

MFC Preliminary Fellowship Transformation Rule and Policy Change Proposal

The SWG moves that the MFC approve the following rule changes for adoption by the UUA Board. We further move that the MFC adopt the following policy changes pending approval of the rule changes. **Passed by MFC 9/24/23**

The proposed rules and policies are presented here in their proposed final (cleaned-up) versions. Versions that show the edits made to current rules and policies (additions and deletions) can be found [here \(for rules\)](#) and [here \(for policies\)](#). Notes in red are internal notes to help us understand and implement these changes.

Proposed Rules

6. Definition of a Minister

For the purposes of these Rules, the term "Minister" applies to those persons:

- granted fellowship by the MFC;
- whose self and contextual understanding are as a professional religious leader; and
- whose work is theologically grounded, expresses Unitarian Universalist values and principles, and reflects commitments to anti-oppression, collective liberation, and ongoing learning.

7. Definition of Professional Ministry

To qualify as active service in ministry, a position must:

- A. Require the use of the competencies and skills associated with ministry, as defined by the MFC.
- B. Have as its central purpose service to persons and/or the transformation of society.
- C. In addition, the minister must maintain membership in, employment by, and/or affiliation with a UUA member congregation or covenanted community.

13. Preliminary Fellowship

When the Committee determines that the candidate is qualified for Ministerial Fellowship, the Committee shall grant the candidate Preliminary Fellowship status.

A. Preliminary Fellowship Requirements

[Internal Note: based on what was formerly rules 13D and 15B]

All ministers in Preliminary Fellowship must meet all requirements and general qualifications of professional ministry, as well as any additional requirements established by the MFC, which shall include, but are not limited to:

- I. An ongoing relationship with an approved mentor, who shall certify this relationship annually.
 - A. The MFC shall make policies regarding the approval of mentors.
- II. Engagement (covenanted, contracted, called, and/or affiliated) with a UUA or CUC member congregation or covenanting community.
 - A. Ministers serving outside of congregational settings must affiliate with a UUA or CUC member congregation or covenanting community and have that affiliation on file with the UUA. Affiliation involves a formal connection to a congregation and recognition of the minister as performing a ministry as well as a covenanted relationship with any other minister(s) serving the congregation.
- III. Maintaining contact with the UUA Ministries and Faith Development Staff Group.
- IV. Demonstrating continued ministerial growth and development to the MFC through periodic renewals of preliminary fellowship.

B. Renewal of Preliminary Fellowship

A person in Preliminary Fellowship shall apply to renew their fellowship regularly following admission to fellowship. The MFC shall make policies regarding the expected time spent in ministry to be eligible for a renewal of preliminary fellowship and the procedures and priorities to waive this expectation.

C. Renewal Requirements

Each application for renewal review shall include the following on the forms provided by the MFC:

- I. A cover sheet providing necessary information and describing the ministry being considered for renewal;
- II. A professional development plan developed by the minister in consultation with their mentor and Ministerial Formation Team;
- III. A self-evaluation;
- IV. Constructive feedback from a Ministerial Formation Team or other such committee convened for the purpose of ministerial support and developmental review.
- V. Certification of an existing mentoring relationship.

Following any review, Preliminary Fellowship may be renewed, continued in present status, terminated, or a determination made to move the candidate to Full Fellowship.

The MFC shall make policies governing these requirements.

D. Renewal Period

A minister has up to three years to establish a ministry that is eligible for renewal of fellowship and submit an application for renewal of fellowship. A minister may remain in each renewal period for up to three years before either entering Inactive Fellowship status or applying for a waiver from the Committee. Applications for renewal may be submitted no more frequently than annually.

E. Waivers

The MFC may waive any requirement in this rule at its discretion. The MFC shall make policies governing waiver requests.

14. Inactive Fellowship Status

Any minister holding Preliminary Fellowship, who in the judgment of the Committee ceases to work as a minister, or who fails to apply for a renewal of their preliminary fellowship in a three-year period shall be moved to Inactive Fellowship status. The decision to move a minister to Inactive Fellowship status shall not be subject to appeal. A minister may apply to the Committee to be removed from Inactive Fellowship status. The Committee shall make policies governing Inactive Fellowship status.

15. Representation as a Minister

[Internal note: Access to settlement system rule moved to 18; Preliminary Fellowship Qualifications moved to 13]

Only a candidate who has received Fellowship is entitled to represent themselves as a fellowshipped Unitarian Universalist minister.

16. Granting of Full Fellowship

To be granted Full Fellowship, a minister must have been in Preliminary Fellowship for at least three years, received three satisfactory renewals, and be deemed by the Committee to be an appropriate candidate for Full Fellowship.

17. Employment Restrictions for Ministers Serving Congregations

In order to ensure an equitable settlement process for congregations and ministers in transition, policies, procedures and restrictions have been developed by the Ministries and Faith Development Staff Group and are administered by the Transitions Director. Failure to adhere to the policies, procedures and restrictions governing the settlement process, including, but not limited to, the restrictions described below may constitute grounds for termination of Ministerial Fellowship.

A. Access to UUA Ministry Search System

[Internal Note: previously part of Rule 15]

Access to the UUA's ministry search system is limited to ministers in Fellowship with the UUA or those who have been otherwise approved by the MFC or their designee to seek settlement.

B. Three-Year Rule

A minister is not eligible for employment in a ministerial capacity in a congregation for three years following previous engagement as an intern or interim minister in that congregation. Waivers may be granted by application to the MFC.

C. Inside Candidate and Professional Engagement Rule

Any minister who has visited a congregation in a professional capacity after the most recent settled minister has announced their departure to the congregation, or who is either employed by or a member of a congregation seeking to fill another ministerial position on staff may only apply for such a position as an inside candidate, to be considered before the Transitions Director has submitted a list of potential candidates to that congregation.

Changed Policies

11. Mentorships

- A. All active ministers in Preliminary Fellowship are required to have mentors, whom they may choose themselves from among UU ministers in full fellowship approved by the Professional Development Director or trained by the UU Ministers' Association. Mentoring relationships in place as of September 1, 2023 shall be considered approved.
- B. The mentor relationship begins when a minister enters Preliminary Fellowship. A minister may change mentors during Preliminary Fellowship.
- C. The mentee shall discuss matters of professional concern with their mentor on a regular basis. It is expected that each application for renewal will be based on at least ten meetings between mentor and mentee.
- D. The mentor must receive all supervisory evaluations that exist as well as their mentee minister's self-reflection and shall work with the mentee to ensure that their Personal and Professional Development Plan addresses the growing edges identified in these documents.
- E. The mentor will affirm the mentor/mentee relationship annually by submitting the mentor form directly to the Professional Development Office.

12. Renewals of Preliminary Fellowship

A. Ministerial Formation Team Composition

1. The purpose of the Ministerial Formation Team is to support and guide a minister in Preliminary Fellowship through the process of reflecting on their ministry and developing a Personal and Professional Development Plan.
2. A Ministerial Formation Team should be composed of 3-6 people, and may include religious professional colleagues (ministers, religious educators, administrators, music directors, etc.), lay volunteer members of Unitarian Universalist congregations, people connected to the specific ministry setting of the minister, and people able to witness the minister in their work.
3. The team should reflect the kind of ministry that the minister is engaged in and what they dream their ministry might become.

Internal note: We need to remember that while we wouldn't not renew someone because of the composition of their team, we might suggest additions to their team to help them move forward in their ministry.

B. Applications for Renewal

An application for renewal should be based on approximately 1000 hours of engagement in ministry. Both compensated and uncompensated hours are included in this total, as is time for self-reflection, spiritual practice, and continuing education, among other practices necessary for a healthy ministry. Ministers will not be expected to justify the time spent in ministry to the MFC. Please note policies elsewhere (14c) that prioritize requests from disabled ministers who need to waive the number of hours of engagement.

Internal Note: C, E, and F were in Policy 13. They belong here. D is new.

C. Preliminary Fellowship Registration

All ministers in Preliminary Fellowship must register annually with the Professional Development Office informing them of the minister's current contact information and the nature of their current ministry position. Ministers who do not register annually may be removed from fellowship.

D. Ministers who Complete Clinical Pastoral Education Residencies

Ministers in Preliminary Fellowship who successfully complete a Clinical Pastoral Education residency (3 CPE units) may submit their self and supervisory evaluations from all CPE units, along with the appropriate cover sheet, as a complete application for renewal.

E. Ministers who Become Board Certified Chaplains

Ministers in Preliminary Fellowship who become Board Certified Chaplains or who successfully renew their Board Certification while in Preliminary Fellowship can have their certification process count as one renewal of fellowship. The Board Certification certificate must be submitted to the MFC via the Professional Development Director.

F. Military Chaplains Who Have Completed Deployment

All military chaplains who have completed one year of deployment can have that year count as one renewal of fellowship. The UUA ecclesiastical endorser must recommend the chaplain for renewal.

13. Full Fellowship

Full Fellowship will be awarded when three successful renewals of Preliminary Fellowship are completed and all professional development requirements given at the time of the minister's interview with the MFC have been satisfied.

14. Waivers for Preliminary Fellowship and Settlement Restrictions

A. Consideration of Historically Marginalized Identities

In support of equity and inclusion, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee will prioritize waiver requests of rules regarding employment restrictions for ministers serving congregations for ministers from historically marginalized identities.

B. Waivers of Renewal Period Limits

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee grants authority to the Professional Development Director to approve a first request for a waiver of rules regarding the renewal period for preliminary fellowship. Subsequent requests for a waiver of those rules must be reviewed and decided upon by the Committee.

C. Consideration of Disability

In order to address ableism in our ministry and acknowledge the lived reality of disabled ministers, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee will prioritize requests from disabled ministers to waive the rules and policies regarding hours and settings of ministerial service, especially in order to keep disabled ministers eligible for government disability payments and other necessary assistance.

15. Inactive Status

The MFC grants the Professional Development Director the authority to approve requests from ministers wishing to be placed on or removed from Inactive Status.