



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

POD Handbook

2025 Version



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Welcome to the Period of Discernment

Every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service."

UCA Basis of Union, para 13.

Everyone who is baptised in Christ is invited into God's ministry to the world. The Period of Discernment (POD) is an intentional pathway that provides participants with a unique opportunity to discern God's leading in ministry. Through the POD, participants might discern a call to serve God's mission in a range of contexts including a workplace, local community, or church.

If you are feeling a yearning, this is a process for you.

You will be given opportunities to learn, try a ministry or service, and reflect with a mentor as you consider where God may be leading. Some may be feeling a call to become a Pastor or Minister. If so, the POD will encourage you to test that call with theological study and deeper Ministry experience.

The Period of Discernment incorporates a range of goals for participants. The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia (our national body), sets out the following goals for POD participants:

1. Develop the participant's relationship with God and understanding of themselves as a disciple
2. Give the participant opportunity to understand God's ministry and mission in the church and the world, the variety of ministries within that ministry, and the nature, function and responsibilities of these ministries
3. Recognise, affirm and build upon the skills, knowledge and experience that the participant brings to the Period of Discernment and ministry within the church
4. Enable both the church and the participant to discern confidently the person's gifts and graces for ministry and the type of ministry in which these may be expressed in the life of the church and the wider community.¹

The broad responsibilities of all POD Participants are as follows:

1. Be open to where God might be leading you.

2. Participate fully in the various requirements of the Period of Discernment process

3. Engage with your mentor

¹ UCA Assembly, *Guidelines for the Period of Discernment* 2008, 1.



Period of Discernment as a Pathway to Ordained Ministry



There will be some who undertake a POD because it is the first step towards specified ministry in the UCA, or who will feel the call to such ministry during the process. The POD, as Phase 1 of formation for ordained ministry, is an important step in this journey. However, the POD is intended to be a pathway that is undertaken to discern God's leading, rather than commence a process with a fixed end in mind. This allows people to engage in a POD with an openness to listen to what God is saying and a willingness to follow Christ's leading through the Holy Spirit.

If you are feeling the call to specified Ministry during this journey, explore that with your mentor. We encourage you to undertake some tertiary level theological study as part of your POD, to ascertain if such study is appropriate for you.

POD Outline

The Period of Discernment involves a range of activities, all of which are designed to enable participants to discern God's leading. The POD pathway involves participants engaging in four integrated facets:

- **POD Study**
- **POD Project**
- **Mentoring**
- **Participant Reflection**

This handbook will explore each of these areas as well as the requirements for commencing and completing the POD.

Commencing the POD

Commencing a Period of Discernment is relatively straightforward and is usually undertaken over a 12-month timeframe. There is flexibility in this approach with 6 months usually being the minimum time for completing a POD. A shorter POD will take into consideration prior learning and ministry experience. Alternatively, a POD can be extended beyond 12 months if necessary. The following steps are required to commence a POD:

1. A person can register for participation in the Period of Discernment through their Minister or Church Council. Registrations are sent to the POD Co-ordinator of the Presbytery in which the Congregation is located. A registration form template is provided at appendix 1
2. The Presbytery POD Co-ordinator receives and acknowledges the registration. After doing so the POD Co-ordinator provides the participant with this POD Handbook. Furthermore, the POD Co-ordinator appoints a mentor to work with the participant through their Period of Discernment. The POD Co-ordinator advises the relevant Presbytery body (usually the PRC) that the participant has commenced a Period of Discernment.
3. A POD commences at the first mentoring session between participant and mentor.



POD Study

The study component of the POD focuses on forming discernment practices, deepening biblical understanding and exploring the Uniting Church as a missional movement. The POD study component involves:

- Short Courses
- Biblical Study

Short Courses

A variety of short courses can be completed during your POD, depending on the purpose of your POD. Aim to complete at least 2. You can get in contact with Trinity College Qld, or Moreton Rivers Presbytery's Centre for Ministry & Leadership to see what short courses are available. If you are seeking to consider Ministry in the Uniting Church, the below list offers some good options to help you understand the Uniting Church and think about discernment;

- UCA Basis of Union
- Discerning God's Leading
- Ordination

If you are seeking to explore other types of ministries, in consultation with your mentor, seek to choose appropriate short courses.

Upon completing the short course, a statement of completion will be issued to the participant. A copy of the statement of completion is forwarded to the mentor who marks the short course as complete on the participant's formation plan.

Biblical Study

POD participants are encouraged to complete a unit of Biblical Studies in either the Old or New Testament. Participants can undertake an accredited² unit of biblical study at Trinity College Qld, or undertake a non-accredited unit of biblical study through "Learning for Living" or "Trinity on Tap" available from Moreton Rivers Presbytery or Trinity College Qld respectively.

If a POD participant has completed Biblical Studies prior to commencing the POD, a conversations regarding recognition of prior learning can be undertaken with your mentor and Presbytery POD Co-ordinator.

² *Accredited* is at tertiary level and counts towards a diploma or degree.



POD Project

Ministry experience

The POD Project is aimed at providing a practical and contextualised opportunity for participants to discern God's leading. The POD Project guides participants and mentors in developing a learning agreement, identifying a relevant context and framing particular reflection questions.

The POD Project provides participants with a ministry experience in which they choose from **one** of the following contexts:



The POD Project is fundamentally about discernment rather than assessment. The project is intentionally experiential and provides space to explore God's leading and activity within a given context. An action/reflection process is central to the POD Project and is designed to help participants explore the following:

1. What are you learning about God, church, faith, ministry, and mission?
2. What are you learning about yourself in terms of character, passion, and skills?
3. Through this experience, where do you believe God might be leading you?

Project Outlines

The context for the POD Project has a set of requirements. The POD Project requires a learning agreement to be collaboratively developed between the mentor and participant. The learning agreement is informed by the framework for the relevant context. A copy of the learning agreement is found at appendix 2.

The following frameworks provide participants and mentors with the shape and focus that a project needs to have. Participants are required to choose one project context. Given the flexible nature of the POD, participants are free to modify their project or develop something new if it is endorsed by both their mentor and the POD Co-ordinator.



Context: Workplace Project

Goal

To explore what ministry and mission looks like in your workplace.

Time

40 hours over six months

Resources

The Workplace Project will require Participants to engage with the following resources:

- *Gospel Centred Work* by Tim Chester

It is recommended that Participants engage with some or all of the following books (and/or those resources recommended by their Mentor):

- *God at Work: Live each day with purpose.* by Ken Costa
- *Deep Work: Spiritual practice in our workday world* by Jenny Tymm
- *Every Good Endeavour* by Tim Keller

Actions

1. Spend time journaling and discussing with your mentor: what it is that you are hoping to learn from this experience?
2. Utilise the first 4-6 weeks engaging with the required and recommended resources. Throughout the engagement with these resources, make a note of various opinions, concepts and questions that stand out. It is vital that participants record these in their journals for future reference. Furthermore, it is important to continue to explore these various avenues with a mentor and through personal reflection to hear what God is saying.
3. Select between 3-6 principles outlined in *Gospel Centred Work* that connect most strongly with personal struggles or missional opportunities in your workplace. Engage with each principle by considering the relevant scriptures, praying into the issues (especially the relationships involved) and consider what initiatives or innovations can be developed and enacted. Ensure that regular journal entries are made that recount what God has done.
4. The participant is expected to use the following reflection questions to help discern what God is saying through the project:
 - In what ways is this project developing people's faith in Christ?
 - In what ways is this project encouraging/growing/developing the body of Christ (church)?
 - In what ways is this project proclaiming the love of Christ to the world?
 - In what ways does this project connect or not connect with your heart and gifts?
 - Do you see yourself being involved in ministry within this context in the future? (Why/why not?)
 - Describe how your relationship with God and your growth as a disciple is being affected by this experience.

It is important for the participant to ensure that they journal the answers to these reflection questions.

Mentoring sessions will provide space to explore what God is saying in and through the answers and reflections emerging from these questions.



Context: Home and Neighbourhood Project

Goal

To explore what ministry and mission looks like from your home and in your neighbourhood.

Time

40 hours over six months

Resources

The Home and Neighbourhood Project will require Participants to engage with the following resources:

- *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* by Sam Chan

It is recommended that Participants engage with some or all of the following books (and/or those resources recommended by their Mentor):

- *Serving a Movement* by Tim Keller

Actions

1. Spend time journaling and discussing with your mentor: what it is that you are hoping to learn from this experience?
2. Utilise the first 4-6 weeks engaging with the required and recommended resources. Throughout the engagement with these resources, make a note of various opinions, concepts and questions that stand out. It is vital that participants record these in their journals for future reference. Furthermore, it is important to continue to explore these various avenues with a mentor and through personal reflection to hear what God is saying.
3. Formulate a presentation of the Gospel that is relevant to your project context. Use Chapter 3 of *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* to guide the development of your Gospel presentation.
4. Pray for an opportunity to share (and then do so if the opportunity arises) the gospel presentation that you have crafted, ensuring you reflect on and journal what is emerging, especially in relation to what God is saying.
5. The participant is expected to use the following reflection questions to help discern what God is saying through the project:
 - In what ways is this project developing people's faith in Christ?
 - In what ways is this project encouraging/growing/developing the body of Christ (church)?
 - In what ways is this project proclaiming the love of Christ to the world?
 - In what ways does this project connect or not connect with your heart and gifts?
 - Could you see yourself being involved in ministry within this context in the future? (Why/why not?)
 - Describe how your relationship with God and your growth as a disciple is being affected by this experience.

It is important for the participant to ensure that they journal the answers to these reflection questions.

Mentoring sessions will provide space to explore what God is saying in and through the answers and reflections emerging from these questions.



Context: Local Congregation Project

Goal

To explore what ministry and mission looks like in a local church setting.

Time

40 hours over six months

Resources

The Local Congregation Project will require Participants to engage with the following resources:

- *UCA Basis of Union*
- *Provocative Church* by Graham Tomlin

It is recommended that Participants engage with some or all of the following books (and/or those resources recommended by their Mentor):

- *Leading Better Bible Studies* by Karen and Rod Morris

Actions

1. Spend time journaling and discussing with your mentor: what it is that you are hoping to learn from this experience?
2. Utilise the first 4-6 weeks engaging with the required and recommended resources. Throughout the engagement with these resources, make a note of various opinions, concepts and questions that stand out. It is vital that participants record these in their journals for future reference. Furthermore, it is important to continue to explore these various avenues with a mentor and through personal reflection to hear what God is saying.
3. Consider which ministry/group area you wish to experience. This needs to be a ministry and/ or mission activity, not a planning group, committee or task group. Possible areas include:
 - Youth and children's ministry
 - Leading worship and/or preaching
 - Bible study or other small groups
 - Playgroups
 - Outreach groups such as men's shed, emergency relief, school-based groups
 - Pastoral care: hospital visiting, congregational visiting, healing/support-based groups
4. Talk to the leader/minister about joining the team and what requirements might exist, including various meetings, planning and training sessions. All relevant Safe Ministry with Children training and approvals (Blue Cards) will be required for this project.
5. Engage in learning about your ministry through a range of different means, including:
 - a. Attending a workshop/conference
 - b. Meeting with practitioners from other Congregations



- c. Reading books or listening to Podcasts, relevant to the project ministry area, that are recommended by your Mentor, Minister or leader
6. In consultation with your minister/leader design a small project that you can plan, do and evaluate within six months. Ideas could be:
- Organise and run an event that connects church and community
 - Organise and run an event that educates your church on a particular issue
 - Develop and run a four-session bible study course on a specific topic
 - Run a creative worship event
7. The participant is expected to use the following reflection questions to help discern what God is saying through the project:
- In what ways is this project developing people's faith in Christ?
 - In what ways is this project encouraging/growing/developing the body of Christ (church)?
 - In what ways is this project proclaiming the love of Christ to the world?
 - In what ways does this project connect or not connect with your heart and gifts?
 - Could you see yourself being involved in ministry within this context in the future? (Why/why not?)
 - Describe how your relationship with God and your growth as a disciple is being affected by this experience.

It is important for the participant to ensure that they journal the answers to these reflection questions. Mentoring sessions will provide space to explore what God is saying in and through the answers and reflections emerging from these questions.



Context: Flexible Option

Examples of possible contexts that could fit within the flexible options include expressions of ministry within a Congress or multicultural setting, School Chaplaincy or Chaplaincy within a UnitingCare or Wesley Mission Qld context.

Goal

To explore what ministry and mission looks like within a context chosen by the Participant in consultation with their Mentor and approved by the Presbytery POD Co-ordinator.

Time

40 hours over six months

Resources

The Participant and Mentor need to agree on a selection of books, podcasts or other resources that will inform the Project.

Actions

1. Spend time journaling and discussing with your mentor what it is that you are hoping to learn from this experience?
2. Utilise the first 4-6 weeks engaging with the required and recommended resources. Throughout the engagement with these resources, make a note of various opinions, concepts and questions that stand out. It is vital that participants record these in their journals for future reference. Furthermore, it is important to continue to explore these various avenues with a mentor and through personal reflection to hear what God is saying.
3. Develop a clear plan that has concise actions outlining what the participant needs to undertake in order to engage in discernment practices within the relevant context.
4. The participant is expected to use the following reflection questions to help discern what God is saying through the project:
 - In what ways is this project developing people's faith in Christ?
 - In what ways is this project encouraging/growing/developing the body of Christ (church)?
 - In what ways is this project proclaiming the love of Christ to the world?
 - In what ways does this project connect or not connect with your heart and gifts?
 - Could you see yourself being involved in ministry within this context in the future? (Why/why not?)
 - Describe how your relationship with God and your growth as a disciple is being affected by this experience.

It is important for the participant to ensure that they journal the answers to these reflection questions.

Mentoring sessions will provide space to explore what God is saying in and through the answers and reflections emerging from these questions.



Mentoring

The mentoring relationship is paramount in assisting POD participants discern God's leading. This relationship allows participants to reflect on their experiences while seeking to make sense of learning that emerges from their study. The relationship between mentor and participant will be at its best when both parties engage, reflect and discuss things openly and honestly. The mentoring relationship within the POD is not primarily about the mentor assessing the participant but journeying with them along a discernment pathway. Therefore, the mentor's goal is to enable and encourage the participant to hear God's voice and leading as they discern a call to a particular way of sharing in the ongoing ministry of Christ.

Understanding the roles and expectations of the Mentoring Relationship

There are various responsibilities and expectations of the mentor and participant within the POD mentoring relationship. The roles of mentor and participant require a commitment to the mentoring relationship that constantly holds the following in view:

Mentors

Mentors should have the following qualities:

- be a good listener
- have wide experience of the Church
- be committed to lay and ordained ministry within the Uniting Church
- be willing and able to discuss and explore their own faith
- know how to develop rapport with others
- be wise and affirming
- be trustworthy and able to maintain confidentiality
- be willing and able to ask probing, challenging and thoughtful questions

Mentors will be required to exercise the following practical skills in relation to the POD pathway:

- make themselves available to meet with participants either face to face or via online meeting platforms. Mentors and participants should connect at least two hours per month and at other times as needed
- assist participants in the development of their Formation Plan
- collaborate with participants in the development of their POD Project Learning Agreement (see appendix 2)
- assist participants to theologically reflect and integrate their learning and experiences
- focus the discussion on the participants relationship with God and growth in faith and discipleship
- help participants discern future directions for ministry
- assist participants in the development of their portfolio statement for presentation to the presbytery representative
- advise participants honestly or seek advice on the steps they might take to follow God's call on your life.

Participants

To make the most of the mentoring relationship the participant needs to fulfill certain responsibilities and expectations. The participant should:

- be teachable (i.e. committed to listening, reflecting, and learning)
- be trusting enough to engage fully in the mentoring relationship
- be reliable, willing to meet with the mentor regularly for at least two hours each month
- be prepared for each mentoring session
- be willing to ask for help when needed
- complete all the required tasks on time



Mentor Training

Training and equipping of POD mentors is a responsibility of the Synod. Trinity College Queensland will provide resources for this to occur on an occasional basis. Other Mentoring programs may be offered through other agencies. The training should aim to develop skills in mentoring as well as a robust understanding of the POD process.

Outline of Mentoring Sessions

Purpose

The general purpose of the Mentoring session will be: To reflect on the participants discernment, progress and experiences.

Meeting

Regular meetings between the participant and mentor should revolve around an action/reflection process outlined in appendix 3. The “what, so what and now what” reflection method helps participants develop theological reflection skills and apply learning from their experiences. Prayer also forms an important part of the mentoring meetings, especially in relation to discerning God’s leading. There is no set outline for how meetings should be conducted but prayer and reflection are essential components of any mentoring session.

There will be certain occasions when the mentoring session needs to have a particular focus such as:

- The first mentoring session will require the mentor and participant to ensure that they both have a clear understanding of the POD pathway. The first session should also involve the development of the Formation Plan. This should be finalised by the end of the second session and sent to the Presbytery POD Co-ordinator. Furthermore, the first session should involve the mentor and participant getting to know each other, perhaps through sharing something of their relationship with God.
- At the halfway point of the POD (usually after 6 months), the mentor and participant will meet for the specific purpose of reviewing progress (see Appendix 4)

Mentor Reporting

At the conclusion of the POD, the mentor will provide two documents to the POD Co-ordinator:

- Completed Formation Plan
- Mentor Report

Formation Plan

The Formation Plan (see appendix 5) provides a clear summary of what the participant has completed during their POD. The Formation Plan is maintained by the mentor and overseen by the POD Co-ordinator. There is the option within the plan for various parties, such as relevant Trinity faculty, to make comment about the participants capacity. It is the responsibility of the mentor to record these comments in the Formation Plan. The participant will provide the mentor with all statements of completion relating to short courses and the biblical studies unit.

Mentor Report

A Mentor Report of up to 500 words will be provided at the conclusion of the POD. The report will include the following:

- A reflection on the participant’s discerned calling.
- Evidence of this calling emerging from the mentoring sessions
- Affirmations or concerns that the mentor needs to make known to the Presbytery regarding the participants sense of calling

The following questions might provide mentors with a basis for developing their report:

- What gifts/passions/abilities have you seen in the participant?



- What discernment practices did you see the participant use in discerning God's call?
- How well did the participant engage with the action/reflection approach to the various facets of their POD and in what ways did this contribute to their discernment?
- Do you agree with the participants discernment of God's leading? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Describe the participants capacity in relation to the following:
 - Preparation for mentoring sessions
 - Openness to reflect on experiences and new possibilities
 - Organisation skills
 - Character (eg. how they have demonstrated resilience and handled conflict, disappointment, success, obstacles)

The mentor will submit the formation plan and mentor report, along with relevant documentation from the participant, to the POD Co-ordinator at the conclusion of the POD.

Participant Reflection and Reporting

Throughout the POD, participants will be required to keep a record of their learnings and discernment. This will inform the participant's reporting at the conclusion of the POD. Participants are encouraged to keep a journal as the means for recording their POD journey.

Journaling

The practice of journaling is a personal activity focused on recording a journey. The various activities of the POD pathway will generate different learnings and reflections which are usually recorded in written form. Journaling can be enhanced through answering pointed questions such as:

- What scripture/s have been significant in the POD experience and study?
- What quotes, books, music or other resources have been significant throughout the POD?
- What have you learnt about yourself through the POD experience or study?
- What connects with your heart/passions?
- What gifts do you have that connect with the ministry you are sensing God calling you into?
- What type of character is necessary for this ministry? Do you believe you possess this character?
- What has surprised you during your POD?

A POD participant will use their journal to capture notes from mentoring sessions and the reflections from their POD Project.

Therefore, the POD journal will contain 3 main sections:

- 1. Personal discernment reflections**
- 2. Notes from mentor sessions**
- 3. Reflections from POD Project**

The journal will not be submitted as part of the documentation for completing a POD. However, it will need to be utilised to complete the participants Discernment Statement and may also inform various answers to their Discernment Reflection Questions.

Reporting

At the conclusion of the POD the participant is required to provide their mentor with the following documents:

- Statements of completion for short courses and biblical studies unit
- Paper including 300-word responses to each Discernment Reflection Question
- Discernment Statement, of up to 1000 words, that succinctly articulates what the participant has discerned during their POD



Discernment Statement

The Discernment Statement should clearly reflect what the participant has discerned God is calling them to. If the participant is still unsure of God's calling, then that becomes the focus for their discernment statement. Participants should use their personal reflections, notes from mentoring sessions and relevant learnings from their study and POD Project to support the articulation of their discernment. Participants should also include any significant challenges or questions relating to their discernment of God's call. Ultimately, the discernment statement allows the participant and Presbytery to discern together.

Discernment Reflection Questions

As participants move toward completing their POD they will be required to write 300-word responses to each of the following reflection questions:

1. What scriptures have informed your discernment and why?
2. What wisdom have others shared with you that contributed to your discernment?
3. What kind of character qualities are essential for the ministry you are discerning a call to and why?
4. What factors in your life challenge your obedience to God's leading?
5. What spiritual practices have informed your discernment and why?
6. How do you know this is what God is leading you to?

The responses will be discussed with the participant's mentor. These responses will be submitted at the conclusion of the POD.

Finalising Reporting

Along with the participants required documents, the mentor will complete a mentor report. Furthermore, the mentor is responsible for ensuring that the formation plan is completed. The participant will send their required documents to the mentor for submission to the POD Co-Ordinator

Therefore, finalising the POD will require the mentor sending the following documents to the POD Co-ordinator:

- **Mentor Report**
- **Completed Formation Plan**
- **Reflection paper responding to the relevant discernment questions**
- **Discernment Statement, of up to 1000 words, that succinctly articulates what the participant has discerned during their POD**

Concluding the POD

The conclusion of the POD involves the POD Co-ordinator submitting a range of documents to the Presbytery. The Presbytery is responsible for ensuring that all requirements of the POD have been met. The following provides an outline of the steps involved in concluding a POD:

1. The participant must provide their mentor with statements of completion for short courses and the unit of biblical studies. The mentor ensures the formation plan is completed. The participant also provides responses to the discernment reflection questions and a Discernment Statement.
2. The mentor submits the following documents to the POD Co-ordinator:
 - Mentor Report
 - Completed Formation Plan
 - Reflection paper responding to the relevant discernment questions
 - Discernment Statement, of up to 1000 words, that succinctly articulates what the participant has discerned during their POD
3. The POD Co-ordinator submits these documents to the Presbytery (usually the PRC)
4. If the Presbytery is satisfied that the requirements of the POD have been met, then it issues a statement of conclusion to the Period of Discernment.
5. Once the POD has been satisfactorily completed a person may commence the process of applying to candidate for ordained ministry



Summary of key responsibilities within the POD process

Participant

- Complete Short Courses
- Complete Biblical Studies unit
- Complete POD Project
- Undertake journaling that captures various reflections from the POD journey
- Attend and be prepared for all mentoring sessions
- Complete Reflection paper responding to the relevant discernment questions and send to mentor
- Complete Discernment Statement, of up to 1000 words, that succinctly articulates what has been discerned during the POD. This statement is sent to the participant's mentor.

Mentor

- Organise and run mentoring sessions
- Work with participant to complete their POD Project Learning Agreement
- Maintain the participant's Formation Plan
- Complete a Mentor Report
- Submit all required documents to the POD Co-ordinator at the conclusion of the POD

POD Co-ordinator

- Receive POD registration
- Advise relevant Presbytery body that a person has commenced a POD
- Appoint a mentor for a participant's POD
- Provide participants and mentors with all POD documentation
- Work with POD participant to determine recognition of prior learning through previous study and/or ministry experience
- Advise mentor of any recognition of prior learning granted to the participant.
- Receive all documents from the mentor at the end of the POD
- Submit all completed documents to the relevant Presbytery body
- Maintain a register of all POD participants
- Advise current and potential mentors about POD mentor training
- Ensure that all current mentors have completed mentor training

Presbytery

- Appoint a POD Co-ordinator
- Receive all documentation from POD Co-ordinator at the conclusion of a participant's POD
- Determine that the participant has satisfactorily completed their POD
- Issue a Statement of Completion to the POD participant

Minister or Church Council Chairperson

- Submit POD registration form to the Presbytery POD Co-ordinator



Appendix 1 - POD Registration Form

POD Registration Form

Participant Name:

Participant Email:

Participant Phone:

Participants Congregation/Faith Community:

Participants Presbytery:

POD Commencement Date:

Participants reason for commencing a POD

Participant's education in theology or ministry

Participant's ministry experience

Minister/Church Council Chairperson reference

Signed:

Participant:

Minister/Church Council Chairperson:



Appendix 2 - POD Project Learning Agreement

The Learning Agreement is the significant point of integration for the POD Project. It is the reference point for participants and mentors that brings clarity to the direction and shape the Project needs to take. The Learning Agreement needs to be established as part of the initial work of developing the POD Project. The key components of the learning agreement are:

- **POD Project Goals:** Participants and their mentor need to develop up to 5 project goals that are directly related to the POD Project. Project goals should articulate simple and specific actions that, when fulfilled, allow for the project to be completed. The goals can be sequential and/or integrated steps in completing the project. The following elements and questions are helpful guides in the development of the project goals:

Purposeful – Why are you setting this goal as part of the project?

Outcome focused – What outcomes are you expecting to see by setting this goal?

Discernment driven – How will this goal help discern God’s leading?

- **Resources:** Participants and mentors will need to outline what resources will be required in order to fulfill the project goals. The resource list can be progressively developed during the project.
- **Outcomes and Discernment:** Participants will be required to record what the outcomes and discernment has been during the Project.

A template for the Learning Agreement is as follows:

POD Project Learning Agreement	
Participant Name:	Mentors Name:
Participant Email:	Mentor Email:
Participant Phone:	Mentor Phone:
POD Project Focus:	
Learning Agreement Commencement date:	Learning Agreement Conclusion date:

POD Project Goals	Resources	Outcomes and Discernment
Goal 1		
Goal 2		
Goal 3		
Goal 4		
Goal 5		

Signed:

Participant:

Mentor:



Appendix 3 – The What, So What and Now What Reflection Model

This structure for reflection questions is perhaps the most widely known and used. It is a basic way to promote discussion that begins with reviewing the details of the experience and moves toward critical thinking, problem solving, and creating and action plan.

What?

This is all about facts and includes questions such as:

1. What did you do?
2. What happened?

The point is to get the participant to bring describe the experience.

So what?

Here is where the participant processes their experiences in order to develop learnings or abstractions:

The So What stage marks a shift from descriptive to interpretive which seeks to uncover the meanings inherent in various experiences through exploring questions such as:

1. How did that make you feel?
2. Why is that significant?
3. What could have been done differently?
4. What might God have been saying in the midst of this experience?

Now what?

The final movement is in generalising learnings to apply them to new contexts which gives rise to questions such as:

1. What discernment will you be seeking from God as a result of what you now know?
2. What spiritual practices will you engage to assist with this discernment and seeking after God?
3. How does the learning provide for an understanding of the way the experience fits into the bigger picture of the ministry context?
4. In what ways can the new learnings be integrated and applied as a means for change in a current context



Appendix 4 – POD Halfway Reflection Session

Outcomes for the Halfway Progress Check

1. Reflect on the Period of Discernment experiences so far
2. Discuss questions/issues that have been emerged for the participant
3. Plan for or reflect on the POD Project
4. Plan for or reflect on the various POD Learning Opportunities

Questions to consider as part of the halfway reflection with Mentor

The participant will be given a range of questions at least 1 month prior to the halfway point of their POD. The participant will be expected to provide written responses to the following questions concerning their POD progress:

1. What have you learnt about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?
2. What have you learnt about what it means to be a part of the Uniting Church in Australia?
3. What are some things that you have learnt about God/church/mission/ministry?
4. What are some things that you have learnt about yourself, your faith, gifts, passion and character?
5. Where do you think that God might be leading you in this process?



Appendix 5 - Period of Discernment Formation Plan:

POD Formation Plan		
Participant Name:	Mentor Name:	
Participant Email:	Mentor Email:	
Participant Phone:	Mentor Phone:	
Participants Presbytery:	POD Commencement Date:	
POD Learning Opportunities	Completed (Y/N)	Comments
Short Courses (2 units)		
UCA Basis of Union		
Discerning God's Leading		
Ordination		
Biblical Study (One of the following)		
New Testament Accredited Unit		
Old Testament Accredited Unit		
New Testament Trinity on Tap		
Old Testament Trinity on Tap		
POD Project	Completed (Y/N)	Comments
The Participant and Mentor select one of the following contexts in which to develop, implement, evaluate & reflect on a POD Project:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace • Home and neighbourhood • Local Congregation • Flexible Option 		
Mentoring and Personal Reflection	Completed (Y/N)	Comments
Mentoring Sessions		
Discernment Reflection Questions		
Discernment Statement		

Signed:

Participant:

Presbytery POD Co-ordinator: