the Uniting Church
- 67.8. A consequent reduction in the numbers of complaints made against ministers of the Uniting Church.
- 67.9. Review of, and/or review the relationship between, the Code of Ethics; Professional Supervision; Continuing education for ministry; Code of Conduct for lay people; Discipline Regulations; and Placements Processes

68. Stakeholders

- 69. The following internal stakeholders have been identified for this project:
 - 69.1. General Secretaries
 - 69.2. Associate General Secretaries
 - 69.3. Moderators
 - 69.4. Discipline Committees
 - 69.5. Royal Commission Task Group
 - 69.6. Presbytery Ministers
 - 69.7. Ministers of the Word and Deacons
 - 69.8. Church members
 - 69.9. Pastors
 - 69.10. Managers of the human resource function of Synods
 - 69.11. National Theological Group
 - 69.12. Multi-cross Cultural Reference Group and Congress
- 70. The following external stakeholders have been identified for this project:
 - 70.1. Ecumenical professional standard bodies
 - 70.2. Church insurers
 - 70.3. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (in particular the findings of the commission)
 - 70.4. Wider community

71. Assumptions and Risks

- 72. The following assumptions in relation to the project have been identified:
 - 72.1. The project will comply with legislative obligations of the church
 - 72.2. An appropriate consultation process will occur i.e. enough people will be consulted with, people will be from the right levels/councils of the church and the consultations will occur across the church
 - 72.3. The project is adequately resources
 - 72.4. The project will need to be completed by the end of 2017 to ensure that any changes to regulations are submitted to the 15th Assembly in 2018
 - 72.5. General Secretaries will provide leadership for the project
 - 72.6. A group or individuals will be made available as a reference for the Project Officer
- 73. The following risks have been identified at the commencement of the project. Additional risks may be identified and recorded in project updates:

Risk (likelihood and consequence if required)	Mitigation Strategy
1. Findings of the Royal Commission will adversely impact the project consultations or outcomes	Review findings; assess risk to project scope and benefits; developed project variations
2. 15 th Assembly not supporting regulation changes	Project research, analysis and findings should support the regulation change
3. Synod Standing Committees not informed of the project or the project progress	General Secretaries to include project update in their report to SSC

74. Related Projects

75. The following projects have been identified as being related to the Review of Professional Standards for Uniting Church Ministry Agents and the Project Officer should consult with the related project's sponsor to identify any related activities or additional project risks:

- 75.1. South Australian Ministry Practices Framework
- 75.2. Projects of the Royal Commission Task Group
- 75.3. National Theological Conversation
- 75.4. National Placement Conversation

76. Responsibilities

77. The following section can be completed at a later date for completeness:

- 77.1. Project Officer – NAME
- 77.2. Project Lead – IF TWO PROJECT OFFICERS, ONE SHOULD BE THE LEAD
- 77.3. Project Sponsor – NAME