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A word of encouragement

The Uniting Church recognises the importance of ministry agents receiving regular professional supervision. In the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, professional supervision is explained as ‘a relationship that Ministers have with another professional whereby they are assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of ministry’ ¹.

Professional supervision is an intentional resource for ministry. It is a space, time, activity and opportunity where, in the context of a supportive relationship, ministers are enabled to reflect on and learn from their ministry and ministry experiences. Professional supervision recognises the accountability of ministry agents as outlined in the regulations ².

In professional supervision the supervisee (you) and the supervisor meet to focus on you and your ministry. The professional supervisor is there to support you. It takes time to learn to ‘be a supervisee’ – to understand the parts that make up professional supervision. Some of those parts are

- the purpose of supervision
- the supervision relationship
- roles and responsibilities of the supervisee
- roles and responsibilities of the supervisor
- process of supervision
- the focus for supervision
- the skills needed by the supervisor
- feedback, review and evaluation

While some ministry agents have experience participating in and receiving professional supervision, it is unfamiliar to others, and they are not sure what it involves, or how it could be a resource for their ministry. It can be helpful to have a conversation with a colleague or the Presbytery Minister about what to expect from professional supervision and how to get started. Your presbytery may have some guidelines for supervision as well as a list of names of potential supervisors.

If you have never experienced professional supervision there may be a number of issues you are considering. Issues such as:

- What is the purpose of professional supervision?
- If I have a spiritual director/mentor do I also need a professional supervisor?
- How does professional supervision differ from spiritual direction and mentoring?
- How might professional supervision enhance my ministry?
- How does a professional supervision arrangement get started?
- How do I find out the names of potential supervisors?
- How do I contact a potential professional supervisor?
- What information do I need before contacting a potential supervisor?

The purpose of this resource is to assist ministry agents to get the most out of professional supervision. It is to be used in conjunction with the UCA Ministerial Education Commission (MEC) document Professional supervision: A process of Reflection on Ministry Experience ³. It is designed as a workbook, and explores various aspects of professional supervision, providing space for thoughts, comments and reflections.

It is suitable for ministry agents who are both familiar and unfamiliar with professional supervision. Depending on your knowledge or experience you may want to work through the whole resource or alternatively only explore some parts.

It is divided into sections and includes reference to supervision resources for those who want to explore a topic further, and some appendices.

¹ UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice effective 1 January 2010 section 3.9c
² UCA Regulations 2012 edition
³ UCA MEC 2011 Professional Supervision: A process of Reflection on Ministry experience. For a copy of the document go the UCA Assembly web site
Part 1: Introducing professional supervision

Getting started in professional supervision is not always easy, and it can be overwhelming at first. Your first contact with a potential professional supervisor may be prompted by a number of reasons, including a crisis (personal, family, ministry), becoming a ministry candidate, being recently ordained/commissioned, starting a first placement, a change of placement, ministry requirement, need for support, information... etc.

Professional supervision is a specialist area of supervision practice. Most people have some experience of being supervised. You might have experienced:

- management supervision (where you had an employer to whom you were accountable);
- student supervision (when you were in College or University studying and involved in field placement);
- peer supervision (where you met with one or more colleagues to share about ministry);
- group/team supervision (with a group of colleagues working in the same organization/placement);
- professional supervision (working with a professional to focus on you and your ministry).

Different people learn differently, and it is important that you are able to help the supervisor understand how you learn so you can get the most out of professional supervision. People learn in various ways such as on their own, with others, using diagrams, symbols, journaling, reading theory, seeing how individual parts connect, holding the parts as a whole, by sound, movement and touch... etc. Cultural background also influences how people learn and how they might engage in professional supervision.

Honey and Mumford refer to the four learning styles below:

- Activist – hands on
- Reflectors – stand back
- Theorists – convince me
- Pragmatists – show me

Take time to remind yourself of your experiences of supervision

What supervision have you experienced?

Who was the supervisor?

How did supervision support you and help you reflect, learn and grow?

What is your learning style?

How do you learn best?

How can you encourage a supervisor to provide support that maximises your learning outcomes?

What might a supervisor need to know and understand about you and your cultural background so that the professional supervision is appropriate and effective?

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4 Appendix 1 has some definitions of the different types of supervision, and also looks at how professional supervision differs from spiritual direction, mentoring and coaching.

5 Honey and Mumford 1989 Capitalizing on your Learning Style 2nded Organization Design and Development, USA
Part 2: Theological reflection

As people seek to learn from their life experiences they reflect. Reflection can occur
- Prior to an event (in the planning that takes place) – reflection for action
- During an event (when things are unfolding/don’t go as planned) – reflection in action
- After an event (looking back at what happened) – reflection after action
- Reflection on the process of reflection – reflexivity

Reflection has been defined as an ‘exercise to facilitate deep thought about the situations in which one is engaged’. For the people of God reflection will also facilitate deep thought about the situations in which one is engaged alongside the faith in which one believes. This reflection is theological reflection.

Theological reflection
- Is a tool for our formation and the formation of others
- Invites us to stand before our experience and be open to what may or may not be revealed
- Is a process that integrates life and faith
- Includes reference to experience (yours and others), culture (yours, others), context, scripture, tradition, thinking (reason)
- Moves us from experience to reflection and action

Reflecting theologically is part of what happens in professional supervision. Sharing with the professional supervisor the process you use to reflect theologically, will assist the supervisor to work well with you in professional supervision.

Think of a recent time when you reflected theologically on a situation. What process did you use to reflect theologically?

Here are the outlines of two models of theological reflection. Consider how your process of theological reflection resonates with or differs from the process of these authors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whitehead and Whitehead</th>
<th>Killen and de Beer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MODEL: 3 sources (conversation partners) of theological reflection for ministry</td>
<td>MOVEMENT:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition: scripture and history of the church</td>
<td>When we enter our experience, we encounter our feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience: personal of the minister and collective of the community</td>
<td>When we pay attention to those feelings, images arise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture: biases which contribute explicitly and implicitly to any theological reflection in ministry</td>
<td>Considering and questioning those images may spark insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHOD:</td>
<td>Insight leads, if we are willing and ready, to action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend: awareness and listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assert: challenge and confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide: problem analysis and conflict resolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FRAMEWORK:
Focus: on some aspect of the experience
Describe: that experience to identify the heart of the matter
Explore: the heart of the matter in conversation with the wisdom of the Christian heritage
Identify: from this conversation new truths and meanings for living

How will you share the process you use to reflect theologically with a professional supervisor?

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6 Schon 1987 Educating the reflective practitioner Jossey-Bass, San Francisco
7 Leach and Paterson 2010 Pastoral supervision SCM Press, UK p201
8 Dickey 2006 What is theological reflection? Internet article – extract from Andover Newton Theological School, Theological Reflection Handbook
11 Killen and de Beer 1999 The art of theological reflection Crossroad, New York
Part 3: The focus of professional supervision

The UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice highlights a number of areas of ministry experience that a minister might explore in professional supervision (see Appendix 2).

The process model of supervision refers to the ‘7 eyed supervisor’ as a tool for identifying the different areas to be focused on in professional supervision 12.

Different sessions of supervision will explore different ‘eyes’, but across time you would expect all ‘eyes’ to be explored.

If only one ‘eye’ is explored, then the supervision may be too narrow.

If any ‘eyes’ are never explored, then the focus of supervision may not be broad enough.

Here is a diagram of the ‘7 eyes’ with the accompanying explanation of the focus that is each ‘eye’.

1. The people you work with
2. The way you work (interventions/strategies)
3. The relationships you develop
4. You – the supervisee
5. Relationship between supervisee and the supervisor
6. The supervisor
7. Wider context

Here the diagram is explained more fully with some examples from the UCA context.

1. The people you work with
   e.g. individual people with whom you are in pastoral relationship, people with whom you are in particular relationship, people with whom you are in collegial relationship, congregation overall, congregation members, church council members, small group members, teams, agencies, institutions, organizations, organizational management, community members and context, Assembly, Presbytery, Synod, Commissions, Boards, Committees, Councils….

2. The way you exercise ministry with people and seek to address issues
   e.g. what you do, how you do it, quality of ministry, strategies and interventions, planning, activities, pastoral care, situations of conflict, pastoral issues of concern, critical incidents, professionalism, cultural awareness and sensitivity, reflection on ministry experiences, boundaries 13, multiple roles, conflicts of interest, unconscious processes 14, learning about and from ministry, identifying competence and areas for growth, skill development, keeping records….

3. The relationships that you seek to develop with the people you work with
   e.g. with individuals, families, groups, teams, colleagues, communities, agencies….

4. You
   e.g. personal health and well-being, self-care, personal identity and ministry identity, relationship with God, family, fitness for ministry, referral to other professionals, taking time off, how you are growing and developing in ministry and as a minister, CEM, discernment of placement directions, placement transition, retirement transition, particular relationships, supervision needs and reflections on your thoughts, feelings and experience of the supervisor….

5. The relationship between you and the supervisor
   e.g. reflecting on the supervision arrangement and relationship, process of supervision, ethical supervision, review, feedback, evaluation, checking the effectiveness of the supervision, checking the breadth of focus of the supervision, renegotiating how you are working together and what topics you might explore, ending the supervision….

6. The supervisor
   e.g. how they work as a supervisor, their style of supervision, their thoughts and feelings about working with you, how they are developing their capacity to work effectively with you, their supervision learning needs….

7. Wider context of ministry
   e.g. Assembly, Synod, Presbytery, Boards, Commissions, committees and councils of the church, the polity of the UCA, institutions, agencies, ecumenical community, general community, statutory organizations, working within the foundational documents of the church (Basis of Union, Constitution, Regulations), code of ethics, policies and procedures (e.g. child safe church), social media and technology, compliance issues around government regulators….

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12 Hawkins and Shohet 1989 Supervision in the helping professions Open University Press, Buckingham
13 Reamer 2012 Boundary issues and dual relationships in the human services Columbia University Press, New York
14 Unconscious processes is a term used to describe what is happening when we unknowingly relate to others or respond in situations other relationships, situations or experiences (or others unknowingly relate or respond to us out of their previous experiences etc).
Consider the various headings of the ‘7 eyed supervisor’. What might you want to explore in professional supervision?

1. The people you are working with and in what contexts
2. The way you exercise ministry with people and seek to address issues
3. The relationships you seek to develop with the people you work with
4. You – the supervisee
5. The relationship between you and the supervisor
6. The supervisor
7. Wider context of ministry
Part 4: Good practice professional supervision

It is essential that ministry agents receive professional supervision that is effective and appropriate. The supervisee needs ‘supervisee glasses’ 15 to enable them to recognise good practice professional supervision.

Pull glasses apart and you see the different parts that make the whole: frame, hinges and 2 lenses. ‘Supervisee glasses’ would involve

Frame: purpose of supervision

Hinges: supervision relationship

Lens 1: expectations and process

Lens 2: focus and skills

Here the parts of the ‘supervisee glasses’ are expanded to give you as the supervisee some suggestions of what to look for in good practice professional supervision.

Purpose (frame)

Professional supervision

- assists the ministry agent to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of their ministry 17
- supports and resources the ministry agent to reflect on, learn from and grow in their ministry 18
- provides an intentional reflective space where a ministry agent can safely express, explore and discuss their experience of ministry and ministry concerns
- provides an opportunity for ministry agents to critique and reflect on the effectiveness of their ministry
- is for the benefit of the ministry agent and their ministry
- assists the ministry agent to serve faithfully and effectively

15 ‘supervisee glasses’ is a concept developed by Sue Crittall
16 Hawkins and Shohet 1989 Supervision in the helping professions Open University Press, Buckingham refer to the ‘good enough supervisor’
17 UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice effective date 1 January 2010
18 UCA MEC 2011 Professional Supervision: A process of Reflection on Ministry Experience
20 Appendix 3 is the supervision covenant sheet from the UCA MEC professional supervision document. It would be usual for a supervisor and supervisee to have a written covenant/contract/agreement which covers some of the detail of professional supervision such as those issues outlined in the check list of part 6 of this resource
Getting the most out of professional supervision
A resource for Uniting Church in Australia Ministry Agents

- follow up from sessions
- review
- ask for, give, receive, accept and act on feedback
- evaluate
- learn and change

**Process**
The process of professional supervision is
- supportive but not overly therapeutic
- flexible rather than constrictive
- active but not too directive
- planned and focused rather than a ‘friendly chat’
- negotiated rather than determined
- affirming but also challenging
- nurturing but not creating dependency
- culturally aware, sensitive and appropriate
- transformative
- creative
- a good use of time

The professional supervisor will
- be committed to and available for the supervisee
- be present, attuned and responsive to the supervisee
- work with the individual supervisee, adjusting their practice of professional supervision to the learning style needs of the supervisee
- honour and respect the ministry agent and their ministry
- support and encourage the ministry agent when appropriate to take ministry concerns to the presbytery minister or other appropriate council or officer of the church
- encourage the supervisee to reflect theologically
- learn and grow as a professional supervisor

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**Focus and skills (lens 2)**

**Focus**
Professional supervision will have a broad focus – where all ‘7 eyes’ are explored (though not all ‘eyes’ in each session)

The agenda will be negotiated at the start of each session
The supervisee and the professional supervisor will both contribute to planning the agenda (but it is the supervisee’s needs that are to be met)

The supervisee will be able to identify how professional supervision is impacting positively on their ministry

**Skills**
The professional supervisor will have the capacity to work well with the supervisee to
- listen
- support
- be empathetic
- educate
- explain
- challenge
- inform
- resource
- help express feelings
- help release emotions
- raise awareness
- critically reflect
- understand
- learn and change

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21 A useful tool for supervision is a supervision folder (paper, electronic) where a supervisee can record their preparation for a session, issues raised and explored during a session, any follow up tasks or actions arising from a session, as well as thoughts, feelings and reflections about their experience of professional supervision and the practice of the supervisor.

22 Zachary 2000 The mentor’s guide: facilitating effective learning relationships Jossey-Bass, California

23 Rosenblatt and Mayer 1975 in Cleak and Wilson 2007 Making the most of field placement Thomson, Australia

24 Shohet (ed) 2011 Supervision as Transformation: a passion for learning Jessica Kingsley Publishers, UK

25 Schuck and Wood 2011 Inspiring Creative Supervision Jessica Kingsley Publishers, UK

26 Pohly 2nd ed 2001 Transforming the rough places: the ministry of supervision Providence House Publishers, Tennessee refers to the qualities, attitudes and skills of a supervisor

27 Davy and Beddoe 2010 Best Practice in Professional Supervision Jessica Kingsley Publications, UK


29 Benefiel and Holton 2010 The soul of supervision: integrating practice and theory Morehouse Publishing (New York) refer to supervisors being called, competent and committed

30 Siegel 2007 The mindful brain: reflection and attachment in the cultivation of wellbeing WW Norton, NY
Part 5: Planning to meet

At some stage you will meet with a new potential professional supervisor. This might happen because you are looking to start a first professional supervision arrangement, or because you are looking to change professional supervisors.

Here are some issues to consider prior to that first meeting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What has prompted me to contact the supervisor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I am looking for in a supervisor (and not looking for)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any concerns that I need to clarify/discuss about supervision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will I say to explain how I learn best?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is helpful to share about my current placement context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I want to focus on at the moment?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 6: First meeting

Here is a list of some possible issues to explore at the first meeting with a potential professional supervisor. It is important to discuss them when you and the supervisor are deciding whether to commence working together. This is part of negotiating a supervision arrangement.

It is usual for a professional supervision covenant/contract/agreement to be written that includes reference to many of these topics.

- What is the supervisor’s understanding of the purpose of professional supervision in the context of ministry?
- Overview of the supervisor’s practice of professional supervision (including whether they have participated in supervision training)
- Supervisor’s understanding and knowledge of the UCA including structure, Basis of Union, Code of Ethics, Regulations
- The place of theological reflection in professional supervision
- What is the supervisor’s understanding of the supervision relationship and the characteristics of an effective supervision relationship?
- Role, tasks and expectations of the supervisor and supervisee
- Connection between professional supervision, supervisor and presbytery
- Confidentiality and limitations of confidentiality (including when and how the supervisor might connect with presbytery – eg supervision coordinator, Presbytery Minister)
- What to do if there are situations of conflict that you are unable to resolve (such as faith, family, congregation, council, agency, colleague)
- What happens if there is a breach of the Code of Ethics?
- Availability, frequency, length of session (including how to cancel a session, what happens if I do not arrive at the session, contact between sessions), payment/fees
- Where will a session take place – what about telephone? Skype?
- Preparing and planning for a session
- Who sets the agenda?
- What topics might be explored in supervision?
- Multiple roles in the church and their potential impact on professional supervision (including dealing with conflict of interest)
- What about privacy of personal information/records
- How and when will feedback and evaluation occur?
- How does the supervisor learn and grow as a supervisor?
- Under what circumstances might a professional supervision arrangement end, and how would it be ended?
Part 7: Reflecting on your experience of professional supervision

Getting the most out of professional supervision includes a supervisee actively and regularly reviewing and reflecting on their experience of professional supervision and the supervisor.

Reflection on supervision needs to consider:

- The purpose of professional supervision (to enhance the quality of your ministry and assist you to maintain the boundaries of pastoral relationships)
- The relationship between you and the supervisor
- The focus of sessions
- The process of supervision
- The skill of the supervisor and their capacity to work with you
- Whether you are getting the most out of professional supervision
- What needs to change to make professional supervision a better learning experience for you

Using the 'supervisee glasses' think about how you are going to reflect on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the professional supervision you are receiving.

A final word

Getting the most out of professional supervision happens when you:

- Understand the purpose of professional supervision
- Are willing and open to receive professional supervision
- Develop a relationship with the supervisor that is characterised by trust, integrity, honesty and openness
- Expect competency and skill from your supervisor
- Use supervision time well – pray, prepare, plan and participate
- Review and reflect on your experience of the effectiveness of the professional supervision and the practice of the supervisor to ensure your ministry grows and develops

Remember:

As you get more experienced in receiving professional supervision you will grow in your understanding of how to get the most out of it 32.

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32 Supervision literature identifies that across time people develop as supervisees (they develop as supervisors as well!) Leach and Paterson 2010 Pastoral Supervision SCM Press, UK; Davys and Beddoe 2010 Best Practice in Professional Supervision Jessica Kingsley Publications, UK; Carroll and Gilbert 2011 On Being a Supervisee: creating learning partnerships Psychoz Oz Publications Australia
APPENDIX 1:

Some definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialist areas of supervision practice</th>
<th>Line of accountability</th>
<th>Functions*</th>
<th>Nature of the supervision relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial supervision</td>
<td>Internal to an organization where a line manager has the responsibility of ensuring the requirements of the organization are fulfilled</td>
<td>Administration Support Education</td>
<td>Management relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educative supervision (student supervision)</td>
<td>The educative supervisor has responsibility for ensuring the student has opportunities for practice experience and learning. The educative supervisor and the student are linked back to the training institution where the student has study requirements</td>
<td>Support Education</td>
<td>Student – teacher relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional supervision</td>
<td>The professional supervisor is external to the organization with no managerial responsibility or authority. The supervisor is accountable to the supervisee with whom they have a professional supervision relationship. The supervisee is accountable to their employing organization</td>
<td>Support Professional development Education</td>
<td>Collaborative relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Supervision literature also uses the language of “formative, normative and restorative” to describe the various functions of supervision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional supervision*</th>
<th>Mentoring*</th>
<th>Spiritual direction*</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose: assist the minister to maintain the boundaries of pastoral relationships and quality of ministry through reflection and education</td>
<td>Purpose: share wisdom and experience, enable reflection and provide space for learning</td>
<td>Purpose: walk with people as they seek to develop their relationship with God</td>
<td>Purpose: enable the identification and achievement of goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: the definitions used in the table above are extracts from the definitions given in the UCA Support document for the Interim Code of Ethics 1997
APPENDIX 2:

Sections of the Code of Ethics that refer to Ministers and professional supervision

**Introduction 1.9**
It is recognised that rural and isolated communities present particular difficulties in terms of professional/personal relationships; availability of supervision and access to support. This intensifies the responsibilities of presbyteries for care of such persons, and in assisting Ministers to fulfill the Code of Ethics.

**3.4 Competence (d)**
Where Ministers are forced by circumstances to provide care beyond their normal level of competence they shall:
(i) discuss this with their supervisor;

**3.5 Professionalism (c)**
Ministers have a responsibility to provide unbiased pastoral care to those with whom they disagree, and to consult their supervisor in relation to the situation.

**3.8 Self care**
Ministers shall take responsibility to:
(b) participate in supervision;

**3.9 Supervision**
(a) Ministers have a responsibility to recognize that they are also vulnerable, requiring them to maintain their professionalism in difficult circumstances.
(b) Ministers shall keep appropriate pastoral records (e.g. details of appointments and referrals and a journal of critical incidents).

(c) Professional supervision means the relationship Ministers have with another professional whereby the Minister is assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of ministry (as per the definition at the commencement of the Regulations) including competencies, time management, priorities and any difficulties arising in ministry.

(d) Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that they receive regular professional supervision. Such supervision is intended to assist Ministers to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationships and quality of ministry.

(e) Ministers shall discuss with their supervisor any ongoing situations of conflict in which they are involved in the course of their work.

(f) Where applicable, Ministers shall maintain membership requirements of any relevant professional association (e.g. psychologists or counsellors.)

**4.4 Particular relationships**
In some circumstances it will be appropriate for a Minister to cease a pastoral relationship in order to enter a particular relationship. In the event that a Minister and a person with whom they have been in a pastoral relationship identify a potential particular relationship, the Minister shall:
(b) seek advice on the appropriateness of such a particular relationship, preferably through supervision.
Supervision Covenant

Note: A copy of this document shall be to be sent to the Convenor, Pastoral Relations Committee, immediately after signing; Supervisor and Minister should each retain a copy of the document.

This covenant is between:

Minister ............................................................................................................................................

Telephone (H) ................................................................................................................................

Address ........................................................................................................................................... 

Mobile ............................................................................................................................................

Email ..............................................................................................................................................

Supervisor .........................................................................................................................................

Telephone (H) ................................................................................................................................

Address ........................................................................................................................................... 

Mobile ............................................................................................................................................

Email ..............................................................................................................................................

Supervision arrangements:

This Covenant is for the period of .......................year(s) beginning on ........................................

and concluding on ........................................... We have agreed to meet at .................................... weekly

intervals (eg every six weeks) starting on ..................................................(date)

at a fee of .........................................................................................................................................(amount in $, NA, or waived)

Signed:

(Minister) ........................................................................................................................................... Date: ............

(Supervisor) ....................................................................................................................................... Date: ............