GUIDANCE

TRAINING PATHWAYS INFORMATION G.8

This is for guidance only.

An updated version will be sent to recommended candidates when they are recommended.

The Ministries Committee has approved three learning pathways for ministerial students, all delivered by the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham:

> A two-year, full-time pathway (though there may be people who are allocated to a three-year full-time pathway, for the opportunities that offers, for them and for the church).
>
> A three-year, part-time pathway – the Queen's Connexional Course (QCC).
>
> A three-year, Circuit-Based Learning pathway (CBLP), with the student beginning either full-time or part-time in the first year and becoming full-time on CBLP normally by the beginning of the second year.

All students are allocated to their training pathway by the Allocations Committee, who take full account of each student's personal circumstances, preference for learning and previous studies before making the allocation.

Financial Preparedness: We recommend reading the Document G.2 *Financial Guide to Candidating* available on the Methodist Church Web Site.

It is recommended that students do not take out Student Loans, given the repayment burden this could create once students enter stipendiary ministry. We recommend candidates take impartial financial advice before embarking on a training course: for example, see https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en

A TWO-YEAR, FULL-TIME PATHWAY (OR THREE YEARS FOR SOME)

You are advised to consult the Queen's website for the most up to date pathway information – https://www.queens.ac.uk/study-routes/ministerial-formation/methodist-church/track1/

Ministerial students following the full-time pathway do so as their main occupation. It is important to be realistic about the demands of this programme, which requires students to be present on the campus from Monday to Thursday during the Autumn, Spring and half the Summer Term. This will mean being available for classes, study or other commitments from 9.15 to 17.00 as a minimum each day. On one evening there may also be online evening classes continuing until 20.30. You will also be in a local church for two sessions in the week. In the Summer Term of your first year the programme changes: much of your on-campus learning in the first half of the term will focus on preparing you for a placement which you will undertake

in the second half of term. The full-time programme is intensive, with a great deal of learning compressed into less than two years.

A full-time pathway will benefit a wide range of learners, but you need to reflect carefully on whether you will flourish in this pathway. Factors you will need to consider include how far you:

- thrive in diverse, busy environments and like learning quickly, moving rapidly from one piece of learning to another;
- have significant prior learning that can be built on and developed, which is easier to do in a full-time than a part-time setting;
- might need specialist support, for example for learning needs such as dyslexia, which may be easier to access in a full-time than a part-time setting;
- have secure financial arrangements and are realistic about living on a bursary.

These points, however, are simply indicative (and are by no means an exhaustive list) of those reasons why it is beneficial for some people to be on the full-time pathway; the option will be explored in relation to each accepted candidate's particular circumstances and the balance of student groups overall.

For some people a three-year full-time pathway may be the right option, because it would enable certain learning opportunities, or for family circumstances, or because engaging with the course in a slightly less intensive way may be appropriate. Again, these issues would be explored in relation to individual circumstances and also the needs of the church and dealt with in the allocations process. For some a decision to extend to a three-year full-time period of training and formation may be made after study has begun as part of the oversight process.

You could engage with this training pathway by moving to Birmingham and being a permanent resident on campus, either as a single person (usually in a study bedroom) or as a family in a flat (though provision of accommodation is limited, especially in a flat), or by choosing to live off-campus, thus taking advantage of the opportunities Birmingham has to offer. However, if you are thinking of moving to Birmingham you need to consider the feasibility of this. For example, if suitable accommodation is not available on campus, you will need to consider the cost of living off campus, and if school-age children are involved, you will need to consider whether school places are available or likely to be available. If you are thinking of commuting to Queen's on a weekly or daily basis, you will need to consider the feasibility of this. Is it manageable, affordable and sustainable for your relationships?

The financial arrangements for this pathway for 2026-2027 are as follows:

Full tuition fees are paid by the Methodist Church.

For each student allocated to this pathway

- the Methodist Church pays Queen's for their campus costs – general services (e.g. accommodation for those living in study bedrooms; study space; maintenance) and some meals.
- Meal provision includes breakfasts, one main meal at lunchtime every weekday and two evening meals a week during term time. There is limited provision at weekends and there are no meals outside term time. Queen's practice is to offer partners and children of residents 3 free family meals each week and to make a small charge if more meals are sought, beyond the normal provision.

- Queen's then makes additional charges for those who are tenants in flats, an amount for rent and a potential additional standing charge to cover some of the electricity, gas and water costs.

Ministerial students allocated to this pathway receive an annual bursary paid on a monthly basis. The different levels of bursary reflect the costs of different levels of maintenance support provided to students by the Queen's Foundation.

The figures below are for the 2026-2027 connexional year. They are expected to change slightly, in line with inflation, for 2027-28, and then again for 2028-29:

Permanent resident in a Study Bedroom for sole use normally in Frances Young House: £11,145

Weekly commuter with a Study Bedroom for term time use normally in Frances Young House: £13,147

Daily commuter with study space on the main site: £14,079

Tenant in flat: £13,833

Many flats on the Queen's campus are designed for a couple (or single person who wants more independence); some are suitable for families, having 2-4 bedrooms. Although Queen's make every effort to meet the accommodation needs of students, the availability of a suitable flat cannot be guaranteed. Each student's individual needs and wishes will be discussed with them in the allocation conversation. The monthly rental (which you would have to pay) for flat accommodation is as follows for 2025-2026 (and would be expected to rise slightly for 2026-27).

1 bedroom	£620 pcm
2 bedroom	£755 pcm
3 bedroom	£890 pcm
4 bedroom	£1,035 pcm

In addition, a small number of students, because of their family circumstances, need to live off campus in Birmingham where rents are generally higher than at Queen's. If due to lack of onsite accommodation a student needs to find a flat within Birmingham, a discretionary fund is set aside to contribute towards some of the additional rental, if necessary, in addition to the support for housing costs mentioned below.

Additional Support

(Exact figures quoted in this section are for 2026-27 and would be expected to rise for 2027-28.)

Housing Support for Lone Parents, Couples and Couples with Children. For full-time students who have a partner and/or dependent children, a flat is sometimes required either on campus at Queen's or elsewhere in Birmingham. It may also be agreed that a single person needs a flat, on health grounds. There is a rent charged by Queen's for those who are resident in flats on the campus, for whom Queen's is their Landlord. The rental charges at Queen's are below market cost in order to assist ministerial candidates and make them affordable. In order to assist in these cases of need, the Church provides an additional grant for students occupying a flat at a rate of **£4047** per year, where the total level of household income after tax and National Insurance and excluding the bursary and benefits is less than **£19494** per annum.

Ministerial students who are also parents of dependent children (defined as children under the age of 18 in full-time education or training) may claim a Dependent Child Payment of £3898 per child per annum, provided that their net earned household income (income after deductions for tax and National Insurance contributions, exclusive of benefits, tax credits and the bursary) is projected to be less than £19494 per annum.

Support for dependent adult: A dependent adult, in this case, is more likely to be, eg a dependent with significant physical or mental health issues, who needs to be resident with the student and for whom the student is a primary carer. The Allocations Panel may recommend an additional payment equal to the level of a Dependent Child payment (£3898).

Non-residential Students: There are a number of full-time students who, by agreement, choose to commute either daily or weekly and continue to pay rent or a mortgage for their existing property in addition to the costs of commuting. There are limits to the support which the Connexion can provide. Where the total level of household income of a full-time commuting student, after taxes and excluding the bursary and any benefits, is less than £19494 per annum, an additional grant of £4047 per year will be provided as a contribution towards housing and travel costs.

All full-time students will receive a **book grant** of £433 per year.

A grant is available for **computer equipment**, equivalent to 4 years' worth of the annual grant that ministers now receive, and payable as a reimbursement of actual expenditure (£881 in 2026-27). This can be taken *at some point during training or probation,* as a lump sum or spread over a number of years.

Provision for Student Financial Hardship from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons (FSPD) enables ministerial students to claim financial contributions towards unexpected expenditure incurred during their time as a ministerial student. Normally, ministerial students will be required to demonstrate that such unexpected expenditure has resulted from a financial crisis, which disrupts their original budget. Payments will not normally exceed £2,000 per connexional year. The Director of Methodist Formation handles any applications to the Fund and will be happy to advise further.

Other than the funding sources noted above, no further financial contribution is made by the Methodist Church.

A THREE-YEAR, PART-TIME PATHWAY: THE QUEENS CONNEXIONAL COURSE (QCC)

You are advised to consult the Queen's website for the most up to date pathway information – http://www.queens.ac.uk/what/minform/methodist/course

The Queen's Connexional Course involves regular residential weekends (currently six weekends per year) and an annual residential week, as well as online learning each Tuesday evening during term time, and ministerial practice locally and on placement.

Ministerial students following this part-time pathway will be doing so alongside other commitments (such as full-time or part-time work and/or childcare) and not as their sole undertaking.

It is important to be realistic about the demands of this programme. A part-time pathway will benefit a wide range of learners, but you need to reflect carefully on the time you have available for study (in common with the usual expectation for a part-time course in Higher Education, it is estimated that this averages out at 15-20 hours per week for much of the year), your preferred style of learning and your financial situation. Factors you will need to consider are how far you:

- are a confident self-starter in your learning;
- are technically confident to manage e-learning;
- benefit from longer to process learning and the opportunity to absorb one subject before engaging with new learning;
- are realistically able to attend and participate effectively in residential events at the Queen's Foundation (currently six weekends and one residential week in each year);
- have secure financial arrangements that will allow you to take on this additional task with confidence.

The financial arrangements for this pathway are as follows:

Full tuition fees are paid by the Methodist Church.

For each student allocated to this pathway the Methodist Church pays maintenance to Queen's. The maintenance cost includes all service costs and meal provision for residential weekends and the annual residential week.

Travel expenses incurred as a ministerial student are reimbursed.

Other reasonable expenses are reimbursed, up to a total of £500 per connexional year.

A book grant (currently £433) is paid each year.

A grant is available for computer equipment, equivalent to 4 years' worth of the annual grant that ministers now receive, payable as a reimbursement of actual expenditure (£881 in 2026-27). This can be taken *at some point during training or probation,* as a lump sum or spread over a number of years.

Provision for Student Financial Hardship from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons (FSPD) enables ministerial students to claim financial contributions towards unexpected expenditure incurred during their time as a ministerial student. Normally, ministerial students will be required to demonstrate that such unexpected expenditure has resulted from a financial crisis, which disrupts their original budget. Payments will not normally exceed £2,000 per connexional year. The Director of Methodist Formation handles any applications to the Fund and will be happy to advise further.

Other than the funding sources noted above, no further financial contribution is made by the Methodist Church.

A THREE-YEAR, [MOSTLY FULL TIME] CIRCUIT-BASED LEARNING PATHWAY (CBLP)

One year on a part-time or full-time pathway is followed by two years on a full-time Circuit-based Learning Pathway.

Student ministers may be allocated to the Circuit-Based Learning Pathway by the Allocations Committee which meets before they begin training. However, they begin their training at Queen's on either the full-time or part-time course (as described above) for at least the majority of the first year and move to CBLP, normally at the beginning of their second year. Their ministerial formation then continues through an integration of Circuit-based and Queen's-based learning, balanced differently from other pathways.

In years two and three of their programme (and for some in the final half-term of their first year), CBLP students will join part-time students for formal studies (either through QCC weekends or during the week) and will be engaged in Circuit-based learning for the rest of their time. In the case of students who begin their training part-time, there will be a marked shift to full-time mode after the first year, such that other parallel employment is not viable. Students on this route will continue to live in their own homes, whether in Birmingham or elsewhere, and undertake reflective practice-based learning in the host learning circuit.

The financial arrangements for this pathway are as follows:

Full tuition fees are paid by the Methodist Church.

Maintenance is paid to Queen's to cover the costs of services and meals during your time on campus.

Ministerial students allocated to this pathway **who began their course part-time** receive an annual bursary in their second and third years of £16,922 [2026-27 figure] paid on a monthly basis with the expectation that the student will remain in their own home. The student who was part-time and becomes full-time on CBLP will become responsible for their travel expenses (eg to residential weekends), with the exception of those incurred within the learning Circuit. Some further help with this expense may be available in cases of need.

Ministerial students who began their course full-time, moving to Birmingham, and then transfer to CBLP will continue with the bursary arrangements that applied in their first year.

The circuit in which the Circuit-based learning takes place will be responsible for the in-Circuit expenses incurred by the students carrying out duties in the Circuit in relation to their training.

A book grant (currently £433) is paid each year.

(The information about the provision of a grant for computer equipment is as above in this document.)

Ministerial students on CBLP who are also parents of dependent children (defined as children under the age of 18 in full-time education or training) may claim a dependent child payment. Extra help with accommodation costs, or for care for a dependent adult, may also be claimed. Please refer to the details under the full-time pathway.

Provision for Student Financial Hardship from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons (FSPD) enables ministerial students to claim financial contributions towards unexpected expenditure incurred during their time as a ministerial student. Normally, ministerial students will be required to demonstrate that such unexpected expenditure has resulted from a financial crisis, which disrupts their original budget. Payments will not normally exceed £2,000 per connexional year. The Director of Methodist Formation handles any applications to the Fund and will be happy to advise further.

If you indicate an interest in this pathway there will be further discernment about suitability through the Allocations Committee and during the first two terms at Queen's. Staff at the Queen's Foundation will explore a possible Circuit base, matching to clear criteria. There are no guarantees: even if there are students who would benefit from this pathway and are provisionally allocated to it, there may not always be a viable Circuit placement available. Like other students, you will also need to consider the practical and financial implications for your home life (eg there will almost certainly be evening commitments).

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