Candidacy Pathway:
Policy

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Contents

About This Resource ....................................................................................................................... 5
About the Policy .......................................................................................................................... 5
Purpose of the Policy ................................................................................................................... 5
Candidacy Board .......................................................................................................................... 6
  Appointment ............................................................................................................................. 6
  Task ........................................................................................................................................ 6
  Individual Journey .................................................................................................................. 7
Principles of the Seven Phases ..................................................................................................... 7
  Underlying Basis ..................................................................................................................... 7
  Call Forth ................................................................................................................................. 7
  Identify .................................................................................................................................. 8
  Equip ..................................................................................................................................... 9
  Assess ................................................................................................................................... 9
  Authorize ............................................................................................................................... 9
  Celebrate .............................................................................................................................. 10
Markers of the Pathway .............................................................................................................. 10
  Identification of Call ............................................................................................................. 10
  Application ............................................................................................................................. 10
  Assessment by Candidacy Board ......................................................................................... 11
  Additional Requirements for Candidacy ............................................................................. 11
  Vocational Assessment ........................................................................................................ 11
  Celebration of Candidacy ..................................................................................................... 12
The Ongoing Journey with the Candidacy Board ......................................................................... 12
  Reporting ............................................................................................................................... 12
  Interviews .............................................................................................................................. 13
Accompaniment .......................................................................................................................... 13
  Accompaniment for Interviews ......................................................................................... 13
  Ongoing Accompaniment ................................................................................................. 13
Authorization for Ministry Leadership ......................................................................................... 14
  Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education .................................................................... 14
  Readiness for Appointment ............................................................................................... 14
  Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition .............................................. 14
Celebration .................................................................................................................................. 15
Formation for Ministry .................................................................................................................. 15
Credentialing ........................................................................................................................... 15
Developing Competency ......................................................................................................... 18
Resigning from or Terminating Candidacy .................................................................................... 19
About This Resource

This resource outlines the policies that must be followed by the church to support people who are called to designated lay ministry, diaconal ministry, or ordained ministry.

The related policies about the Candidacy Board can be found in *The Manual* under E. Office of Vocation. The related policies about the Candidacy Pathway can be found in *The Manual* under H. Entering Ministry.

This resource gives additional policies and procedures that must be followed. It includes the policies from *The Manual* in order to give a complete picture of the pathway to ministry.

Policies from *The Manual* are written in italics.

About the Policy

The United Church of Canada has committed to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation and also adopted the “Calls to the Church” at its 43rd General Council 2018.

The church has also made a commitment to become an intercultural church, which “means living together with a respectful awareness of each other’s differences. We do this by examining ourselves, building relationships, and distributing power fairly” (from a Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church, 2016).

The Candidacy Pathway policy is designed to include these commitments as they relate to preparation for ministry leadership.

Purpose of the Policy

The United Church of Canada upholds a vision that all believers are called to participate in the healing of creation. This ministry may be lived out in many ways, from being a disciple who is actively involved in God’s mission in the world, to being in a leadership role as ministry personnel.

We celebrate the diversity of expressions of ministry leadership. We also celebrate that God calls individuals with varying gifts and abilities specifically to the vocation of ministry in order to faithfully lead the church in living out its purpose for the sake of a broken world.

The “Statement on Ministry” (2012) further articulates an understanding of ministry within The United Church of Canada.
A Song of Faith (2006) gives voice to what we believe:

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.
For the sake of the world,
God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.
In the church,
some are called to specific ministries of leadership,
both lay and ordered;
some witness to the good news;
some uphold the art of worship;
some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;
some build up the community of wisdom;
some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.

To embody God’s love in the world,
the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship
of all believers.

We affirm that some are called to the vocation of ministry and that ministry leadership that is intentionally set apart is essential for the church to participate in God’s hope for the world. The Candidacy Pathway policy is designed to assist people in discerning their call to ministry leadership, and to assist the church in walking with them in the formal process of candidacy.

The requirements aim to ensure the suitability and readiness of those who are authorized by the church to ministry leadership.

**Candidacy Board**

*The Board of Vocation has standing commissions called “Candidacy Boards.”*

*One of the Candidacy Boards serves the Indigenous United Church. The other Candidacy Boards serve different geographic areas of the United Church as determined by the Board of Vocation.*

**Appointment**

*The Board of Vocation appoints the members of the Candidacy Boards, ensuring the appropriate balance of intercultural, ordained, diaconal, designated lay ministry, and lay members. The members of the Candidacy Board serving the Indigenous United Church are named by the National Indigenous Organization for appointment by the Board of Vocation.*

**Task**

*The Candidacy Boards have responsibility for*

  a) approving an individual for candidacy for ministry in the United Church;

  b) terminating candidacy if necessary;
c) determining an individual’s readiness for accreditation for ordination, for commissioning, and for recognition as a designated lay minister; and
d) overseeing the Candidacy Pathway process.

Individual Journey

The Candidacy Pathway is intended to be nimble, responsive, and streamlined in order to prepare people who each have unique gifts and experiences for the vocation of ministry.

Individuals will journey in similar but sometimes different ways toward ordination, commissioning, or recognition. The Candidacy Board will determine the process on a case-by-case basis with each individual, ensuring that the principles and requirements of the seven phases and the required markers are applied in each case.

Applicants and candidates are responsible for following the direction of the Candidacy Board and the required markers of the pathway. The process is designed to hold applicants and candidates responsible and accountable for fulfilling the requirements in a proactive, timely, and professional manner.

Principles of the Seven Phases

Underlying Basis

The basis underlying the Candidacy Pathway is the integration of the seven phases to guide the process that prepares individuals for ministry leadership.

The seven phases are intentionally not sequential.

Additional policies and resources to support the phases of Candidacy Pathway are found in the following documents (NB: some of these are still in development as of fall 2018):

- Candidacy Pathway: Candidacy Board Resources
- Candidacy Pathway Roadmap
- Candidacy Pathway: Circle of Accompaniment
- Supervised Ministry Education
- Learning Covenant
- Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership
- Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice
- Theological Education Resource
- Calls to the Church (2018)

Call Forth

1. The United Church affirms that God’s call is heard within a variety of communities of faith and ministry settings and is directed to and heard by people of all ages, gender identities, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds. God calls people to diverse ministries in the church and in the world.
2. Ongoing discernment of God’s call and one’s faithful response to that call is vital to discipleship and to calling forth individuals for ministry leadership.

3. It is the responsibility of the whole church to engage a creative and invitational approach to calling forth leaders by encouraging people to open themselves to God’s call and by naming and nurturing gifts for ministry leadership.

Identify

1. Discernment is an intentional practice of attending to the Spirit’s leading. Listening for and identifying God’s hope for our lives involves a habit of ongoing discernment, which is woven throughout the various requirements of the Candidacy Pathway.

2. People who are active in communities of faith who experience God’s call to ministry leadership may apply for identification as to promise and suitability for candidacy.

3. The church identifies the gifts, skills, and competencies that are required in ministry personnel for effectively leading the church today.

4. The various requirements of the Candidacy Pathway include identifying an individual’s giftedness and competence for ministry.

5. The Candidacy Board discerns and identifies promise and suitability for candidacy using a variety of tools.

Accompany

1. Accompaniment is intended to encourage and nurture individuals who have been called forth for ministry leadership.

2. Candidates are responsible for demonstrating that they have the capacity to receive support for ministry leadership and are open to the wisdom of others.

3. The church accompanies applicants and candidates by providing support and guidance in a variety of ways that are woven throughout the Candidacy Pathway journey.

4. Candidacy boards foster a supportive relationship with applicants and candidates throughout their journey to commissioning, ordination, or recognition. As much as possible, individuals and candidates meet with the same candidacy board for the duration of the process.
The United Church of Canada

Equip

Additional policies related to the Equip phase are found in the Theological Education resource and the Supervised Ministry Education resource.

1. Applicants and candidates are equipped to live out God’s call to ministry leadership through ongoing formation, spiritual growth, and development.
2. There are two components to the education and other preparation for ministry:
   a) Credentialing: acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for effective ministry leadership, and beginning the development of the “habits” or “arts” of ministry and that lead to credentialing; and
   b) Competency: the development, through substantial experience in the field, of the “habits” or “arts” of ministry that leads to the deepening of competency for effective ministry leadership.
3. The United Church needs ministers who are trained for ministry in the United Church and who have knowledge and an appreciation of the United Church’s polity, ethos, traditions, and theology.
4. The United Church relies on the theological schools related to the United Church to provide the training, knowledge, and appreciation required for ministry in the United Church.

Assess

The guidelines and criteria for assessment and authorization are found in the Candidacy Board resource.

1. The Candidacy Board assesses the promise, suitability, and readiness of applicants and candidates for designated lay, diaconal, and ordained ministry by following the required markers of the Candidacy Pathway.
2. The Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership and Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice form the basis for assessing promise, suitability, and readiness for ministry leadership.
3. A collaborative working relationship is to be intentionally nurtured between Candidacy Boards and United Church theological schools in order to best support, equip, and assess those who are preparing for ministry leadership within the United Church.

Authorize

The Candidacy Board authorizes candidates as ready for

   a) ministry leadership, including for
      i) candidate supply appointments; and
      ii) Supervised Ministry Education placements and/or appointments as required; and
   b) commissioning, ordination, or recognition.
Celebrate

1. The gift of leaders to strengthen the church’s participation in God’s mission is to be celebrated throughout the Candidacy Pathway process.
2. The Spirit’s leading, individual growth, and the blessing of a new generation of ministry leadership is to be celebrated at all stages of the Candidacy Pathway.
3. The church celebrates the commissioning, ordination, or recognition of candidates who have accepted a call, appointment, or offer of employment as ordained, diaconal, or designated lay ministers.

Markers of the Pathway

Identification of Call

An individual who perceives that God is calling them to the vocation of ministry dedicates themselves to discerning the call personally and within the church by

1. using the resources made available by the church to discern a call, including the option of attending a discernment event, which is recommended as an effective model for discernment;
2. discussing their sense of call with a United Church leader, who provides a mentor letter;
3. listening for affirmation of the call from others in their community; and
4. attending an orientation session to learn about the streams of ministry and the requirements of the pathway.

Application

When a person has discerned and identified that God is calling them to a particular stream of ministry, they submit an application to the Office of Vocation.

The application must include the following:

1. Work history
2. Educational background
3. Current police records check (refer to Police Records Check policies)
4. Mentor letter and letters of reference
5. Narrative responses to questions

Mentor Letter

Those who have prayerfully discerned a call to ministry will have talked with others about this feeling of call. To begin the journey on the pathway, the individual will ask someone with whom they have discussed their sense of call to write a mentor letter. This letter will include the following information:

- how long and in what capacity the writer has known the person discerning a call;
- any observations concerning the person’s call to faith, theology, and/or call to ministry;
- a description of the person’s involvement and leadership in church and/or community;
The United Church of Canada
Candidacy Pathway: Policy
(January 2019)

• any comments on the person’s spiritual gifts and gifts for ministry; and
• any comments on any particular challenges facing the person.

The Office of Vocation, in consultation with the applicant, assigns the applicant to a Candidacy Board.

Assessment by Candidacy Board

Guidelines and criteria for assessing promise, suitability, and readiness are found in the Candidacy Board resource.

1. The applicant meets with the Candidacy Board for the assessment of the applicant’s promise and suitability for candidacy.
2. Following an interview, the Candidacy Board may determine one of the following:
   a. The applicant shows promise. The Candidacy Board makes recommendations regarding requirements and next steps in order for the applicant to be approved as a candidate.
   b. The applicant demonstrates promise and suitability and is approved as a candidate;
   c. The applicant is encouraged to continue in lay leadership.
3. After an interview, the Candidacy Board meets with the applicant to share
   a. the decision of the Candidacy Board;
   b. direction regarding the process; and
   c. guidance on fulfilling the requirements of the pathway.
4. A written record of the decision, direction, and guidance of the Candidacy Board is shared within two weeks of an interview.

Additional Requirements for Candidacy

There are additional requirements for the applicant to be approved as a candidate.

The applicant must
a) have been actively involved in the United Church for the last 24 months;
b) be a member of the United Church;
c) have completed mandatory trainings;
d) agree to become a member of the United Church pension plan and group insurance plan upon eligibility for enrolment; and
e) complete a vocational assessment.

Vocational Assessment

The Office of Vocation directs an applicant to receive a vocational assessment.

The vocational assessment is a tool for the applicant that affirms their strengths and identifies areas for growth and development with respect to the practice of ministry. It is used by the applicant in discerning their fit for the role of ministry personnel.
The vocational assessment is one of many pieces used by the Candidacy Board to identify and discern a person’s promise and suitability for ministry, their readiness for ministry leadership, and the support they need to develop the growth and ministry formation in relation to the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership. These areas of growth inform the learning goals for Supervised Ministry Education.

One-third of the cost of the vocational assessment is paid for by the applicant; two-thirds of the cost is paid by the Office of Vocation.

**Celebration of Candidacy**

When an applicant has been approved as a candidate, the Office of Vocation notifies the regional council in which the candidate is a corresponding member.

The regional council will celebrate new candidates.

**The Ongoing Journey with the Candidacy Board**

*The Candidacy Board accompanies and assesses the candidate by receiving reports and conducting interviews throughout the candidacy process.*

If there is significant reason for an applicant or candidate to move to a different Candidacy Board, the Office of Vocation minister must be notified by the applicant’s or candidate’s Candidacy Board. The Office of Vocation minister will ensure that there is agreement with another Candidacy Board to develop relationship with the applicant or candidate.

**Reporting**

The applicant or candidate communicates their accomplishments, challenges, concerns, and celebrations to the Candidacy Board on an ongoing basis.

The theological school where the applicant or candidate is enrolled submits regular reports to the Office of Vocation.

The Candidacy Board receives and reviews the reports.

*Guidelines for submitting reports are found in the Candidacy Roadmap resource.*

*Guidelines for the theological school are found in the Theological Education resource.*
Interviews

The number of interviews with each applicant or candidate is determined on an ongoing and case-by-case basis, depending on the needs and life circumstances of the applicant or candidate and the requirements of the program of study for the stream of ministry they are pursuing.

The Candidacy Board may hold an interview with an applicant or candidate at any time.

Best practices for interviews are outlined in the Candidacy Board resource.

Accompaniment

Accompaniment for Interviews

Applicants and candidates bring an accompanier with them to interviews with the Candidacy Board. An accompanier is someone who knows the applicant and their faith journey but is not related to them or their minister. The accompanier is oriented to their role before the interview. The accompanier observes the interview in silence.

Ongoing Accompaniment

At the appropriate time in the process, the applicant or candidate is responsible for determining with the Candidacy Board the suitable model for ongoing accompaniment, including establishing a Circle of Accompaniment, taking into consideration their stream of ministry and their chosen program of study.

Those who play an accompaniment role do not have an evaluative function. If information comes to the attention of a Circle of Accompaniment that raises serious concerns about a candidate’s promise, suitability, fitness, and readiness for service as ministry personnel (refer to the Ethical Standards to identify disqualifying behaviour), those concerns are communicated to the Candidacy Board for it to address with the candidate. The Circle of Accompaniment or equivalent notifies the candidate that concerns are being shared with the Candidacy Board.
Authorization for Ministry Leadership

The Candidacy Board is responsible for determining a candidate’s readiness for accreditation to ministry.

Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education

Additional policies and procedures for Supervised Ministry Education are found in the Supervised Ministry Education resource.

1. Before the Candidacy Board authorizes readiness for Supervised Ministry Education, approval as a candidate is required.
2. The Candidacy Board discerns and assesses readiness for Supervised Ministry Education through an interview.
3. The candidate is responsible for developing learning goals for Supervised Ministry Education in consultation with the Candidacy Board and in relation to the Learning Outcomes and the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice.
4. The Candidacy Board recommends the type of Supervised Ministry Education program and learning site to best address the candidate’s learning goals.

Readiness for Appointment

1. If a candidate wishes to apply for a ministry position in a pastoral charge outside of the context of Supervised Ministry Education, then the Candidacy Board will discern and assess readiness for the appointment through an interview.
2. Before the Candidacy Board authorizes readiness for an appointment, approval as a candidate is required.

Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition

1. The Candidacy Board ensures that the Equipping phase of the pathway has been or will soon be complete in order to assess readiness for commissioning, ordination, or recognition.
2. The Candidacy Board determines readiness for commissioning, ordination, or recognition. As part of this determination, the Candidacy Board must satisfy itself that
   a) the candidate is in essential agreement with the statement of doctrine of the United Church;  
   b) the candidate, as a member of the order of ministry or as a designated lay minister, will accept the statement of doctrine as being in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures; and  
   c) that the candidate will comply with the polity of the United Church.
Celebration

The Office of Vocation determines the regional council that will celebrate the commissioning, ordination, or recognition of the candidate.

The regional council commissions, ordains, or recognizes at a celebration of ministries service based on

a) receipt of the confirmation of readiness of the candidate from the Office of Vocation; and
b) confirmation that a covenantal relationship is in place with a community of faith or offer of employment to a paid accountable/recognized ministry, as determined by the regional council.

A candidate may pursue postgraduate studies following commissioning or ordination as an alternative to serving in a covenantal relationship.

Formation for Ministry

Credentialing through Program of Study
The General Council has set the program of study for candidates for designated lay ministry, diaconal ministry, and ordained ministry. It includes different options for a candidate’s education.

A candidate is responsible for following and completing the program of study approved from time to time by the General Council or its executive.

Completion of Program of Study
A theological school related to the United Church provides a certificate or other form of assurance to confirm that a candidate has satisfactorily completed the program of study required for candidates. For diaconal ministry and ordained ministry, this is called the “testamur.”

The theological school is responsible for reporting to the Candidacy Board on whether the candidate

a) has completed the program of study required for candidates; and
b) is recommended by the school for commissioning, ordination, or recognition to ministry in the United Church.
The formation for ministry that takes place during the program of study for all streams of ministry includes developing competency for ministry leadership and should not be understood as being solely about acquiring a credential.

**Credentiaing for Ordained Ministry**

**Undergraduate Studies**

Applicants/candidates for ordained ministry must complete an undergraduate degree from a university recognized by the Office of Vocation.

Applicants/candidates who do not have an undergraduate degree, and whose financial and familial circumstances would prevent them from completing an undergraduate degree; and who have work and life experience may apply to the Office of Vocation for a reduction in the requirement for an undergraduate degree. The minimum requirement is five full credits of undergraduate studies at an accredited university. If the applicant/candidate has already completed five full credits of undergraduate studies, then one full credit must be completed within the two years prior to their application.

The applicant/candidate is encouraged to consult with the theological school where they plan to enrol to ensure that their undergraduate education will meet a theological school’s admission requirements.

**Theological Education**

A United Church theological school grants the testamur based on the applicant’s/candidate’s completion of one of the following:

a) a master of divinity degree from a United Church theological school  
b) a diploma in Indigenous ministry from the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre  
c) a master of divinity degree from an accredited institution and additional education completed at a United Church theological school  
d) a degree in theology from an accredited institution and additional requirements necessary to make the education equivalent to a master of divinity degree from a United Church theological school

The program of study for ordained ministry focuses on an encounter between Christian tradition and our current context. The program of study must include learning in the following areas:

a. biblical studies, including their critical interpretation;  
b. theology, both historical and current;  
c. Christian ethics and church in society;  
d. church history, including Canadian church history;  
e. mission, ecumenism, and culture;  
f. religious pluralism, including the social dimension of religion and world religions;  
g. theology and practice of ministry, including homiletics, pastoral care, Christian worship, Christian education, leadership, and personal and pastoral identity;
The study of the Greek and Hebrew languages, or an Indigenous language, is recommended.

The theological school is responsible for designing a curriculum to cover the areas of study specified above and the method of teaching.

**Credentialing for Diaconal Ministry**

**Prerequisite**

The prerequisite for admission to the theological education for diaconal ministry is one of the following:

- a) an undergraduate degree from a university recognized by the Office of Vocation
- b) personal maturity arising out of life and work experience that leads to demonstrating capacity for the program of study
- c) personal maturity arising out of life and work experience, and admission to the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

**Theological Education**

A United Church theological school grants the testamur based on the applicant’s/candidate’s completion of one of the following:

- a) a diploma in diaconal ministries from the Centre for Christian Studies
- b) another degree in theology from an accredited institution and additional requirements necessary to make the education equivalent to the diploma in diaconal ministries from the Centre for Christian Studies
- c) a diploma in Indigenous ministries the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

The program of study for diaconal ministry focuses on the integration of academics, field education, and learning in community. The program of study must include learning in the following areas:

- a. Christian education, including educational theories and leadership development;
- b. pastoral care, including personal and social theories and contexts;
- c. social ministry, including social analysis and contextual theologies;
- d. biblical studies, theology, ethics, church history, and Christian worship, including sacraments and preaching;
- e. field education, with a minimum of two terms in each of a congregational setting and a social ministry setting;
- f. diaconal history and diaconal vocational identity;
- g. personal and pastoral identity; and
- h. church administration and United Church polity.

The theological school is responsible for designing a curriculum to cover the areas of study specified above and the method of teaching.
Credentialing for Designated Lay Ministry

Prerequisite
The prerequisite for acceptance into the program of study for designated lay ministry is one of the following:

a) completion of a Licensed Lay Worship Leader program
b) completion of the Learning on Purpose Module at the Centre for Christian Study
c) completion of a lay certificate in ministry (at a United Church theological school)
d) completion of a prior learning assessment that demonstrates a basic level of competence in critical theological reflection

Acceptance into the Designated Lay Ministry Diploma Program is contingent on approval of an appointment. A candidate who does not have an appointment may be conditionally accepted into the program with permission from the Candidacy Board. In order to continue in the program beyond one learning circle, the candidate must secure an appointment.

Program of Study
A designated lay minister candidate is required to complete the Designated Lay Ministry Program at St. Andrew’s College in Saskatoon or the equivalent program at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in Beausejour, Manitoba.

The program at St. Andrew’s College is a three-year, community-based program consisting of three components

a) Learning Circles. Six residential learning circles over three years, each of 10 days’ duration, held twice a year. The learning circles introduce theory and theology, guide students in reflection on integrating the content with the practice of ministry, and provide a peer setting for deepening formation in lay ministry. An online community supports preparation for and follow-up after the learning circles. The learning circles are required for all candidates regardless of previous formal learning or experience.

b) Complementary Courses. Complementary courses are chosen to round out the educational program based on the learning needs and particular ministry focus of the student. Three courses, each a semester or equivalent, are taken at a theological school, university, or educational centre or other venue, as approved by the Designated Lay Ministry director.

c) Supervised Ministry Education: see the Developing Competency section below.

Developing Competency

Ordained Ministry and Designated Lay Ministry

Each candidate for ordained and designated lay ministry must satisfactorily complete a Supervised Ministry Education program that involves learning goals based on the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership, reflection on the practice of ministry, and regular supervision and evaluation.
The Candidacy Board determines a candidate’s readiness for Supervised Ministry Education.

The Candidacy Board determines completion of Supervised Ministry Education by assessing a candidate’s competence for ministry leadership based on the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership.

Diaconal Ministry

Each candidate for diaconal ministry must satisfactorily complete field placements through their program of study.

The Candidacy Board reviews the evaluations from the field placements to assess a diaconal ministry candidate’s competence for ministry leadership based on the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership.

Resigning from or Terminating Candidacy

1. If a candidate wishes to resign from the Candidacy Pathway process, they must notify the Candidacy Board in writing, indicating the date of and reasons for their voluntary withdrawal.

2. When the candidate has not met benchmarks of their pathway and/or they demonstrate that they are not able to achieve the growth and development required for the vocation of ministry, or when the Candidacy Board receives a report of an investigator under the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy or the Workplace Harassment Policy including findings about a breach of ethical standards, the Candidacy Board follows this process:
   a. Documents: The Candidacy Board reviews the candidate’s file and all relevant documents that may inform the decision to terminate candidacy.
   b. Notification: The Candidacy Board informs the candidate about the concerns and that there are two possible outcomes including that their candidacy pathway process may be terminated.
   c. Interview: The Candidacy Board interviews the candidate to discuss the concerns that have been raised. Representation from the body that raised the concern (ex. Circle of Accompaniment, governing body, and/or regional council) may be included as required to provide information regarding the context of the concerns. The candidate may bring an accompanier to the interview with whom to debrief following the interview. In the case of the interview arising from an investigation of a complaint then the candidate is invited to respond to the findings of the investigation as well as the remedy determined by the Candidacy Board.

3. There are two possible outcomes of the interview:
   a. Termination of candidacy: If the concerns that have been raised are not adequately addressed in the interview, and if the Candidacy Board discerns that the candidate lacks the skills, calling or ability to change behaviour, then the Candidacy Board makes the decision to terminate candidacy. A written copy of the decision of the
Candidacy Board is sent to the candidate following the interview. If the candidate is serving in a candidate supply appointment, then the regional council receives a copy of the decision.

b. Remedial work: If the concerns are adequately addressed and the Candidacy Board is satisfied that the candidacy process can continue then the Candidacy Board identifies remedial work for the candidate. The goals for the remedial work must be shared with the candidate in writing.

4. The decision of the Candidacy Board to terminate candidacy may be appealed by the former candidate through the Judicial Committee of the General Council. The grounds for appeal are found in The Manual section J.10.

5. Former candidates who resigned or whose process was terminated who wish to re-engage the Candidacy Pathway process must wait two years from the date of termination or resignation before submitting an application to the Office of Vocation to be assessed for promise and suitability. The Candidacy Board must consider the reasons for the resignation or termination in their assessment of the former candidate.