

G.16 Training pathways

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS FOR THE CANDIDATES WHO ENTER TRAINING IN SEPTEMBER 2020. AN UPDATED VERSION WILL BE SENT TO ALL RECOMMENDED CANDIDATES IN MARCH 2021. UNTIL THEN PLEASE REGARD THE INFORMATION HERE AS FOR GUIDANCE ONLY.

The Ministries Committee has approved three learning pathways for ministerial students, all delivered by the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham:

- A full-time pathway, usually for two years, though there may be people who are allocated to a three-year full-time pathway, for the opportunities that offers for them and for the church.
- A three-year, part-time pathway – the Queen's Connexional Course (QCC).
- A three-year, Circuit-Based Learning pathway (CBLP), with the student beginning either full-time or part-time in the first year and becoming full-time on CBLP by the beginning of the second year.

Financial Preparedness: We recommend reading the Document *The Cost of Candidating* available on the Methodist Church Web Site <http://www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/leadership-and-ministry/candidating-for-ministry/candidating-forms-and-information>

It is not recommended that students take out Student Loans, given the repayment burden this creates once students enter stipendiary ministry. We recommend candidates take impartial financial advice before embarking on a training course: see www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en

1. A two-year, full-time pathway (or three years for some)

You are advised to consult the Queen's website for the most up to date pathway information – <http://www.queens.ac.uk/what/minform/methodist/college>

Ministerial students following the full-time pathway do so as their main occupation. It is important to be realistic about the demands of this programme, which requires students to be present on the campus from Monday to Thursday during the Autumn, Spring and half the Summer Term. This means being available to attend classes from 9.15 to 17.00 each day. On one evening there may also be evening classes continuing until 21.30. You will also be in a local church for two sessions in the week. In the Summer Term of your first year the programme changes: much of your on-campus learning in the first half of the term will focus on preparing you for a placement which you will undertake in the second half of term. The full-time programme is intensive, with a great deal of learning compressed into less than two years.

A full-time pathway will benefit a wide range of learners, but you need to reflect carefully on whether you will flourish in this pathway. Factors you will need to consider include how far you:

1. thrive in diverse, busy environments and like learning quickly, moving rapidly from one piece of learning to another;
2. have significant prior learning that can be built on and developed, which is easier to do in a full-time than a part-time setting;

3. might need specialist support, for example for learning needs such as dyslexia, which is easier to provide in a full-time than a part-time setting;
4. have secure financial arrangements and are realistic about living on a bursary.

These points, however, are simply indicative (and are by no means an exhaustive list) of those reasons why it is beneficial for some people to be on the full-time pathway; the option will be explored in relation to each accepted candidate's particular circumstances and the balance of student groups overall.

For some people a three-year full-time pathway may be the right option, because it would enable certain learning opportunities, or for family circumstances, or because engaging with the course in a slightly less intensive way may be appropriate. Again, these issues would be explored in relation to individual circumstances and also the needs of the church and dealt with in the allocations process. For some a decision to extend to a three-year period of training and formation may be made as part of the oversight process during initial ministerial training.

You could engage with the full-time training pathway by moving to Birmingham and being a permanent resident on campus, either as a single person or as a family in a flat (though provision of accommodation is limited, especially in a flat), or by choosing to live off-campus, thus taking advantage of the opportunities Birmingham has to offer. However, if you are thinking of moving to Birmingham you need to consider the feasibility of this. For example, if suitable accommodation is not available on campus, you will need to consider the cost of living off campus, and if school-age children are involved, you will need to consider whether school places are available or likely to be available. If you are thinking of commuting to Queen's on a weekly or daily basis, you will need to consider the feasibility of this. Is it manageable, affordable and sustainable for your relationships?

The financial arrangements for this pathway for 2020-21 are as follows:

- Full tuition fees are paid by the Methodist Church.
- For each student allocated to this pathway the Methodist Church pays Queen's for their campus costs – e.g. general services and some meals. There will be no charge made by Queen's except for additional services (e.g. for the rental charge for a flat or for meals taken in addition to the normal provision). Meal provision includes breakfasts and one main lunchtime meal every day and two evening meals a week, with slight variations for those who commute to Queen's during term time. There are no meals outside term time. Queen's practice is to offer partners and children of residents 3 free family meals each week and to make a small charge if more meals are sought.
- Ministerial students allocated to this pathway receive an annual bursary paid on a monthly basis. The different levels of bursary reflect the costs of different levels of maintenance support provided to individual students by the Queen's Foundation. The figures below are for the 2019-20 connexional year. They are expected to change slightly, in line with inflation, for 2020-21:

Permanent resident in a Study Bedroom for sole use normally in Frances Young House: £8,057.86

Weekly commuter with a Study Bedroom for term time use

| | |
|---|------------|
| normally in Frances Young House: | £9,762.86 |
| Daily commuter with study space on the main site: | £10,367.86 |
| Tenant in flat: | £10,197.86 |

Many flats on the Queen’s campus are designed for a couple (or single person who wants more independence); some are suitable for families, having 2-4 bedrooms. The availability of a suitable flat cannot be guaranteed. Allocation of accommodation is by availability and perceived need. The monthly rental (which you would have to pay) for this accommodation is as follows for 2019-20 (and would be expected to rise slightly for 2020-21):

| | |
|-----------|----------|
| 1 bedroom | £506 pcm |
| 2 bedroom | £588 pcm |
| 3 bedroom | £622 pcm |
| 4 bedroom | £724 pcm |

In addition, a small number of students, because of their family circumstances, need to live off campus in Birmingham where rents are generally higher than at Queen’s. If due to lack of onsite accommodation a student needs to find a flat within Birmingham a discretionary fund is set aside to cover the rent of a flat at the current Queen’s rate as well as, where required, an additional payment to support some of the additional costs.

Additional Support

Housing Support for Lone Parents, Couples and Couples with Children. For full-time students who have a partner and/or dependent children, a flat is sometimes required either on campus at Queen’s or elsewhere in Birmingham. There is a rent charged by Queen’s for those who are resident in flats on the campus, for whom Queen’s is their Landlord. The rental charges at Queen’s are below market cost in order to assist ministerial candidates and make them affordable. In order to assist families the Church provides an additional grant for students occupying a flat at a rate of £250 a month (i.e. £3,000 per year) where the total level of household income after tax and excluding the bursary is less than £13,688.86 p.a. (at 2019-20 figures).

Ministerial students who are also parents of dependent children (defined as children under the age of 18 in full-time education or training) may claim a Dependent Child Payment of £2,738 per child per annum, provided that their net earned household income (income after deductions for tax and National Insurance contributions, exclusive of benefits, tax credits and the bursary) is projected to be less than £13,688.86 per annum.

Support for dependent adult: A ‘dependent adult’ means an adult who needs to be resident with the student and for whom the student is a primary carer (e.g. a dependent with significant physical or mental health issues). The Allocations Panel may recommend an additional payment in such circumstances equal to the level of a Dependent Child payment (£2,738).

Non-residential Students: There are a number of full-time students who, by agreement, choose to commute either daily or weekly and continue to pay rent or a mortgage for their existing property in addition to the costs of commuting. There are limits to the support which the Connexion can provide. Where the total level of household income of a full time commuting student, after tax and excluding the bursary, is less than £13,688.86p.a., an additional grant of £3,000 per year will be provided as a contribution towards housing and travel costs.

All Full Time students will receive a book grant of £300 per year .

A grant is available for computer equipment (£660 in 2019-20), equivalent to 4 years' worth of the annual grant that ministers now receive. This can be taken at some point during training or probation, as a lump sum or spread over a number of years.

Provision for Student Financial Hardship from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons (FSPD) enables ministerial students to claim financial contributions towards unexpected expenditure incurred during their time as a ministerial student. Normally, ministerial students will be required to demonstrate that such unexpected expenditure has resulted from a financial crisis, which disrupts their original budget. Payments will not normally exceed £1,000 per connexional year. The Director of Methodist Formation handles any applications to the Fund and will be happy to advise further.

Other than the funding sources noted above, no further financial contribution is made by the Methodist Church.

2. *A three-year, part-time pathway – the Queen's Connexional Course*

You are advised to consult the Queen's website for the most up to date pathway information – <http://www.queens.ac.uk/what/minform/methodist/course>

The Queen's Connexional Course involves regular residential weekends (currently seven weekends per year) and an annual residential week, as well as online learning with regular online small group seminars and ministerial practice locally and on placement.

Ministerial students following this part-time pathway will be doing so alongside other commitments (such as full-time or part-time work and/or childcare) and not as their sole undertaking.

It is important to be realistic about the demands of this programme. A part-time pathway will benefit a wide range of learners, but you need to reflect carefully on the time you have available for study (we estimate this averages at 15-20 hours per week for much of the year), your preferred style of learning and your financial situation. Factors you will need to consider are how far you:

1. are a confident self-starter in your learning;
2. are technically confident to manage e-learning;
3. benefit from longer to process learning and to absorb this before engaging with new learning;
4. are realistically able to attend and participate effectively in residential events at the Queen's Foundation (currently seven weekends and one residential week in each year);
5. have secure financial arrangements that will allow you to take on this additional task with confidence.

The financial arrangements for this pathway are as follows:

- Full tuition fees are paid by the Methodist Church.
- For each student allocated to this pathway the Methodist Church pays maintenance to Queen's. The maintenance cost includes all service costs, and meal provision for residential weekends and the annual residential week.
- Travel expenses incurred as a ministerial student are reimbursed.
- Other reasonable expenses are reimbursed, up to a total of £500 per connexional year.
- A book grant (currently £300) is paid each year.
- A grant is available for computer equipment (£660 in 2019-20), equivalent to 4 years' worth of the annual grant that ministers now receive. This can be taken *at some point during training or probation*, as a lump sum or spread over a number of years.

Provision for Student Financial Hardship from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons (FSPD) enables ministerial students to claim financial contributions towards unexpected expenditure incurred during their time as a ministerial student. Normally, ministerial students will be required to demonstrate that such unexpected expenditure has resulted from a financial crisis, which disrupts their original budget. Payments will not normally exceed £1,000 per connexional year. The Director of Methodist Formation handles any applications to the Fund and will be happy to advise further.

Other than the funding sources noted above, no further financial contribution is made by the Methodist Church.

3. A three-year, [mostly full-time] Circuit-Based Learning pathway

One year on a part-time or full-time pathway is followed by two years on a full-time Circuit-based learning pathway.

(A document with further information and criteria for CBLP is also available.)

The Circuit-based Learning Pathway began in September 2016 in a small pilot phase. Student ministers may be allocated to this pathway by the allocations committee. They begin their training at Queen's on either the full-time or part-time course for all or the majority of the first year. Their ministerial formation then continues through an integration of Circuit-based and Queen's-based learning balanced differently from other pathways.

In years two and three of their programme (and for some in the final half-term of their first year), CBL students will engage in Queen's-based learning on a part-time basis (either through QCC weekends or during the week) and will be engaged in Circuit-based learning for the rest of their time. In the case of students who begin their training part-time, there will be a marked shift to full-time mode after the first year, such that other parallel employment is not viable. Students on this pathway will either

continue to live in their own homes or will be based in Birmingham and resident at or near Queen's and undertake reflective practice-based learning in a host learning circuit close to where they live.

The financial arrangements for this pathway are as follows:

- Full tuition fees are paid by the Methodist Church.
- Maintenance is paid to Queen's to cover the costs of services and meals during your time on campus.
- Ministerial students allocated to this pathway receive an annual bursary in their second and third years paid on a monthly basis of £12,188.86 (2019-20 figure) with the expectation that the student will remain in their own home.
- The circuit in which the Circuit-based learning takes place will be responsible for the in-Circuit expenses incurred by the students carrying out duties in the Circuit in relation to their training.
- A book grant (currently £300) is paid each year.

(The information about the provision of a grant for computer equipment is as above in this document.)

Ministerial students who are also parents of dependent children (defined as children under the age of 18 in full-time education or training) may claim a Dependent Child Payment. Please refer to the details under the full-time pathway. Support for non-residential students with housing and travel costs, as outlined for the full-time pathway, is also available.

Provision for Student Financial Hardship from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons (FSPD) enables ministerial students to claim financial contributions towards unexpected expenditure incurred during their time as a ministerial student. Normally, ministerial students will be required to demonstrate that such unexpected expenditure has resulted from a financial crisis, which disrupts their original budget. Payments will not normally exceed £1,000 per connexional year. The Director of Methodist Formation handles any applications to the Fund and will be happy to advise further.

If you indicate an interest in this pathway there will be further discernment about suitability through the Allocations Committee and during the first term at Queen's. Staff at the Queen's Foundation will explore a possible circuit base, matching to clear criteria. There are no guarantees: even if there are students who would benefit from this pathway, there may not always be a viable Circuit placement available. Like other students, you will also need to consider the practical and financial implications for your home life (e.g., there will almost certainly be evening commitments).