



Anglican Diocese of The Murray

Protocol:	Comprehensive Psychological Assessment of Candidates for Ordination		
Body adopting	Diocesan Council	Date of adoption or last review:	18/2/2023
Related Documents:		Review schedule:	2028

Background

- At its meeting in October 2004, the General Synod adopted the Safe Ministry Policy Statement which states that the Anglican Church in Australia is committed to the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare and safety of all people, particularly within its own community, and includes a commitment to carefully recruit and train its clergy and church workers. Included in the General Synod's resolutions was a recommendation that dioceses adopt some form of comprehensive psychological assessment (including psychosexual assessment). In 2014 the General Synod adopted the Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion which includes a commitment to assess the suitability of persons for ordination as clergy.
- In 2017 General Synod adopted the Safe Ministry to Children Canon (the SMC Canon). The SMC Schedule, Canon establishes standards for the screening of candidates for ordination - see s3 of the Second Schedule, SMC Canon. Before a person can be ordained as a deacon, the screening authority (the Bishop or the Bishop's delegate) must determine whether a candidate can proceed to ordination. In making that determination, the Bishop must obtain and consider a psychological assessment from a registered psychologist experienced in psychological assessment. The psychological report must include an assessment of the personal, social and psychosexual maturity of the person.
- Research of such assessments conducted elsewhere in Australia as well as overseas was carried out by looking at relevant literature and talking with current practitioners working with other denominations. The best practice revealed by this research is that both psychometric measures and a detailed structured interview should form the basis for assessment.

Outline

This protocol has been developed to provide:

- a method for conducting and reporting the comprehensive psychological assessment (including the personal, social, and psychosexual maturity of the person).
- for the assessment to be made by means of a psychometric measure of personality (PEPQ) and a psychological interview structured around a detailed personal history provided by the candidate to the psychologist, together with additional questions about psychosexual maturity to be used during the interview.
- opportunity for additional assessment if required (e.g., cognitive testing if there are concerns about a candidate's ability to undertake tertiary level study).
- criteria against which the psychologist's report is to be written.

- the psychologist will provide candidates with a copy of the written report. The psychologist will seek the consent of the candidate to provide a copy of the report to the Bishop. If that consent is not provided or is withdrawn at any stage, the psychologist will inform the referring authority accordingly. Failure to agree or withdrawal of consent will be interpreted as the candidate withdrawing their application.

Protocol

The Anglican Diocese of The Murray will commission a comprehensive psychological assessment of candidates for ministry formation as follows:

- The assessments will be conducted when the initial or enquiry phase is complete and before the Ministry Discernment Event. This ensures that the Bishop can consider the psychologist's written psychological assessment report and can seek clarification from the psychologist of any concerns raised in the report prior to the Bishop inviting an enquirer to the formal Ministry Discernment Event. The report is to be available to the Bishop before the final decision as to each candidate's entry into ministry formation is made. The Bishop aims to avoid undue delay in notifying the candidates following the Ministry Discernment Event.
- The diocese will engage registered psychologists who are competent and experienced in the psychological assessment of candidates for ministry training to undertake this work.
- Psychologists who are selected will be provided with a copy of relevant material given to enquirers as background.
- Assessments will include an assessment of the personal, social, and psychosexual maturity of the person and will be conducted using both psychometric measures (tests) and a structured interview.
- Candidates will be provided with appropriate referral letters that set out in some detail what they can expect of the assessment (example of letter attached).
- As is normal practice, the psychologist will seek the informed consent of the candidate to participate in the assessment before commencing the assessment. The candidate may choose not to give their consent, or having given it, withdraw it at any time. The psychologist will report this fact to the Bishop who will regard this as the candidate having withdrawn their application for entry into ministry formation.
- The recommended psychometric instrument is the PsychEval Personality Questionnaire (PEPQ). The PEPQ is a derivative of the 16PF personality test (personality profile for normal population) and the Clinical Assessment Questionnaire (this provides indicators of possible psychopathology). Having regard to the type of people who are candidates, this is considered to offer a good assessment of normal personality functioning together with any signs of possible pathology. If a psychologist wishes to suggest an alternative instrument be used, this could be considered.
- Where a psychologist considers that cognitive testing is also necessary, the most appropriate instrument should be used. It is expected that cognitive testing will normally only be carried out when there is concern about a candidate's ability to undertake tertiary level study.

- Following completion of the PEPQ, the psychologist will interview each candidate about his or her personal history. Areas covered will include family background and relationships, education, work history, health, church involvement, sports hobbies and social interests, and vocational interest. Specific questions addressing psychosexual issues will be included within relevant topics.
- The interview will be structured primarily around the candidate's personal history and will also include additional questions relating to sexual history (refer to attached explanatory note)
- The psychologist will provide candidates with a copy of the written report. The psychologist will seek the consent of the candidate to provide a copy of the report to the Bishop (example agreement attached). If that agreement is not provided or is withdrawn at any stage, the psychologist will inform the referring authority accordingly. Failure to agree or withdrawal of consent will be interpreted as the candidate withdrawing their application for entry into ministry formation.
- The diocese is responsible for the psychologists' costs for the assessment and the report preparation.

Report of Psychologist

The psychologist's report should provide assessments on each of the following criteria:

Presentation (including brief physical description and how candidate related with psychologist).

Psychological Factors - Personal, Social and Psychosexual Maturity

- Biological and Constitutional Factors (relevant health history and status; ability to actualise; family history of substance or psychiatric disorders; drug or medication history).
- Cognitive Factors (ability to study at tertiary level; attitude to learning).
- Social Determinants and Current Life Situation (family background; educational and work history; friends and social support systems).
- Identity and Self-Concept (self-view and how viewed by others; level of self-esteem, ego- strength; personal and career aspirations; ability to change).
- Personality Factors (capacity to work under tension and deal with multiple stressors, including those that are beyond a person's control; energy level; time management abilities; adequacy of defences; presence and degree of underlying self-absorption; 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 own impact on others and to maintain healthy boundaries; openness to living, relating, and working with individuals from cultures other than own).
- Psychosexual 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, Capacities, and Experience

- Skills (leadership potential, for example as exhibited in personal initiatives and personal life decisions; capacity to cooperate with others; capacity to build relationships and communities; capacity for active listening; capacity for compassion and empathy; capacity to communicate adequately in English in both writing and speaking; commitment to promote social justice).
- Experience (past experience of active involvement in a parish or other Christian community; familiarity and experience with ministerial requirements of the Diocese of The Murray).
- 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 the Anglican diaconate and priesthood)
- Reality of Motivation (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 formation training?)

The overall assessment should also include *one of* the following three statements regarding the candidate's potential risk of sexual misconduct:

- No evidence of risk.
- Further investigation needed.
- There is evidence of risk.

Note: Negative predictors of vocational success can include:

- Emotional: self-preoccupation; poor judgment; inability to empathise; overly dependent, or overly defensive.
- Historical: previous treatment for serious psychiatric disorders; repeated failures; impulsive decision-making; decision based solely or primarily and in isolation on intense spiritual experiences.
- Motivational: any indication that the candidate desires to escape "self," family, or life situation; attraction based on insecurity and wanting to be cared for; or ambitions that overreach one's capabilities.

Consent to Release Psychologist's Report

Please complete either Section A or Section B

Section A

I,.....[name] have undertaken a psychological assessment for the purpose of assessing my suitability for ordained ministry in the Anglican Church.

I consent to and hereby authorize [name of registered psychologist] to provide the psychological assessment report to the Bishop of The Murray for the sole purpose of considering my application for ministry formation training in the Diocese of The Murray

X

Signature

Date: _____

X

Witness:
Psychologist

Please attach to the front of the report before sending.

Section B

I,.....[name] I have undertaken a psychological assessment for the purpose of assessing my suitability for ordained ministry in the Anglican Church. I have discussed the psychologist's assessment with [name of registered psychologist]

I do not consent to the psychological assessment report being provided to anyone.

I acknowledge and accept that, as a consequence, my application to undertake ministry formation training in the Diocese of The Murray will be regarded as having been withdrawn.

X

Signature

Date: _____

X

Witness:
Psychologist

Please send without a copy of the report