



OPEN BAPTISTS ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

These guidelines set out the requirements for accreditation by the Open Baptists Association.

PART 1: WHAT ACCREDITATION MEANS

Accreditation by the Open Baptists Association means that the accredited person is suitable for pastoral leadership roles in Baptist churches and other organisations. An accredited person is entitled to be called a pastor.

An accredited person has been assessed against the Accreditation Standards (Part 2) and other requirements (Part 3) using the process laid out in Part 4 and continues to meet the ongoing requirements for accreditation (Part 6).

PART 2: ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

An accredited person must meet the Accreditation Standards set out below. Part 4 of these guidelines sets out the process for determining whether a person meets these standards. An extensive process of formation will normally be required in order for a person to meet these standards. Such a process of formation is set out in Part 8 of these guidelines. However, a person does not need to have followed the process set out in Part 8 to be accredited.

STANDARD 1: VOCATION

A discerned vocation for pastoral ministry that is prayerfully affirmed by a church community.

STANDARD 2: CHARACTER

Committed to and growing in:

- Love of God and others
- A commitment to the gospel and following Christ
- Honesty and integrity
- A commitment to ongoing personal spiritual development and practices, and openness to new ideas
- Compliance with the Open Baptists Code of Conduct
- Self-awareness and openness to constructive criticism

STANDARD 3: TRAINING

A Bachelor of Ministry or Bachelor of Theology degree meeting the Australian Qualification Framework Standards or an equivalent qualification is generally required. The Committee for Ministry (see Part 9 for a description of the Committee) has discretion to accept other evidence of suitable expertise in exceptional cases.



STANDARD 4: MINISTRY SKILLS

A range of ministry skills that would enable the candidate to be effective in Christian ministry, including some or all of:

- Pastoral: the ability to provide pastoral support to people in a broad range of circumstances. The ability to recognise when other professional expertise is required.
- Leadership: the ability to exercise leadership within the structures of congregational government. The ability to identify, support and develop other people in exercising ministry.
- Teaching and communication: the ability to develop and deliver sermons and other forms of teaching that nurture faith and are suitable for the intended audience.
- Liturgical: including the ability to lead public worship and prayer, and ceremonies such as funerals and (blessings of) marriages.
- Mission, evangelism and church planting.
- Ability to work as part of a team: including appointing, forming, participating in, and leading diverse teams.

STANDARD 5: COMMITMENT TO OPEN BAPTISTS' VALUES

Commitment to the principles:

- That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice, as revealed in the Scriptures, and that each Church and individual has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to seek the mind of Christ in matters of faith and practice.
- That, symbolising our participation in Christ, Christian Baptism is by water (normally by immersion) into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried and rose again the third day".
- That every church and disciple is called to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and partner in the mission of God in our world.

PART 3: OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION

In addition to the accreditation standards, an accredited person must:

- Provide a satisfactory Police Check
- Provide evidence that they/she/he satisfies requirements for working with children and/or vulnerable people under relevant State or Territory legislation.
- Demonstrate an understanding of Work Health and Safety, risk management, child safety and protection, and governance.
- Comply with requirements for ongoing development and supervision (see Part 6).



PART 4: THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The Committee will maintain strict confidentiality in handling all material provided as part of the accreditation process.

STEP 1: APPROVAL TO APPLY

All presumptive candidates must complete a screening questionnaire related to the candidate's suitability to work with children and/or vulnerable people.

Subject to satisfactory screening, applications for accreditation will be accepted from candidates who:

- Are accredited/ordained ministers in other Christian denominations or with other Baptist Associations or Unions, or
- Have completed the formation process set out in Part 8 of these guidelines.

Other potential candidates may submit a letter of no more than 500 words to the Committee for Ministry requesting approval to apply. The letter should outline why the candidate has a reasonable prospect of meeting the Accreditation Standards and other requirements for accreditation. The Committee may seek further information from the candidate but is under no obligation to grant approval to apply. The Committee will ask the presumptive candidate to complete a screening questionnaire before granting approval to apply.

STEP 2: APPLICATION

Candidates must submit evidence that they meet the accreditation standards and other requirements for accreditation.

Accredited/ordained ministers in other Christian denominations or with other Baptist Associations or Unions may use the form at Attachment A. Other candidates given approval to apply by the Committee may also use the form at Attachment A.

Where relevant, the Committee for Ministry will contact the candidate to discuss arrangements for a psychological evaluation.

Candidates who complete the process set out in Part 8 will develop the required evidence in a form suitable for submission as part of that process.

Candidates must also provide the names of three referees. Referees must not be related to the candidate or to one another, must not be people who report (directly or indirectly) to the candidate, and should normally include the leadership of the church community or church agency the candidate works for or is a part of. The Committee will have the discretion to talk to the nominated referees.

Candidates should also provide a statement from a church community affirming their vocation.

STEP 3: PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Candidates will generally be required to participate in a psychological evaluation. However, the Committee for Ministry may waive this requirement if the candidate is able to provide the results of a suitable psychological evaluation conducted in the last three years.

The evaluation will have two parts: screening and a more intensive part that will typically involve two sessions with a psychologist using an approach known as collaborative assessment. However, if a candidate has at least ten years' experience as an accredited or ordained minister in another Baptist





Association or Christian denomination, the Committee for Ministry may agree to waive the requirement for the second part.

The psychologist will provide a report from each part of the evaluation to the candidate, and a summary report, containing only information relevant to the Committee's decision, to the Committee for Ministry.

The Committee for Ministry will not disclose the contents of the reports it receives to anybody outside the Committee.

STEP 4: ASSESSMENT

The Committee for Ministry will assess each candidate against the accreditation standards and other requirements for accreditation. This assessment will include:

- Considering the documentation submitted by the candidate
- An interview with the candidate
- Considering the psychological evaluation
- Considering the comments of three referees nominated by the candidate.

STEP 5: ENDORSEMENT

If the Committee for Ministry assesses a candidate as suitable for accreditation, it will forward the candidate's name to the Board of Open Baptists for approval.

The Board will consider the Committee's recommendation and, if it agrees, recommend to a General Meeting of Open Baptists Ltd that the candidate be added to the list of accredited ministers. The candidate may then be added to the list of accredited ministers by a vote of the General Meeting.

PART 5: INTERIM ACCREDITATION

After assessing a written application and advice from referees, the Committee for Ministry may recommend to the Board that an applicant be granted interim accreditation.

Before making any such recommendation, the Committee will satisfy itself that the applicant's police checks and working with children checks (or equivalents) are current.

The recommendation may only be made if the applicant is currently, or recently, accredited by another Australian Baptist Association, no findings of misconduct have been made against them, and no alleged misconduct is being investigated.

The Committee must provide a written statement to the Board justifying the recommendation to grant interim accreditation.

The Board will consider the Committee's recommendation and may decide to grant interim accreditation for up to twelve months.

If the Board grants an applicant interim accreditation for twelve months, the Committee for Ministry may offer up to four six-month extensions of interim accreditation.





PART 6: ONGOING DEVELOPMENT AND SUPERVISION

Accredited ministers must:

- Attend regular sessions (at least six a year) with an appropriately qualified pastoral supervisor approved by the Committee for Ministry. We also encourage meetings with mentors or spiritual directors.
- Complete at least ten hours a year of appropriate professional development.
- Maintain current police checks and qualifications for working with children and vulnerable people (as required by state or territory law). If not specified by state or territory law, police checks should be renewed at the same time as working with children and vulnerable people checks. Maintain currency in understanding of creating safe spaces for children and vulnerable people.
- Be involved in a ministry that allows them to exercise and develop their capabilities under appropriate supervision.
- Participate in Open Baptists events and activities.
- Maintain an active faith.
- Submit evidence that these requirements have been satisfied to the Committee for Ministry.

PART 7: REMOVAL OF ACCREDITATION

A person may be removed from the list of accredited ministers:

- At his/her/their own request
- If she/he/they die
- If found to have committed a significant breach of the Code of Conduct
- If found guilty of a criminal offence
- If they/she/he fails to comply with the ongoing development and supervision requirements
- If he/she/they are no longer committed to the principles of the Open Baptists Association.

The process for removal of accreditation other than at death or at the person's own request is:

- The Committee for Ministry investigates the grounds for accreditation to be removed. The investigation must follow all guidelines set out in relevant Open Baptists policies.
 - The Board, on recommendation of the Committee, may suspend a person's accreditation while a concern is being investigated.
 - Where a concern about an accredited minister is brought to the Committee for Ministry by the person's employer, the employer must demonstrate that the person has been shown procedural fairness in dealing with alleged concerns before the Committee begins its investigation.
- The Committee for Ministry makes a recommendation to the Board that accreditation be removed
- The Board decides whether to remove the person from the list of accredited ministers. The Board must invite the person to address the Board before making a decision.

The person may appeal to the Board for the decision to be reversed within 6 months.



PART 8: FORMATION OF CANDIDATES FOR ACCREDITATION

The process for formation of candidates will be developed in 2024-25. Open Baptists intends that the formation process will foster creativity and self-reflection, be inclusive, and emphasise individual mentoring to tailor formation to the qualities of the candidate.

PART 9: THE COMMITTEE FOR MINISTRY

The Committee for Ministry will be appointed by the Board of Open Baptists. It will have at least five members comprising:

- A majority who are ordained or accredited by a Baptist Association or Union
- At least one trained psychologist
- At least one member who is currently an academic staff member at a theological college has experience as an academic staff member at a theological college that is acceptable to the Board.

The Board will ensure that the membership of the Committee is diverse. At least forty percent of the members will be female. The Board will consider gender diversity, people of colour, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and people with disabilities.

The Committee will have the power to co-opt temporary members to consider applications from people from diverse backgrounds. A person may serve as a temporary member of the Committee for no more than six months or three meetings (including non-consecutive periods).

The Committee's responsibilities include:

- Assessing applications for accreditation in accordance with these guidelines and making recommendations to the Board of Open Baptists
- Approving psychologists to conduct psychological evaluations as part of the assessment process
- Approving spiritual directors, mentors, and professional and pastoral supervisors as suitable to provide support and guidance for accredited ministers
- Assessing whether accredited ministers have satisfied requirements for ongoing development and supervision under Part 5 of these guidelines.
- Investigating possible grounds for accreditation to be removed and making recommendations to the Board.

