



Registration Guidelines (including Accreditation)

For Persons in Ministry with Baptist Churches Western Australia

This Accreditation Guide is designed as an introductory document, focusing on the process of Registration and should be read in conjunction with the BCWA Accreditation Policy.

A Person in Ministry refers to persons in pastoral appointments or positions of spiritual leadership in the context of BUWA ministries and local churches. Eg Pastors, Chaplains, Minister of Religion. Duties are normally centered around the Word of God, the care of people and the equipping of God's people for service.

Introduction

Welcome! Given that you're reading this, then you are likely in the process of Registering as a 'Person in Ministry' with BCWA, and perhaps wondering about Accreditation as a Person in Ministry... but what exactly is it?

When Churches become Members of BCWA, they enter into a mutual agreement with other member churches – a Relationship Agreement. This agreement includes 8 elements, one of which is that pastoral appointees are Registered with BCWA within 6 months of appointment. BCWA strongly recommend that all Persons in Ministry seek registration for Accreditation.

Registration is the successful outcome of recognition by BCWA of a Person in Ministry. There are different kinds of Persons in Ministry, with different eligibility criteria:

- **Local Appointment:** is for the specific ministry role you are in and expires at the end of the role. It does not transfer if you move churches. This is usually for people who do not qualify for, or do not desire, Accreditation. The use of the title Pastor, Chaplain (or any other title) is the responsibility of the local church and is not recommended by BUWA¹. Local appointments should not represent themselves as a representative of BUWA and are not usually eligible to be nominated as a Marriage Celebrant.
- **Accreditation Candidate:** for people applying for Accreditation but have not yet met all the requirements. We encourage all pastors to apply as a Candidate either as soon as they are appointed, or as they commence theological studies. Candidates are entitled to use the prefix "Ps" (Pastors) and are endorsed by BUWA to do so. Candidates are eligible to seek nomination as a Registered Marriage Celebrant.
- **Accredited Person in Ministry:** for people who fulfilled all the normal requirements. Accredited Persons are entitled to use the prefix "Ps" (Pastor) and are eligible to seek nomination as a Registered Marriage Celebrant. There are 2 categories of Accredited Persons: Cat 1: Senior/Sole Pastor with 4 years of relevant study; and Cat 2: Specialist Pastors with 2 years of relevant study. Persons holding Category 1 Accreditation may use the personal prefix "Rev" (Reverend) and are endorsed by BUWA to do so. Accredited Persons are recognised in the BCWA Constitution and attend Annual Assembly.

All Registered Persons in Ministry are expected to uphold the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, and maintain Registration through ongoing development, professional supervision and appropriate Safe Church endorsements. A Person in Ministry would normally meet the definition of the Australian Taxation Office as a 'minister of religion' including being acknowledged as a leader in spiritual affairs.

¹ The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlight the community expectation that persons who present themselves as Ministers of Religion and use a prefix designator/title such as Pastor, Reverend, Chaplain, have been given the designation through an external body.

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation involves the certification of people as suitable for ministry within or on behalf of BUWA. It gives recognition of their having met specific requirements and that they possess appropriate qualifications, experience and credentials for such ministry.

(2.9 of the Accreditation Policy)

Accreditation is administered by BUWA, on behalf of, and in partnership with local member churches. Accreditation is formal public recognition that God has called a person into pastoral ministry, within the context of Baptist Churches Western Australia (BCWA). The Accreditation process is a journey of discernment, guided by the Holy Spirit, seeking evidence that a person has been called, is of suitable character, and is competent.

It is normal for the Accreditation journey to take at least two (2) years from commencement to completion, and people are encouraged to apply for Accreditation whilst completing theological training; or within 6 months of commencing a formal ministry position.

To be eligible to enter into the Accreditation journey (known as the Accreditation Stream), a person needs to be:

- Baptised by immersion
- Normally been an active member of a recognised Baptist Church for at least 2 years
- In, or seeking, a formal ministry position within a BCWA constituent church, agency or ministry. This includes Baptistcare; Defence Force chaplaincy
- Completing, or completed, theological study

People usually apply firstly as an Accreditation Candidate, and once accepted, undertake an agreed Accreditation Pathway (in conjunction with your church/ministry placement). The Pathway will include all the elements needed to complete the requirements for 'Full Accreditation'.

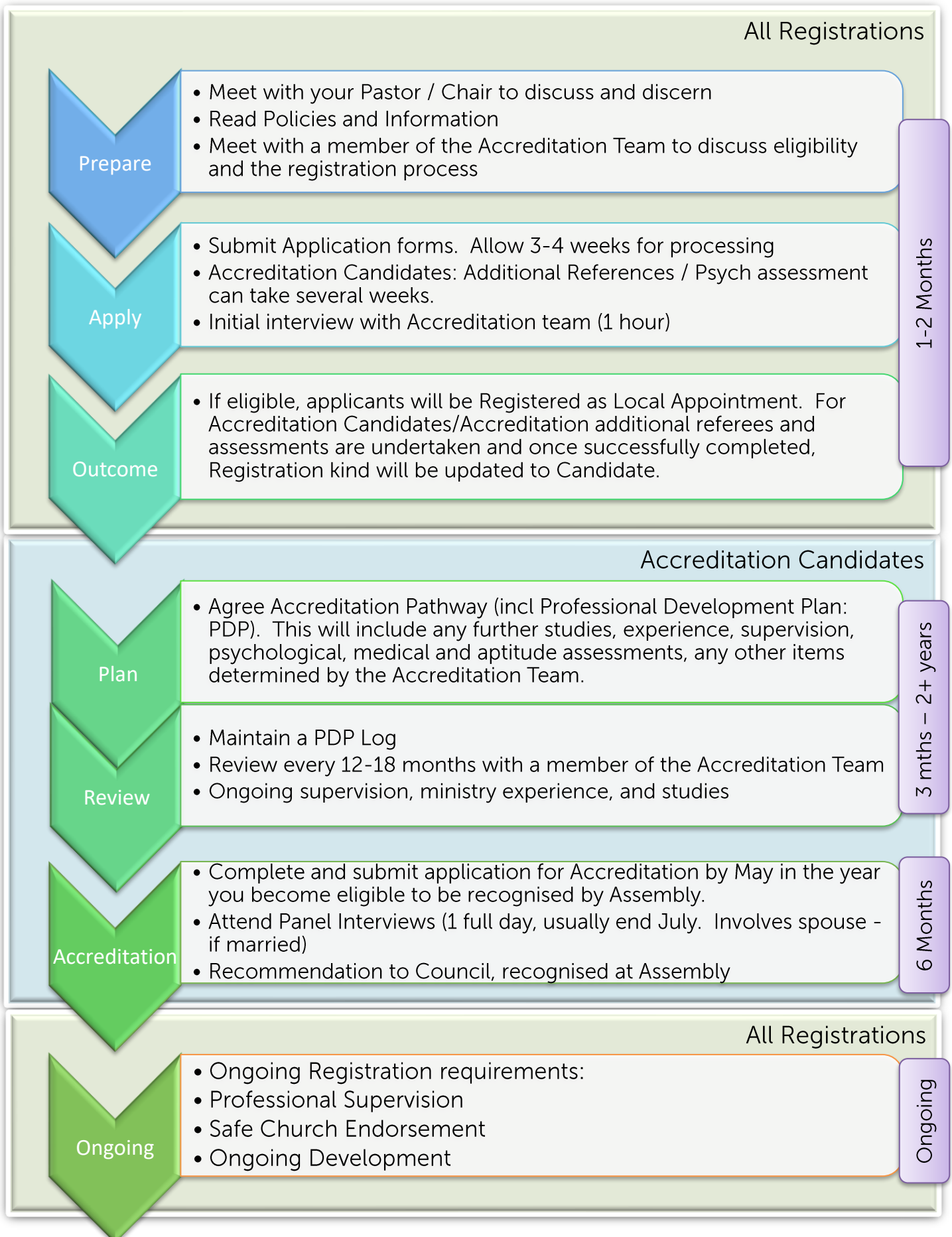
To fulfil all of the requirements for Accreditation, a person will need:

- 4 years relevant training (min 2 years theological) for Cat 1 (Senior / Sole) OR
- 2 years theological training for Category 2 (Specialist)
- 2 years (full time equivalence) supervised pastoral service
- Psychological, medical, and aptitude assessments
- Safe Church Endorsement and training

The above describes a normal process, however BCWA recognise that people may also seek Accreditation after many years in ministry; or seeking a transfer of other ministry credentials. See the FAQ for some examples.

Kinds of Persons in Ministry	Local Appointment	Accreditation Candidate	Accredited Person in Ministry
Eligibility Criteria			
Active member of a Baptist Church OR recognised Baptist Agency	✓	✓	✓
Position meets ATO definition of 'Minister of Religion' TR2019/3	✓	✓	✓
Baptised by immersion		✓	✓
Undertaking, or completed, relevant training	✓	✓	
Minimum 2 years theological training			✓
Equivalent of 2 years full time pastoral experience (usual minimum)			✓
Forms / Assessments / Requirements			
Application for Registration	✓	✓	✓
Current Job/Ministry Description	✓	✓	✓
Safe Church Application / Endorsement (WWC etc)	✓	✓	✓
Signed Code of Ethics and Ministry Standards	✓	✓	✓
Professional Supervision arrangements	✓	✓	✓
Currency Requirements (Safe Church, Dev Plan, Supervisor) 3 yearly	✓	✓	✓
Declaration / Undertaking	✓	✓	✓
Local Church declaration	✓		
Referees (incl local church)		✓	✓
Academic transcripts		✓	✓
Psychologists Report (via appointment)		✓	
Interview (1 hour)		✓	
Medical declaration			✓
Beliefs and Church Health Questionnaires			✓
Interview Panels (usually over a day)			✓
Spouse Support Questionnaire (if applicable)			✓
Student Report			✓
Assessments (self / church)			✓
Conditions			
Theological convictions consistent with BCWA Statement of Faith	✓	✓	✓
BCWA Endorse use of title Ps		✓	✓
BCWA Endorse use of title Rev – Cat 1 only			✓
Eligible for Nomination as Marriage Celebrant		✓	✓
Can vote at Assembly (as per Constitution requirements)			✓
Credentials recognised interstate and internationally		✓	✓
Required for Australian Defence Force Chaplains			✓
Meets BIS definition of Accredited Pastor for some insurances			✓
Registration ceases when specific role registered for ceases	✓		

Registration Process



Why is Accreditation Important?

Baptist Churches Western Australia, as an Assembly, a collective, have delegated the responsibility for Accreditation to the Council of BCWA. It is a service that BCWA provides to affiliates. We recognise that it is the local church who appoints and calls, and as the employer, has the responsibility to ensure that a person is suitably qualified to fulfil the role to which they are being appointed.

Accreditation is one way that churches and ministries who are seeking Pastors and ministry appointments can be assured that a thorough process that tests calling, character and competence has been undertaken, and that a person has been recognised by the Assembly of BCWA churches. Accreditation is also recognised across states, and internationally.

We acknowledge that Pastoral Ministry is a calling, a vocation, rather than a profession, however the titles 'Pastor', or 'Reverend' have become a prefix, a designated identifier that the Christian church and the community at large recognise.

Many vocational professions have a registration process that goes beyond their employer, in order to certify their suitability for that profession. For example, Doctors, Teachers, Engineers, CPA's, all have an accrediting body and employment is conditional upon that registration being current.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse identified the use of the title 'Pastor' as a risk factor in child safety. Case Study 55 (ACC) highlighted the expectation that a person carrying the title 'Pastor' has had formal pastoral training and is recognised by a reputable ministerial body.

The title 'Pastor' carries weight, both within the Church and the wider community. We urge local Churches to ensure that persons appointed as Pastors are registered as, or are in the process of becoming, an Accredited Person in Ministry with BCWA.

Shouldn't I just finish my studies first, before I apply?

Academics are only one aspect of Accreditation. Waiting until you have completed your studies may result in you needing to do further supervision; extra study to meet pre-requisites; or unexpected delays in completing the Accreditation process.

Applying early in your study, or ministry journey can ensure that all aspects of Accreditation are taken into account throughout your ministry: calling; character and competence. It also ensures that adequate supervision and support are provided and undertaken throughout the process.

Accreditation is a partnership between yourself; your training provider; your local church and BCWA. Morling College is the preferred training provider for BCWA, and Candidates can expect to complete at least Denominational Distinctives, and Supervised Field Education through the Vose Campus.

Am I Eligible: Common Scenarios

- **Currently Studying theology, intending to be in pastoral ministry, but no formal pastoral ministry placement.**

You can apply for Registration as an Accreditation Candidate, however you would need to have been an active member of a recognised Baptist Church affiliated with BCWA for at least 2 years. A report from your member church would be part of the application process, as well as from a Pastor who has observed your ministry context, even if it is volunteer.

Full Accreditation could not be recognised until you had completed studies, and gained the equivalent of 2 years full time supervised pastoral ministry in the Baptist context.

You could lodge an Expression of Interest with BCWA. Whilst not Registration, it does express your interest in a pastoral position, and will provide you with a pathway towards Registration. See the EOI Pastors Guide for further information. If you decided to wait to apply until you had a placement, please check that your study programme would fulfil the requirements for Accreditation.

- **Have a formal ministry placement in a Baptist Church affiliated with BCWA; or a recognised agency (eg Baptistcare).**

You should apply for Registration, ideally either within 6 months of your ministry appointment, or in your 2nd year of studies (whichever is soonest). If seeking Registration as an Accreditation Candidate, your study programme will be taken into account when developing your Accreditation Pathway. The Pathway will be developed in cooperation with your local church.

Active membership is generally a pre-requisite for acceptance, however persons ministering in a Baptist organisation (eg Baptistcare; Global InterAction; Baptist World Aid Australia) who are not members of a Baptist church affiliated with BCWA, may be granted Interim Accreditation.

- **I am an active member of a Baptist Church, and have a formal ministry position with another Christian organisation.**

Eligibility for Accreditation will be dependent upon the BCWA relationship with that organisation; whether Accreditation (or Ordination) is a pre-requisite for the position, and whether you are a Baptist Representative for that organisation. Eg a Chaplain with the Defence Forces, Police Force, or Hospital. This however, this would not extend to being a Pastor of a church not affiliated with BCWA; or other mission agencies.

This currently includes Chaplains in: The Bethanie Group, ADF, Police, and Hospitals

- **I have recently been appointed to a ministry position with a church affiliated with BCWA, but have not been a member of a Baptist Church for 2 years.**

You should apply for Registration as a Local Appointment within 6 months of your appointment. If you have commenced, or completed, theological study, you can apply for Registration as an Accreditation Candidate. To be accepted as a Candidate you will need to have been baptised by immersion. A reference and/or report may be required from your previous ministry position, or the church in which you were a member.

Full Accreditation cannot be granted until the satisfactory completion of a period of 2 years full-time equivalent supervised pastoral service; and completion of studies.

If, however, you have been Accredited or Ordained with another denomination, you may be able to apply to have your credentials recognised; and may meet the requirements for Provisional Accreditation.

- **I completed theological studies long ago, and have been in active pastoral ministry within the BCWA context for several years.**

You can apply for Registration as an Accreditation Candidate, and are encouraged to do so as soon as possible. A review will be made of your academic qualifications; pastoral experience; references from your ministry placements; supervision arrangements and any professional development undertaken. Every case will be unique, and an Accreditation Pathway will be developed to suit your needs. In some cases, this may result in moving directly through to Registration as an Accredited Person in Ministry.

- **I have years of leadership and work experience, with other professional qualifications, and have now been appointed to a pastoral position within a BCWA context.**

You will need to have, or be commencing, some theological training in order to be eligible to apply for Accreditation. Every case will be unique, and an Accreditation Pathway will be developed to suit your needs, including study requirements.

- **I have recently been appointed to a ministry position with the BCWA context, and have been previously Accredited or Ordained with another state or denomination.**

You are eligible to apply for Accreditation and are encouraged to do so within 6 months of your appointment; and may be eligible for Provisional Accreditation. Persons transferring can expect to include the completion of Denominational Distinctives in their Professional Development Plan. It is important to note that the term 'Accreditation' means different things in different states and denominations, and may not be equivalent to BCWA Accreditation. You will need to provide your academic transcripts; and a statement of your pastoral experience. References will be obtained from your state or denominational office, including a Professional Standards report.