

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE PLACEMENTS

Guidance for Students



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Introduction

Welcome to this guidance booklet which has been designed to assist you in integrating your academic pathway with contextual learning. Through church-based and social context placements you will be invited to explore the ways that faith is made visible in practice, in different situations. This will contribute to your Christian discipleship, your vocational and formational development, and aims to enhance your skills, dispositions and confidence as a pastoral practitioner.

The aims of placements

Its aims are:

- to root theological training and formation for ministry in the life, ministry and mission of a local church, pastorate or community context where a Christian presence is to be found.
- to bring assumptions, both theological and practical, into active contact with ministry in order to provoke further questions, stimulate reflective practice and theological reflection, thus deepening formational learning.
- to offer hands-on experience in a range of ministerial practices.
- to maintain an active relationship with the wider church beyond the Westminster College.
- to facilitate learning at several levels including personal and spiritual development; personal and professional relationships; ministerial skills; growth in knowledge and understanding of the ministry and mission of the church (see the *Guidelines on Supervision*).



Placement Basics: What? When? Where? Who?

What?

Every EM1 student training as a Minister of Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church is required to undertake 800 hours of placement experience. For students training for Stipendiary service and Non-Stipendiary service (not NSM Model 4) 400 hours will probably be taken up with Westminster's *Living Ministry Programme*. This is a nine-month pastorate-based placement undertaken in the final year of training; in which the trainee minister engages fully in the ministry, worship and mission of the churches and then attends four block weeks of college-based training. All students, including NSM Model 4, will have the opportunity to undertake shorter placements in church-based contexts or in other social contexts, such as community organisations or institutions where ministry takes place i.e. hospital, hospice, police, workplace, shopping centre, waterways. Every student will also be encouraged to undertake one placement overseas, so that they encounter the world church.

When?

For students undertaking a block training pathway placements take place alongside academic study at home. Residential students may take advantage of the range of placements offered through Cambridge Theological Federation (CTF) Social Context Placements. These happen over concentrated short periods, often in vacation time, or throughout the whole academic year for one session per week, fitting around lectures and private study.

COVID -19

Please note: during the academic year 2020+21 practical placements are likely to be affected by the opportunities and limitations of the COVID 19 pandemic. The following instructions should be considered in the light of changing circumstances (i.e. national and local restrictions) and students must be prepared to comply with the protocols for safe working set by the context in which they are placed. Sadly, some placements that would be available on other years may not be possible during 2020+21 (i.e. visits overseas or some sector ministries where new short-term volunteers are not able to be accommodated).

Where?

Arrangements may be made for students so that they can either:

- commute daily to a context near where they live (normally up to an hour from home)
- be accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation or with a local family for short placements located away from home
- be accommodated abroad in a church in partnership with the United Reformed Church, i.e. WCC, or through Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide *Encounter Programme* (this has financial and logistical implications – see *Practicalities*)

Who?

Four parties are involved in this exercise: the College, the student, the venue i.e. host church or social context organisation, and the agreed supervisor (normally the minister or lead chaplain/organiser)

1. The College

Your personal tutor will discuss your annual placement requirements with you at the beginning of the academic year. Then you will need to talk with the DOPS about potential placement venues. (If you are a block pathway student your local knowledge will be very important).

During your training pathway you will need to experience a wide range of churches as the URC has many styles of church and mission contexts. In addition to this you will be required to have some

experience of one or more different denominations. The DOPS will liaise with Senatus about contexts which might be suitable for you and the Synod moderator and/or training officer may also be consulted about the suitability of church contexts.

Social context placements vary considerably and students are encouraged to explore contexts that they have not experienced before. The DOPS is available to make initial contact or provide introductions where contexts are new to students. In addition, students often arrange 'light touch' placements during the summer vacation, in which they arrange to visit an unusual project or to preach in environments that are totally new to them. Again, these can be discussed with your personal tutor and DOPS. The college is regularly contacted to offer opportunities for students and the college tutorial office is the place to ask about these.

2. *The Student*

The aim is to enable the student to observe and reflect on what is happening in the local church and community. This will involve experiencing the realities of ministry, participating in the life and routine of the local church or social context, and reflecting theologically with the supervisor on this experience at the beginning and end of the placement.

A church-based placement may include engaging in issues such as:

- approaches to mission and discipleship
- preaching and leading worship during the Christian Year
- pastoral care
- engagement with children and young adults, i.e. uniformed organisations or Messy Church
- community projects i.e. church café, foodbank, refugee project, lunch club
- staff meetings and committee meetings

A social-context placement may include engaging in issues such as:

- social welfare
- pastoral care i.e. hospital or hospice chaplaincy
- team-working i.e. Street Pastors
- befriending i.e.
- practical assistance utilising the resources of the organisation i.e. distributing woollen hats to seafarers at the Seaman's Mission

Students may find that it enhances their experience if they undertake some preparatory reading before their placement (see *Resources*). Students are encouraged to keep a reflective journal (either in hard copy or electronic form) during their placements. These tools inform and equip, but also provide a platform to capture evidence that can be drawn on at a later date for academic and vocational purposes.

If the placement forms the substance of assessed work, you will be asked to reflect on your experience during class time as well as provide a written theological reflection (see relevant module guide for specific requirements)

If the placement does not form the substance of assessed work the student is required to write 1500 word reflection on an aspect of their placement and submit this to the DOPS along with your supervisor's final report on the placement. This should be done within a month of the conclusion of the placement.

3. *The Local Church(es) and Community*

Pastorates are asked to encourage students to relate to the life of the whole people of God, and not

just to the work of the minister. We therefore encourage members of the church community to take responsibility for providing appropriate support, encouragement and constructive criticism.

Whether it is a church-based placement or social context, It will be necessary for the supervisor to fulfil the requirements of Ethical practice and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by signposting the student's presence on placement in advance of their arrival (see *practicalities*).

4. *The Supervisor*

The minister or organisation leader is normally the student's supervisor on placement. This leader may delegate the task to an experienced ordained colleague or appropriate departmental leader. It would be helpful to inform college where this occurs. If the student is preparing for NSM Model 4 service, and therefore in pastoral charge of a congregation during training, the student's Synod will arrange an external supervisor to support the student. For short placements it is expected that students will meet with supervisors for theological reflection and pastoral reflection *at least* at the beginning and end of the placement. LMP Trainees and NSM Model 4 students will be meeting with their supervisors on a regular basis throughout the placement.

The first meeting will need to be a practical planning session and requires the completion of the Student Working Agreement (see the section on *Supervision*). The student and supervisor should seek to establish a *Working Agreement* (see '*forms*' below) as the basis for the placement. Ideally this should be done as early as possible and will be provided by the student.

The supervisor is asked to allow the student to play as full a part as possible in the work of the church/organisation. The student will need to explore ministry in that context through the lens of the URC Minister's Marks of Ministry:

A Minister of Word and Sacrament is ...	
1. A FAITHFUL DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST:	caught up in the joy and wonder of God's will and work; seeking always to live a holy life in public and in private; sustained by their own rhythm of prayer, Bible reading and worship so that they might model and encourage such life-long patterns in others with integrity; open to learning discipleship from others.
2. A PERSON OF INTEGRITY AND RESILIENCE:	self-aware and committed to their own lifelong learning (especially through the URC's provision for ministers); aware of their own limitations and thus willing to seek support; ready to deal with situations of conflict; balancing ministry's joys and pains with the fostering of right relationships with family and friends.
3. A THEOLOGIAN:	delighting in Scripture, rooted in the Reformed tradition, able to communicate their own faith and its implications within and beyond congregations; encouraging others to discover how these rich resources inspire and sustain faithfulness.
4. A WORSHIP LEADER AND PREACHER:	able to craft and lead worship that show an appreciation for the Sacraments and the resources of many traditions and styles yet unafraid to create and advocate new forms as appropriate; passionate and effective in breaking open God's Word in preaching; ready and able to foster skills, techniques and experience in others so that they might lead worship and preach well.
5. A PASTOR:	sharing with others, especially Elders, in sustaining care; making time to walk in love alongside people; rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support; wise in knowing their limits and boundaries when more specialised help is needed; reliably dealing with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality.
6. A LEADER AND COLLABORATOR:	identifying, developing ,and enabling others, particularly Elders; capable of working in ,and leading, teams through collaborative and shared leadership; aware of their own leadership style and open to learning with and from others, when necessary acknowledging their own mistakes and seeking restoration; committed and equipped to building up others in faith and witness so that the gifts and callings of all might flourish; demonstrating love for God's people.
7. A MISSIONARY AND EVANGELIST:	passionate about and active in sharing the love of God for the world; alive to the significance of contexts and culture in shaping mission and creative in discovering missional opportunities; empowering and equipping God's people in mission to share the Gospel and live God's Kingdom of justice and people to the full.
8. A PUBLIC FIGURE:	reliable and effective in representing the Church in ecumenical, community and wider settings; committed to and equipped in speaking truth to power and challenging injustice and marginalisation wherever they may be found.
9. A COMMUNICATOR:	who uses written, spoken and other modes with clarity and grace to share faith and build up relationships and communities; helping others to find their voice.
10. A COMMITTED PARTICIPANT IN THE COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH:	responsive to God's call as gift and blessing to be lived out within the discipline and accountability of the denomination which trains, ordains and inducts them and the pastorates and ministries within which they serve.
11. A REFORMER:	wise in the dynamics and challenges of change; bold yet humble in helping individuals and congregations to discern and respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit as new chapters open in the life of the Church and others close.

Students: Finding a placement

Things to consider

Take some time to evaluate:

- your previous church experience
- how your sense of vocation is developing
- your training needs at this stage, including recommendations from your personal tutor, previous end-of-year report or DoS
- how flexible you can be in relation to location

Remember that a placement offers a good opportunity to:

- experience a different type of context (eg rural/ multi-parish/ urban/ suburbia/ network /new housing estate/ pioneer/ strong chaplaincy elements)
- experience a different style of worship and ministry
- consolidate and apply learning from this year
- explore different opportunities in mission and evangelism

Support from Westminster

Students are responsible for organising and managing the placement after a placement has been agreed. Westminster will provide:

- Financial support to cover the costs of travel and accommodation if students are in EM1 (please consult your personal tutor and Syd Harper for more information regarding the criteria for this.)
- advice in applying for funding for overseas placements (although ultimate responsibility is yours - your name should be on any applications, not Westminster).
- pastoral support during the placement as appropriate.

Issues for overseas placements

Overseas placements have the same administrative requirements as a local placement. Students are responsible for ensuring the following are in place:

- funding
- accommodation
- visas
- insurance
- general health and vaccination requirements

For more detailed information please see Westminster's Interim Director of Pastoral Studies, Rick Mearkle (rm2024@cam.ac.uk), for current information and support.

Students: Preparing for your placement

Once the placement has been agreed, you should arrange to contact (and if possible, meet with) your placement supervisor before the placement begins. In preparation for this, think about what aspects of the pastorate or organisation's life, ministry and mission you have little previous experience of so that you can discuss the possibility of engaging in these, in addition to what the supervisor will already be planning.

This discussion will form the basis of the Working Agreement, which may be completed at this first meeting or at the beginning of your placement. Among other things, this will involve agreeing your day off, any other special arrangements, and the dates of the placement. When the Working Agreement is signed, email a copy to Syd Harper (admin@westminster.cam.ac.uk).

Before your placement begins download copies of the following documents, which can be found in the student resources section of the Westminster College website:

1. The Working Agreement Form
2. The Supervisor's Report Form
3. The Ethics Template (to be given to your supervisor)

Before the placement begins, gather some of the resources that are likely to be relevant for your placement.

Finally, explore the placement venue's website and to appraise yourself of their core work, who's who, and the location so that you can travel there for a punctual arrival.



1. Think and pray about what you need to experience and learn.



2. Contact your supervisor.



3. Complete the Working Agreement with him/her and send to Syd (copy to DOPS)



4. Gather some resources and make a study plan for your placement.



5. Find out about the venue!

Students: During the placement

Contextual theology involves paying attention to

- the context of both the church and its parish: the situations, relationships and circumstances that you observe or are involved in
- your responses to the context – your feelings as well as your thoughts that bring in your knowledge and understanding from other contexts and experiences
- the theology you are studying – biblical studies, doctrine, worship, church history and so on
- the promptings of the Holy Spirit as you offer these to God in prayer and meditation.

Explore the ENVIRONMENT. You will need to do some active research and exploration. Familiarise yourself with the church, institution or organisation. Walk around at different times of day, and get a feel for the place and its inhabitants. Take photos. Shop locally and strike up conversations. Notice the houses, gardens, cars. Find out about the history of the place. Where do people meet? Are there active projects or groups? Can you join one for a day? What do people do? Pray as you walk around for a sense of where God is...

Find out about the INSTITUTION. *Study its building.* How old is it? Where is it located in relation to the neighbourhood? Is it accessible? Is it attractive from the outside? What about its notice board? Is it open during the week? How comfortable is it? What is its history? How well is it configured for welcoming people, for worship, the work that it does? Is it cared for or are there neglected areas? Are there particular objects that are important to those that use it? Take photos.

Study the people. Have lots of conversations and ask to visit key people. What are their life and faith stories? What brought them to the place? What keeps them there? Who are seen to be the leaders?

Study the structures and what it says about itself. What kinds of things happen in and around the church, organisation or chaplaincy? What priorities do they reflect? How is the church and/or its members connected to the wider community? Who are the key stakeholders in the organisation? How well is it resourced? How is it looking ahead to the future?

Participate in LIFE, MISSION AND MINISTRY. Attend the key meetings or gatherings that form the heart of that community.

Ask questions. Your placement is a great opportunity to ask questions about the nature of mission, the role of the minister or chaplain, how gifts are recognised and used in the communities it serves. Don't be afraid to ask your supervisor about the challenges and joys of ministry, or members of the congregation or organisation about how they experience and live out their Christian discipleship, or people in the wider community about how the church and Christian faith is perceived.

Keep a journal. Use this to capture your thoughts and feelings as well as to record what you have been doing. If you have an interesting conversation or scenario, be sure to capture it in your journal while it is fresh in your memory. Sometimes you may want to try and record a conversation word for word ('verbatim') and then reflect on it more systematically later on. It is surprising how quickly details can fade and how easily we can 'gloss' experiences that may have been quite raw or perturbing. It is the near-subconscious disturbances that are often a clue to there being something significant to reflect on.

Use the journal for your prayers as well as for your 'thick descriptions' and beginnings of analysis of different aspects of your placement. Use this when meeting with your supervisor.

Gather material from your activities, research and observations. This includes service sheets of worship that you have helped to plan, sermons and feedback from members of the congregation and/or your supervisor, any other material you helped to prepare. It could include information about places you visited (such as schools, care homes, coffee mornings, lunch clubs, messy church, community projects).

Make sure you build up a good resource from which you can draw upon when you come to doing the assessment tasks related to your placement.

Meet with your supervisor and make the most of these times. Prepare for them by reviewing your journal entries and completing your log of activities. Make a note of questions you want to ask, and don't be afraid to ask him/her about why they do the things they do. Ask for feedback on how you are doing – both for specific 'activities', such as preaching or leading a group, but also more generally about how you are engaging with the congregation, the wider community and with the supervisor.

Make the most of your study time to do some background reading on contextual theology, mission, pastoral care, community work, ecclesiology and so on. (see *Resources*). Use this time to think about what you might choose as the 'substrate' for your assessment task(s) and allow it to guide your reading. You may be able to start on one or more of your tasks while in the placement. Do get in touch with Westminster's DOPS for any advice or for suggested reading.

Pray. Pray for the people among whom you find yourself. Pray for discernment and for humility to learn from others. Pray for grace and love in all your relationships and interactions. Pray for a deeper understanding of your calling and of God's love for the world.



1. Explore the communities in which the church is placed.



2. Find out about the church community.



3. Participate in the life, mission and ministry of the parish.



4. Ask questions.



5. Keep a journal



6. Gather material from your activities, research and observations.



7. Meet weekly with your supervisor.



8. Make the most of your study time.

9. Pray.

Students: At the end of the placement

Ask your supervisor to complete the supervisor's report. The supervisor may or may not do this together with you, but it is your responsibility to remind the supervisor about the need to complete this by the end of your placement. You are also responsible for keeping a log of the activities you have been involved in during your attachment or placement and to give this log to your supervisor to include with his/her report. The forms are available on the Student Resources section of the Westminster website. The completed form should be sent electronically to Syd Harper.

Create a space in which to reflect prayerfully about your experiences. Pray for the pastorate or organisation and its community and pray for discernment about what you have learned and what you still have to learn. Take time out to rummage through your journal entries and the information you have gathered. Allow yourself to remember how you felt at different times during your placement and reflect on why you felt the way you did. Recall which aspects of the placement leave you with unresolved questions that you want to explore further. Think about how your supervisor exercised his/her ministry and leadership and what you have learned from him/her.

Complete your assessment tasks. These will vary according to the pathway you are on. Please make sure you know what is required and by what deadline, and ask Westminster's DOPS if you are in any doubt.

For written theological reflections:

- Define what it is that you want to reflect on. This is likely to be something that aroused strong feelings in you and raised questions that remain unanswered.
- Once you have drafted a 'thick description' of the situation (or a verbatim of the conversation), think about what is at the heart of the matter and formulate this into a title that is both interesting and clearly focused.
- Spend some time thinking about what theological themes or biblical texts might be most fruitful as conversation partners for the experience that you are exploring. Do some in-depth study of this area.
- Consider what approach to theological reflection might work best for the experience you have chosen. Do consider creative options (music, poetry, sculpture, drama) where appropriate and possible.
- Do seek the advice of the Tutor for Context-based Training. For BTh students, make sure you take the initiative to organise supervisions in good time.

When preparing presentations or other forms of assessment, make the most of the opportunity to reflect on what you sense God is doing, and how you would respond to God's call, in the setting that you have experienced.

Ethics. In written theological reflections and placement reports, all names and identifying details of the parish and of people in the parish need to be changed to preserve confidentiality. In order to fully comply with research ethics and recent GDPR regulations, it is necessary to obtain consent before written reflective work to be undertaken. This will need to come both from the placement supervisor and from the congregation (or equivalent). They will need to be submitted to the DoPS, along with the Working Agreement form at the beginning of your placement. To obtain consent from the congregation, a notice needs to be placed in the weekly noticesheet (or equivalent) at the beginning of the placement, informing members of the congregation or organisation who you are, what is happening and giving them option to withdraw themselves from being subjects of any written reflection. A template for this notices should be completed by you with the supervisor's support and then displayed appropriately. **If people have requested that you do not base your written reflections on them, then you may not write about them in your reflection even if you change their names.**



1. Ask your supervisor to complete the Supervisor's Report by the end of your placement.



2. Create a space to reflect prayerfully on your placement experiences.



3. For assessment: complete your assessment task, asking for advice and organising supervisions.

Not for assessment: write your 1500 word reflection and submit it with your report within a month of concluding your placement.



Supervisors: The art of supervision

The supervisor and supervisions can be enormously formative in students' training and ministerial formation. Supervisors are there to direct and guide the student in their contextual learning, as well as support them in their ministry experience.

Setting learning objectives

Setting learning objectives for a placement helps to give direction for the student's experience and criteria for his/her growth and learning.

It is probably most helpful to settle on just a few learning objectives that seem particularly pertinent for the individual student and the context of the church or social context.

The learning objectives will articulate what the student hopes to learn and how the activities and experiences of the placement will enable them to do so.

What makes good supervision?

Supervision is more than diary planning and pastoral care, although these are vital aspects of enabling a student succeed in completing a fruitful and meaningful placement. Supervision is also the building of a rapport that enables insightful questions to be asked. The following questions may be helpful ways to reveal hidden depths for exploration.

Facts	What are the facts of the situation or experience and what is opinion or hearsay?
Feelings	What feelings have been aroused?
Fantasies	Are there fantasies, stereotypes, fears or prejudices that need to be brought to light?
Focus	What is at the (theological) heart of the situation or experience?
Faith	How is faith exercised – and what does it mean – in this particular experience?
Future	What has changed as a result of reflecting together? What will we do, or how will we think, differently?

The supervision session: involving self and others

Ultimately, supervision is at its most effective when it engages the supervisor as much and as vulnerably as the students. When the dynamic moves from teacher and student to co-learners in God's kingdom, deep and transformational learning begins to take place. This can be a costly but energising and stimulating experience for the supervisor as well as for the student!

Although the relationship between student and supervisor is vital, it is equally important to model and give opportunities for others in the church or chapel to be a part of such reflections. This is one way of embodying collaborative ministry and the releasing of the whole people of God into service and leadership.

Practicalities

Working Agreement

Placement supervisors are requested to complete a *Working Agreement* form as soon as possible at the beginning of the placement. This is normally done during the initial meeting of supervisor and student. This form helps students and supervisors agree on expectations of work and areas of ministry that they will be involved in. This needs to be returned to **Syd Harper** (admin@westminster.cam.ac.uk) as soon as possible after the beginning of the placement.

Placement Checklist

All placement supervisors are requested to complete a *Placement Checklist* at the beginning of the placement. This ensures that practices are compliant with safeguarding and safe practice guidelines, and the Cambridge and Durham Universities' Ethics and Good Practice guidance. This needs to be returned to **Syd Harper** as soon as possible after the beginning of the placement.

Supervisor's Report

As the placement is a formal element in the student's training, a *Supervisor's Report* will be required. This must be returned to **Syd Harper** as soon as possible after the end of the placement. It is necessary to have a signed copy of the report for the files but it would be helpful to have an electronic copy as well.

Ethics Checklist

This checklist is completed by the student and is intended to help the student comply to the university research ethics regulations as they undertake placements and prepare written theological reflections.

Finances

Certain expenses may be claimed for from Westminster College. Please use the *Westminster College Student Expenses Claim Form* available from the tutorial office (admin@westminster.cam.ac.uk). **Please provide receipts whenever possible!**

Once completed, please print it off, sign it and give it to Syd Harper for authorisation, after which Syd will pass it on the Finance Office for processing.

Church Placements in the UK: You may claim the cost of travel to and from a church placement. If you travel by rail or coach, a second class advance purchase fare will be reimbursed. If travelling by car, you may claim mileage (at 40p per mile) up to the cost of a second class advance purchase rail fare.

If you need to travel daily by car to get to your placement, this is reimbursed at a mileage rate of 21p per

Church Placements abroad: If you are considering a church placement abroad then grant funding may be possible through the URC's *Belonging to the World Church* fund or CCCW 'Encounter Programme' A document with a list of potential funders can be found on the intranet.

The College will reimburse travel within the UK (to the airport, for example) as explained above. Similarly, and you may claim a weekly allowance and subsistence as above.

Please make sure that you include all receipts with your claim, unfortunately without these we will not be able to pay you.

Contacts

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Resources

Contextual theology

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Ecclesiology

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Exploring your context

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