

## Newly Accredited Ministers – information for churches

This paper gives some information about the requirements of the BU programme for Newly Accredited Ministers and the implications for their church.

The recommended Terms of Appointment include the following wording: “When a Newly Accredited Minister is appointed the church shall agree to the minister’s participation in the Baptist Union’s mandatory programme for Newly Accredited Ministers and allow time for study and participation in the programme during normal working hours, and pay such expenses as determined from time to time.”

Ministers coming from College, or via Residential Selection Conference, into a pastorate are given special support. During their time as a Newly Accredited Minister (NAM), ministers are linked with one of our trained mentors (another Minister or person with particular experience and skills to enable their development). Normally, they would initially meet with the mentor every 4 to 6 weeks, but in their second and third year this would typically reduce to about once a quarter. The mentors are accountable to the Association and Ministries Team for their work, and do not have a role in relation to the NAM’s church. The NAM is expected to travel to the meeting with the mentor.

NAMs are also required to link up with one of our Baptist Colleges (in most cases the one most local) to complete three ‘Learning Contracts’, one per year, the content of which is agreed with the College. This is an important way of maintaining a course of study and developing reflective practice during their probationary period. For the first Learning Contract this will usually take the form of a Mission Audit, whereby they look at the church and the local community and consider the best ways the church can relate to and engage with the community in mission. The College may require NAMs to attend once or twice a year to review their Learning Contracts. On two to four occasions a year (it varies from Association to Association), Regional Ministers bring the NAMS in their Association together for a Theological Reflection Day. This provides an opportunity to discuss issues that arise in ministry and to encourage theological reflection on the practice of ministry. These days also help ministers to gain support from each other.

To encourage NAMS to engage with Baptists Together at a national level, the Baptist Union now provides free tickets for them and their spouse to attend Assembly every year during their NAM period. The church is asked to support their minister’s attendance at the Baptist Assembly, especially when they are affirmed by Assembly as Fully Accredited Ministers following completion of their probationary period.

It is generally reckoned that the church should allow, on average, half a day a week to cover these various elements, although the actual time will obviously vary in any one week. In addition, the church is expected to cover relevant expenses associated with the programme, eg travelling to meet with the mentor, attend Theological Reflection Days, College, attendance at the Baptist Assembly etc. There is also a modest annual enrolment fee for the Learning Contracts.

Each NAM's progress is usually reviewed two or three times during the probationary period by the Association. The church will be asked to provide a report on the minister's development as part of this. Guidelines for this are provided by the Association and it is an open process in which the minister and church co-operate.

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Registered Charity Number: 1125912 [From 1 January 2020, BUGB will operate as a CIO with registered charity number 1181392.]

Dec 2019