



***Uniting Church in Australia
Presbytery of Bremer Brisbane***

Enhancing the Practice of Ministry:

**Professional Supervision
of those in**

Specified Ministries

Guidelines, Roles & Responsibilities

This paper discusses the nature and purpose of Professional Supervision for those in Specified Ministries in the Uniting Church in Australia and the mandate for Professional Supervision in the UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice; provides guidelines for the Bremer Brisbane Presbytery program of Professional Supervision; and outlines the roles, expectations and responsibilities of those involved.

Approved by the Bremer Brisbane Pastoral Relations Committee 07/02/2017.

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A. Introduction

The impetus for Professional Supervision has its sources in a number of places:

- a. the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (“the Code”), which requires those in Specified Ministries to receive Professional Supervision (Code Sections 3.8, 3.9);
- b. in the Presbytery's desire to see Ministers working effectively, being fruitful in their ministry, and receiving regular professional supervision (Reg.3.1.3a(ii));
- c. in the Minister’s own desire to be effective and fruitful.

Professional Supervision is one way that points a, b, and c are achieved. Ministers are called by ordination and commissioning to ground their lives and ministries in prayer, the study of the Scriptures, the life of a Christian community and other ways of growing, learning and finding re-creation (the Code 3.8). The Presbytery has a role in ensuring Ministers receive pastoral care, support, and encouragement in their ministry, and that their needs to function effectively are being met.

B. Professional Supervision

Professional Supervision means the relationship Ministers have with another professional whereby the Minister is assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of ministry (as per the definition at the commencement of the Regulations) including competencies, time management, goals, priorities, particular relationships, and any difficulties arising in ministry (the Code 3.9(c), 4.4(b)).

It is a time when a Minister can reflect on the practice of ministry with reference to matters such as:

- a. identifying learnings, gifts and competencies, and blocks to further development;
- b. debriefing the experiences of ministry;
- c. reflecting on critical incidents and conflict situations;
- d. identifying and managing the balance between short, medium and long term goals;
- e. clarifying work/family/personal boundaries;
- f. developing the capacity for self-awareness;
- g. caring for oneself.

The primary focus of Professional Supervision is the Minister's ability to maintain boundaries and be effective in the work of ministry. Professional Supervision is not spiritual direction, mentoring, coaching or counselling. While there is value in Ministers engaging in these other kinds of relationships, none of them are mandated or given the same status or priority in the Code as Professional Supervision. Professional Supervision is also to be differentiated from Organisational or Administrative Supervision. (See Appendix.)

Professional Supervision provides a safe and confidential environment where a Minister can be open to discussing the challenges of the work of ministry, and be helped to respond faithfully to those challenges. Professional Supervisors do not report to the Presbytery. The content of supervision sessions is absolutely confidential except in certain situations which the Supervisor should outline at the beginning of the arrangement (eg, illegal activity, danger of self-harm etc).

C. The Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice

The requirements for Professional Supervision are described in the *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice* for Ministers in the Uniting Church in Australia (whether in approved placements or not), which was amended and approved by the 12th UCA Assembly in July 2009 and became effective from 01.01.2010.

This Code is to be applied within the faith and unity of the church as described in the Basis of Union and the context of the Constitution and Regulations of the Church which state the Church's requirements in relation to the conduct and accountability of its Ministers.

Sections of the Code particularly pertinent to Professional Supervision are 3.8 and 3.9. Other references to Professional Supervision in the Code can be found in 1.9, 3.4d and 4.4b.

3.8 SELF CARE

Ministers shall take responsibility to:

- (a) address their physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health needs and, where appropriate, seek assistance from a qualified professional;*
- (b) participate in supervision;*
- (c) give adequate priority to their relationship with their family;*
- (d) nurture personal relationships which assist them in their wholeness;*
- (e) take appropriate and regular leave, and time off from work for recreational activity.*

3.9 SUPERVISION

- (a) Ministers have a responsibility to recognise that they are also vulnerable, requiring them to maintain their professionalism in difficult circumstances.*
- (b) Ministers shall keep appropriate pastoral records (eg. details of appointments and referrals and a journal of critical incidents).*
- (c) Professional supervision means the relationship Ministers have with another professional whereby the Minister is assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of ministry (as per the definition at the commencement of the Regulations) including competencies, time management, priorities and any difficulties arising in ministry.*
- (d) Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that they receive regular professional supervision. Such supervision is intended to assist Ministers to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationships and quality of ministry.*
- (e) Ministers shall discuss with their supervisor any ongoing situations of conflict in which they are involved in the course of their work.*
- (f) Where applicable, Ministers shall maintain membership requirements of any relevant professional association (eg, psychologists or counsellors).*

It is clear then that the aim of Professional Supervision is to facilitate the well-being of the faith community and improved relationships and outcomes for the Minister in the area of ministry.

D. The Presbytery

While Ministers have a responsibility, mandated by the Code, to ensure they receive regular Professional Supervision, presbyteries also have a specific responsibility, according to Regulation 3.1.3a(ii) to ensure that Ministers receive Professional Supervision. This mutual responsibility of Ministers and their Presbyteries underscores the importance that the Church assigns to this activity.

(i) Presbytery's Criteria for Approving a Professional Supervisor

The Presbytery expects that a Supervisor will:

- a. be conversant with the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, particularly in relation to the pastoral relationship, particular relationships, professional conduct and the role of Professional Supervision outlined there;
- b. be conversant with the Bremer Brisbane Presbytery's Professional Supervision document *Enhancing the Practice of Ministry*, the National Assembly's guiding document *Professional Supervision: A Process of Reflection on Ministry Experience*, and the Queensland Synod document *Getting the Most out of Professional Supervision*.
- c. be able to demonstrate competency in Professional Supervision;
- d. have an understanding of UCA culture, ethos, polity and discipline;
- e. have an understanding of ministry practice and pastoral leadership issues;
- f. have the ability to reflect theologically and be able to assist others to do so;
- g. be able to create a safe, supportive and encouraging supervisory relationship;
- h. be a skilled listener, with good analytical and discernment skills;
- i. respect confidentiality;
- j. have a strong sense of personal identity and integrity;
- k. know their own strengths and limitations, and when to refer someone on to another professional;
- l. have a life of Christian faith and participate in the life of a Christian community;
- m. receive Professional Supervision themselves.

(ii) The Pastoral Relations Committee

In the Bremer Brisbane Presbytery, the Pastoral Relations Committee has oversight of the Professional Supervision of Ministers, while the operation of its Professional Supervision program is delegated to the Presbytery Minister, the Supervision Reference Group and the Presbytery Office Administrator.

The Supervision Reference Group consists of 2-4 people appointed by the Pastoral Relations Committee of the Presbytery to act as a resource to the Presbytery Minister.

(iii) The Presbytery Minister:

- a. provides guidance in choosing a Professional Supervisor for Ministers coming into the Presbytery, when assistance is requested;
- b. is available to discuss issues in supervision with Ministers at any time;
- c. receives annual reports from Ministers on their participation in Professional Supervision (Reg.3.1.3(a)(ii));
- d. provides regular reports on Professional Supervision to the Pastoral Relations Committee;
- e. liaises as appropriate with the Presbytery Office Administrator regarding Professional Supervision matters.

(iv) The Supervision Reference Group:

- a. is available as a resource to the Presbytery Minister when issues arise that need some collective wisdom;
- b. in particular, has the task, along with the Presbytery Minister, of approving profiles of new Professional Supervisors, with reference to the criteria listed above under *Presbytery's Criteria for Approving a Professional Supervisor*.
- c. periodically reviews and updates the list of approved Supervisors, adding or deleting names as appropriate, and taking into account any concerns Ministers have expressed about the practice of Supervisors in the program. To augment the list, the Supervision Reference Group may determine to invite particular people to apply to become Supervisors in the program.

(v) The Presbytery Office Administrator:

- a. provides information about the Presbytery's Professional Supervision program to Ministers coming into the Presbytery, including (a) copies of the Presbytery's Professional Supervision document *Enhancing the Practice of Ministry*, the National Assembly's guiding document *Professional Supervision: A Process of Reflection on Ministry Experience*, and the Queensland Synod document *Getting the Most out of Professional Supervision*, and (b) profiles of Presbytery-approved Professional Supervisors.
- b. receives enquiries from potential Professional Supervisors and provides information about how to apply, including guidelines for preparing a profile and copies of the Code and of the Presbytery's, Synod's and Assembly's documents mentioned in a. above;
- c. receives profiles from potential Supervisors and forwards them to the Presbytery Minister for the approval of the Supervision Reference Group;
- d. informs potential Supervisors whether their names have been placed on the Presbytery's list of approved Supervisors, that their names and profiles will now be forwarded to all Ministers in the Presbytery, and that they may now hear from Ministers seeking to set up a supervisory arrangement;
- e. forwards the names and profiles of newly-approved Supervisors to all Ministers in the Presbytery;
- f. annually provides an opportunity for the Presbytery's approved Supervisors to update their profiles;
- g. on request, provides a list of approved Supervisors and copies of their profiles to Ministers seeking to change Supervisors;
- h. maintains the records related to the Presbytery's Professional Supervision program: a list of approved Supervisors and their profiles; a list of Ministers and their respective Supervisors, as well as dates of commencement and conclusion of their supervisory arrangements; copies of Minister's Covenants with their supervisors; and any other records which are deemed necessary;
- i. liaises with the Presbytery Minister in all matters relating to Professional Supervision.

E. The Minister

- a. attends Code of Ethics training annually and is conversant with the Presbytery's Professional Supervision document *Enhancing the Practice of Ministry*, the National Assembly's guiding document *Professional Supervision: A Process of Reflection on Ministry Experience*, and the Queensland Synod document *Getting the Most out of Professional Supervision*.
- b. chooses a Professional Supervisor from the Presbytery's list of approved Supervisors, taking into account information included in the profiles of Supervisors;
- c. approaches the Professional Supervisor of choice and makes an appointment with a view to beginning a supervisory relationship;
- d. establishes a Covenant with the Supervisor, using the form in the Appendix to the Assembly's document *Professional Supervision: A Process of Reflection on Ministry Experience*;

- e. forwards a copy of the Covenant to the Presbytery Office Administrator;
- f. if unable to identify an appropriate Supervisor from the list, discusses possible alternatives with the Presbytery Minister, and with the Presbytery Minister's agreement, seeks a profile from a Supervisor of choice for the approval of the Supervision Reference Group;
- g. informs the Presbytery, through the Office Administrator, of the name of their Supervisor and when a supervisory arrangement commences and concludes;
- h. requests a current list of approved Supervisors and their up-to-date profiles from the Office Administrator when seeking to change Supervisors;
- i. receives Professional Supervision which includes preparation, planning, regular attendance, reflection and evaluation, and openness to learning and change;
- j. on the recommendation of the Presbytery, engages in Professional Supervision for a *minimum* of eight hours each year, eg, *at least* one hour every six weeks or two hours every three months (except that Ministers in part-time placements should discuss with the Presbytery Minister what is an appropriate level of Professional Supervision in their case);
- k. reports annually to the Presbytery, through the Presbytery Minister, on their participation in Professional Supervision;
- l. discusses with the Presbytery Minister any concerns they have about a Supervisor's practice of Supervision.

F. The Professional Supervisor

- a. contacts the Presbytery Office Administrator for information on how to apply to become an approved Professional Supervisor in the Presbytery Professional Supervision program and receives guidelines for writing a profile and copies of the Code, the Presbytery's Professional Supervision document *Enhancing the Practice of Ministry*, the National Assembly's guiding document *Professional Supervision: A Process of Reflection on Ministry Experience*, and the Queensland Synod document *Getting the Most out of Professional Supervision*.
- b. familiarises him/herself with these documents;
- c. submits a profile to the Presbytery Office Administrator (The profile should be 1-2 pages long; include personal information such as name, contact details, qualifications, skills, experience, availability, fees, and whether fees are fixed or negotiable; provide reasons why the Supervisor believes he/she is an appropriate person to act as a Supervisor for Ministers; and address the criteria listed on Page 4 under *Presbytery's Criteria for Approval of a Professional Supervisor*);
- d. when engaged in a supervisory arrangement, establishes a safe environment and a relationship of trust, support and encouragement, working with the Minister to deal with the issues raised;
- e. at the first meeting, outlines the nature and expectations of his/her practice; establishes dates/times for periodic review of the arrangement; clearly negotiates the confidentiality of the supervisory relationship, specifying under what circumstances it may/will be necessary to divulge information (eg, breaches of the Code, issues of criminality, and danger of harm to self or others); and establishes a Covenant with the Minister, using the form in the Appendix to the Assembly's document *Professional Supervision: A Process of Reflection on Ministry Experience*;
- f. ensures that he/she has adequate professional indemnity.

Appendix

Professional Supervision is to be differentiated from other types of helping relationships as follows:

Professional Supervision

Professional Supervision means the relationship the Minister has with another professional or group where the Minister is assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of their ministry through reflection and education. *(Support document Interim Code of Ethics UCA 1997 p8)*

Spiritual Direction

While there are a variety of forms of spiritual direction, the common theme is walking with people as they seek to develop their relationship with God. The task is to open and keep open the structure and space in which the seeker can learn and grow. *(Support document Interim Code of Ethics UCA 1997 p8)*

Mentoring

A mentor shares much of the task of the spiritual director, although the area of concern is different. Mentors are not experts telling people what to do. They are people who share a journey relating to professional and personal development. They share wisdom and experience, enable reflection and provide space for learning. *(Support document Interim Code of Ethics UCA 1997 p8)*

Coaching

While Professional Supervision and Coaching share some things in common, Professional Supervision is more focussed on issues such as the accountability of the Minister as a helping professional, especially in maintaining the boundaries in pastoral relationships and enhancing the quality of ministry; critical incident debriefing; personal development and self-care. Coaching has much more of a problem-solving function in which realistic strategies are adopted by the minister that are designed to facilitate the achievement of specific ministry goals.

Counselling

Counselling can be broadly understood as the provision by a professional of assistance or guidance in resolving personal, social or psychological problems or difficulties. Professional Supervisors need to be aware of their own limitations in this area and to recognise when they need to refer Ministers to other appropriate professionals.

Professional Supervision is also to be differentiated from other types of supervision, in particular:

Organisational or Administrative Supervision

Organisational or Administrative Supervision is defined in the Constitution of the Uniting Church (para. 15) when it says *Ministers ... will be responsible to a Presbytery and Synod in matters of faith and discipline and to the Presbytery or other appointing body for the exercise of their ministry.*