

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BUNBURY

POLICY: Comprehensive Psychological Assessment of Candidates for Ordination

Approved: 18 November 2021
To be reviewed: 2024

Policy

The Anglican Church of Australia Canons have established standards of conduct for clergy and church workers to maintain a safe and healthy ministry environment.

All candidates are required to have a comprehensive psychological assessment prior to being considered as a potential candidate for ordination. This assessment is undertaken by a registered Psychologist who is experienced in psychological assessment and selection, including psychosexual assessment; and, who is approved by the Bishop and Ordination Council. No candidate may be considered for training or ordination until this has been completed with a report provided to the Bishop for consideration whether to proceed to training or ordination.

This policy complies with the Anglican Church of Australia Canons.

Definition of Psychological Assessment: See The Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 Second Schedule, Interpretation (p.17)

Psychological assessment means consideration of a psychological report that includes an assessment of the personal, social and psychosexual maturity of the person by a registered psychologist experienced in psychological assessment.

Deacons (clergy) are required to have: See The Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 Part 2 – Standards of Screening Deacons s.3 (p.19-20)

Current assessments (renewed every 3 years in line with Diocesan Requirements) including:

- WWCC – Unconditional
- National Register check
- Safe Ministry Assessment (see Diocese of Bunbury / Anglican Church of Australia Safe Church forms)
- Medical Assessment
- Psychological Assessment; and,
- A church ministry assessment if coming from another Province, Diocese, or denomination

Our own Safe Church requirements also require:

- A satisfactory National Police Clearance renewed every 3 years
- Safe Church Training, renewed every 3 years

Procedures and Practice

In the process of discernment during the period when the Ordination Council is considering the applicant as a possible candidate for ordination, a medical and psychological assessment must be undertaken at the direction of the Diocese. This can be with the potential candidate's own GP and the psychologist chosen by the Bishop. The Bishop can direct the candidate to attend a psychologist appointed by the Diocese. The cost for the psychological assessment is covered by the Diocese. The medical cost is paid by the candidate.

All the other Safe Church checks must also be completed and finalised prior to the Medical and Psychological assessments being undertaken.

The process to be used must include the following:

- A method for conducting and reporting comprehensive psychological assessment including psychosexual assessment
- The assessment to be made by means of an Australian Psychological Society (APS) recognised psychometric instrument(s). The assessment will also include a psychological interview structured around, but not confined to, a candidate's detailed personal history booklet completed by the candidate prior to the time of testing, together with additional questions about psychosexual maturity to be used during the interview
- Opportunity to administer additional assessments e.g., cognitive testing if there are concerns about a candidate's ability to undertake the required level of study
- Criteria against which the psychologist's report is to be written and approved by the Bishop in consultation with the Ordination Council.
- The candidate consents in writing to the release of the report to the Bishop and the other identified individuals in order to meet privacy requirements. Should a candidate not agree to their report being released, their application will be considered to have been withdrawn and the Bishop will be advised the potential candidate has withdrawn from the discernment process. A record of this decision is to be noted in the individual's application file.
- The outlined processes should be reviewed every three years to establish whether improvements to the assessments, or a change of psychologists, would benefit the assessment process and the value the diocese obtains from the reports.

The Diocesan process will be as follows:

- The applicant or candidate assessments will be conducted when the initial inquiry stage is complete and before any decision is made to commence the trainee phase.
- Registered psychologists will be used who are competent and experienced in assessment and selection including psycho-sexual assessments.
- The psychologist must have no previous or current personal or professional relationship with the candidate or their family.
- Assessments will include psychometric measures, a structured interview and may include psychological tests.
- Informed consent by the candidate must be provided to the Psychologist prior to commencement and they must be advised who will see the report and their choice to proceed or withdraw and the consequences.
- Candidates will be given the referral letters setting out in details what they can expect of the assessment. The candidate can withdraw at any time in the process.
- The interview will be structured primarily around the Personal History booklet but may cover broader psychosocial areas and will include specific questions as to sexual history and psychosexual issues.
- Personal history matters included will cover family background and relationships, education, work and employment, health, church involvement, sports, hobbies and social interests and vocational interest.
- The Diocese is responsible for the payment of the psychologist's fees and the report preparation.

Report from the Psychologist

The report should include the following:

- Presentation of the report and its contents.
- Information on critical applicant or candidate variables relevant to ministry addressing:
 - a) psychometric results validity considerations such as random, negative, or positive distortions of candidate profile information.
 - b) diagnostic issues such as diagnosis of mood and anxiety, somatoform, psychotic, personality and substance abuse disorders, and clinical safety issues such as suicide, self-harm and violence risk.
- Psychological factors:
 - Biological and constitutional factors
 - Cognitive factors
 - Social determinants and current life situation
 - Identity and self-concept
 - Personality factors
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Sexual maturity
 - Skills, capacities and experience
 - Motivation

Expansion on Psychological Factors:

- Biological and Constitutional Factors (relevant history and status; family history and substance or psychiatric disorders; drug or medication history)
- Cognitive Factors (ability to study at tertiary level; attitude to learning)
- Social Determinants and Current Life Situations (family background; educational and work history; friends and social support systems)
- Identity and Self-Concept (self-view and perception of how viewed by others; level of self-esteem, personal and career aspirations; ability to change)
- Personality Factors (capacity to work under tension and deal with multiple stressors, including those beyond a person's control; energy level; time management abilities; ability to relate comfortably with authority figures)
- Interpersonal Skills (capacity to establish and maintain appropriate interpersonal relationships; comfort and effectiveness in group settings; capacity for receiving feedback from others; empathic ability; capacity to recognise impact on others and to maintain healthy boundaries; openness to living, relating and working with individuals from cultures, religious, faith and spiritual practices, and sexual identity and genders other than own)
- Sexual maturity (sexual maturity at a level consistent with age and state in life; sexual orientation, identity; sexual behaviours consistent with vocation; potential resistance to growth and maturation of sexual experience or expression)

Skills, Capacity and Experience

- Skills (leadership potential, for example as shown in personal initiatives and personal life decisions; capacity to cooperate with others; capacity to build relationship sand communities; capacity for active listening; capacity for compassion and empathy; capacity to communicate adequately in English in both writing and speaking, sufficient for an ordained ministry leadership role; commitment ot promote reasonable and harmonious social justice)
- Experience (including past experience of active involvement in a parish or other Christian community; familiarity and experience with ministry requirements of the Diocese)

- Personal Capacities (openness and flexibility; sense of humour; capacity for self-appraisal; adequate physical health; decision-making skills; money management skills; adequate etiquette skills; familiarity with and attraction to Anglican ordained ministry)

Motivation

- What motivates this person's application for ordination?
- How realistic are the person's expectations and understanding of the demands of ministry?

Overall Assessment

- Are there any reasons why this person should not be accepted for ordination training?

The final report must include one of the three following statements:

- Recommend the applicant for consideration by the bishop and Ordination Council to advance to ordination candidacy
- Recommend the applicant reapply to the Diocese in 12 months (or greater period) following further clergy mentoring, and / or spiritual, personal, or educational growth and development

The applicant is not recommended to proceed to ordination candidacy.

Confidentiality

The Bishop, the Director of Ordinands, the Diocesan Secretary (if handling HR matters) and the Archdeacon are the only people who will see a copy of the report from the psychologist about the applicant or candidate. This will remain as a confidential matter in their personnel files.

External Anglican or Other Denomination Clergy

All external Anglican clergy or other denominations clergy seeking licensing in the Diocese of Bunbury are to provide a copy of their medical and psychological tests to the Diocese as part of their application process. This is at the applicant's own cost. The psychological testing cost may be reimbursed at the Bishop's discretion after the external clergy person has successfully served for 6 months in the Diocese of Bunbury.

Notes

The psychological assessments will be administered when the initial or enquiry phase is completed and before those who advise the Bishop meet to consider the suitability of potential candidates for ordination.

Upon referral to a registered psychologist, the psychologist must be provided with a copy of relevant material given to enquirers as background and a copy of their responses.

Candidates will be given up to date information on the process, permissions, privacy and confidentiality and capacity to withdraw.

The Personal History booklet will be completed by each candidate and forwarded to the psychologist prior to the psychological assessment and interview. The Explanatory Note Concerning Psychosexual Assessment which expands on these issues will be available to the Bishop and the person responsible for ordination candidates and will be provided to the assessing psychologist at the time of the referral.

The person responsible for ordination candidates will refer any relevant questions to the assessing psychologist for advice before a final written report and the recommendation is made to the Bishop following receipt of the report.

The Bishop may at the Bishop's sole discretion apply this policy to applicants for non-ordained ministry positions in the Diocese of Bunbury. For example, but not limited to, non-ordained pastoral worker or chaplaincy positions.