



Termination Non-Congregational Placements

POL-MAP-05

Statement

The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations provide for the termination of a Ministry Agent. Unlike the termination of a placement in a congregation within the bounds of a Presbytery, the process for the termination of a non-congregational placement is not defined. A non-congregational body may make a definite decision to introduce a major change as a result of either its own decision or as a result of a change in Government policy that affects its operations, structure or technology which is likely to have a significant effect on one or more placements. A non-congregational body may also have utilised the performance policy and process of the body in relation to a Ministry Agent regarding the life and witness of the body or a service of the body, which has identified that continued placement would be to the detriment to the life and witness of the body or service of the body. This policy will provide guidance for non-congregational bodies in relation to implementing the significant change with Ministry Agents in non-congregational placements which will be impacted by the major change.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- all non-congregational placements within the Queensland Synod.
- Compliance is achieved through adherence to the Regulations, By-Laws and the principles of this policy.

This policy does not apply to:

- a decision of the Synod Committee for Discipline to terminate a non-congregational placement under regulation 5.7.4 (r) (iv)
- a decision to terminate a placement that comes as a result of a request from the Minister concerned.

Principles

1. Governing Regulations

Regulation 2.10.1 (h) provides for placements other than in congregations to be terminated at any time by the Presbytery, Synod or Assembly as the case maybe, after consultation with the Ministry Agent and other bodies concerned.

Regulation 2.10.1 (k) provides for a Minister whose placement has been terminated to have a right of appeal. For non-congregational placement, the appeal is directed to the General Secretary (who, on the advice of the Convenor of the Standing Appeal Panel, shall refer the appeal to another Synod for action when the termination decision is made by a Synod, Placements Committee or Assembly).

Regulation 2.10.2 states that where a Pastor is appointed to an approved placement, the Regulations related to the termination of a placement shall not apply. In other words, the right of appeal under Regulation 2.10.1 (k) does not apply.

2. Governing By-Laws

There are no Queensland Synod By-Laws that relate to the termination of a non-congregational placement.



3. Guiding Principles

The following are guiding principles in relation to the termination of a non-congregational placement:

- a. There is active conversations with the Ministry Agent and the body making the decision to terminate a non-congregational placement
- b. There is active conversations with other bodies concerned and the body making the decision to terminate a non-congregational placement.
- c. There is a need to advocate and accompany a Ministry Agent in moments of disagreement with the body making the decision to terminate a non-congregational placement.
- d. The body making the decision to pay attention to identifying a good process related to the termination of a non-congregational placement, using this policy as guidance.
- e. In terminating a placement, the body making the decision:
 - i. Recognise the good ministry exercised by the Ministry Agent, and
 - ii. Identify a suitable acknowledgement for the closure of the ministry within the body making the decision
- f. Pay attention to identifying conflicts of interest that might arise during or after a decision to terminate a non-congregational placement (refer to POL-0002 Conflicts Policy).

4. Before A Decision to Terminate a Non-Congregational Placement

The Ministry Agent in a placement that may or will be significantly affected by a major change or subject to an outcome of performance review is not part of the decision making body. To avoid conflict (as outlined in Conflicts Policy POL-002), where the Ministry Agent in a placement is normally part of the body making the decision, the Ministry Agent must withdraw from the consideration of the termination.

As per regulation 2.10.1 (h), the body making the decision is to engage in active conversations (refer to 3a and 3b above) which would inform the body making the decision. In addition, the body making the decision is to contact the relevant Presbytery to provide notification that the Ministry Agent in a placement may or will be significantly affected by a major change or subject to an outcome of performance review, and may require pastoral support. There is no obligation on the body making the decision to disclose confidential or commercially sensitive information to the Ministry Agent or Presbytery.

In relation to an assessment utilising a performance policy and process, the active conversations under 3a above must ensure that the Ministry Agent knows the full details of the performance concerns made about him/her.

There may be a need for body making the decision to make a submission to a Committee/Board and for the submission to gain approval through a resolution. The body making the decision should seek to reduce uncertainty:

- a. Scheduling active conversations so that there is a minimal period to time between the conversation and the relevant Committee/Board meeting
- b. Stating what elements are not affected by the major change
- c. Providing information on why the major change is being considered or why the outcome of the non-congregational body's performance review of the Ministry Agent has identified a detrimental concern to the life and witness of a body or a service of a body
- d. In relation to a submission regarding an assessment utilising a performance policy and process, the actions the non-congregational body has taken during the



- performance review period of the Ministry Agent to address identified performance concerns and the impact of the actions taken
- e. providing clear avenues for the Ministry Agent to seek further information (eg a designated position or individual) or personal support with the change (eg access to an Employee Assistance Program, Presbytery Minister or mentor/supervision)

5. After Making a Decision to Terminate a Non-Congregational Placement

As soon as practicable after making its decision, the body must notify the Ministry Agent in writing and discuss with the relevant Ministry Agent:

- a. The introduction of the major change or the outcome of the Ministry Agent's performance review; and
- b. The effect that the major change or the outcome of the performance assessment will have on the Ministry Agent (eg the period of time before the placement will be concluded); and
- c. The active conversations the body that made the decision will engage in to bring the placement to a conclusion and support the Ministry Agent; and
- d. The ability to appeal under Regulation 2.10.1 (k) where relevant.

For the purposes of the discussion, the body that made the decision should provide the Ministry Agent with all relevant information about the outcome of the performance review or, in relation to major change, all relevant information about the major change including the nature of the change, information about the expected effects of the major change on other lay staff/Ministry Agents, and any other matters likely to affect the Ministry Agent. The body that made the decision is not required to disclose confidential or commercially sensitive information.

The body making the decision will also contact the relevant Presbytery providing notification that a decision has been made to terminate a non-congregational placement, so that appropriate pastoral support can be provided. The body that made the decision is not required to disclose confidential or commercially sensitive information.

The Presbytery responsible for oversight of the Ministry Agent must engage with the Ministry Agent around possibilities for future ministry placements.

The body that made the decision must give prompt and genuine consideration to matters or comments raised about the major change by the Ministry Agent.

6. Period of Time Before Placement will be Concluded

The body that made the decision should seek guidance from the Placements Committee regarding the appropriate period of time for a placement to be concluded once a decision has been made to terminate a placement. For planning purposes, the following can be used as a guide:

- a. Minister of the Word or Deacon – 3 months from when the discussion is held with the Ministry Agent to when the placement is concluded.
- b. Lay Appointees including Pastors – 3 months from when the discussion is held with the Ministry Agent to when the placement is concluded.

7. Conversation of Conclusion

The body that made the decision will offer a meeting with the Ministry Agent prior to the conclusion of the placement for the purpose of obtaining feedback on the Ministry Agent's experience with the body that made the decision and more specifically, their placement.

During this conversation, the body that made the decision should canvas a range of issues including relationships with colleagues, conditions of the placement, workload and general satisfaction. The conversation is also an opportunity for the Ministry Agent to provide the body with any other information that they feel would assist the body in supporting people in a ministry placement with the body.

The conclusion meeting will verify that all active conversations were initiated to conclude the placement and that support was subsequently provided.

The concluding conversation must be treated as confidential to ensure all matters can be raised and discussed.

Consistent with principle 3e above, the body that made the decision will organise a service to mark the conclusion of the placement and to recognise the ministry exercised by the Ministry Agent.

Dictionary

Term	Meaning
Queensland Synod	Means the work and activities of the Uniting Church in Australia performed within the bounds of the Queensland Synod office including the Trinity College Queensland, Raymont Residential College, the Alexandra Park Conference Centre, congregations, presbyteries and service agencies of the Church.
Regulations	Means those regulations as prescribed and changed from time to time by the Uniting Church in Australia.
By-Laws	Means the support rules as determined by the Queensland Synod which may be changed from time to time.
GNRC	Means the Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee as established by the Queensland Synod which determines stipend, and allowance matters for ministry agents.
Ministry Agent	In the Queensland Synod, ministry agent refers to ministers of the word, deacons and pastors in an approved placement.
Non-congregational Placement	Means any placement that is not a placement in a congregation within the bounds of a Presbytery.
Significant Effect	Means the termination of the existing placement, including situations where a new placement might be created with a different placement percentage (eg termination of a full time placement and creation of a part time placement; termination of a 80% part time placement and creation of a 50% part time placement)

References & Related Documents

- POL-0001 Privacy
- POL-0002 Conflicts
- The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations
- The Queensland Synod By-Laws

Revisions & Reviews

#	Date	Reason	Author / Reviewer	Approved
1.0	01.11.17	New policy in response to SSC Res 16.259 1/12/16	Grant Weaver (Manager People & Culture)	SSC 5/10/17 Res 17.218
2.0	01.11.20	Review cycle – every 3 years	By Manager People & Culture	