

Notes for Completing the Church of England Application Form

For some clergy, having to complete a job application form departs from traditional methods of recruitment and provokes uncertainties and worries. For applicants from outside the United Kingdom, the process may be unfamiliar and they may be significantly disadvantaged. These notes are provided to help candidates complete the standard application form to the best of their ability.

The most important thing when filling in the form is to put yourself in the place of the person who is likely to be reading and using it. While in some cases, short-listing will be undertaken purely by the patron, or by the patron and bishop's representative together, for most vacancies short-listing will include lay representatives elected by the parishes and possibly representatives of the deanery. This wider circulation should be assumed in completing the application form, and the fact that some of those involved in short-listing will be doing so for their first time. You are advised to avoid any terminology, jargon, acronyms or descriptions that require inside knowledge.

It is very strongly recommended that any application be typewritten, since in a society less accustomed to handwriting, there has been deterioration both in the readability of what is handwritten and also in willingness to spend significant time deciphering handwritten text. The standard application form is available electronically (eg on the diocesan website), so that it can be completed, printed off and signed. Those applying for more than one post will save significant time in this way, as unvarying parts of the application form will be already completed for any further applications.

The following notes relate to each section of the application form in turn.

SECTION 1

At present it is not possible for candidates ordained by a woman bishop to be considered for appointments in the Church of England, on account of the present diversity of practice over the ordination of women to the episcopate. Candidates ordained outside the UK will require the permission of the Archbishop of Canterbury before a bishop can license them to a post in the Church of England. It is not normally possible to consider candidates from denominations that are not part of the Anglican Communion. If you wish to check whether you can be licensed to a post in England you may contact the Lay Assistant to the Archbishop of Canterbury at andrew.nunn@lampal.c-of-e.org.uk

Candidates should also be aware that where the application pack or advertisement for a Church of England post refers to resolutions A or B being in force, the effect is to restrict applications to male priests.

In giving a precise date (eg date of birth), please give the month in letters rather than numbers, to avoid confusion between English and American conventions as to how dates are given in numeric form.

SECTION 2

This is the section which should give the appointments panel insight into the nature and range of the ministry and responsibilities with which you are currently engaged. It is therefore important to answer the second part of the question: some idea of congregational numbers, parish size, churchmanship (that may be different from your own) and key areas of ministry is essential.

SECTION 3

Candidates applying from overseas are recommended to include evidence of proficiency in written and spoken English, and should not assume that a well-written application form will be considered evidence of fluency in English.

SECTION 4

Please note the final sentence in subsection (i): five or six words can give a brief description of the context within which a particular post was held.

Subsection (v) is often answered quite poorly. The appointments panel needs to read something about both the main steps along your personal journey and what lasting mark they have had upon you. A good answer will give some sense of what inspires and motivates you, what you are passionate about within theology and spirituality. A poor answer will be a general expression about your flexibility, eg 'having served in a variety of parishes I can honestly say I am comfortable with most things that are not extreme.'

SECTION 5

It is worth checking with the application pack and perhaps emphasising those responsibilities and interests or recreations that may be indications of your particular suitability for the post in question.

SECTION 6

It is now uncommon for a parish or patron to wish to exclude candidates who have been divorced and remarried or were/are married to partners who have been divorced, but you should be aware that some would take that view.

SECTION 7

Please note that health includes mental as well as physical conditions. Candidates should be full and frank about their health status in this question. Where these have impacted in the past upon work (eg depression, nervous breakdown), they will almost certainly be picked up by the reference process. Doubts may be cast over the honesty and integrity of a candidate who does not refer to a health condition which is mentioned by a referee. If you are in any doubt as to whether or not a medical condition or history should be declared, it is acceptable to leave the section blank and provide full details in a covering letter to the appointing patron and bishop.

SECTION 8

This is the most important section in determining which candidates are called for interview. It is the section most discussed by appointment panels, and the section in which most frequently candidates do not give as good account of themselves as they would wish.

As you need to make clear to the panel how your experience and passions in ministry match with the specifications for which the parish is looking, the applicants' pack is crucial for answering this question, and your answer should be systematically framed around, for example, the bullet-points or similar within the pack or advertisement.

Common mistakes include:

- **Not referring to the applicants' pack.**
- **Referring to the applicants' pack only after giving personal reasons for moving (eg geography, family, etc). Do give such reasons, but briefly, at the end.**
- **Giving answers that are inadequately based on evidence. Eg 'I share your passion for youth ministry.' You need to provide evidence that shows that you can turn your passion into action.**
- **Telling the parish what a wonderful place it is. The parish does not need your affirmation of its virtues at this stage; rather it needs to see how you fit in with its requirements.**

There is no need to be coy or diffident. The best evidence that God will use you in some way in the future is that God has done so in the past.

It is important for us to know both what you can directly attribute to your own involvement and what has been the product of those groups and structures of which you have been part.

SECTION 9

Most candidates offer a good range of referees. Most references are not taken up until after short-listing.

The Clergy Appointments Adviser is an officer based in London who holds details of clergy seeking positions within the Church of England. The adviser is able to interview clergy and circulate their details across all dioceses, and collects and collates references so that referees do not need to be troubled on each occasion. Particular advice can be given to those applying from overseas.

NOTES

The 'verification of the signed statement concerning criminal record and other relevant matters', completed by those called for interview, will involve the bishop's representative seeing an Enhanced Certificate of Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Those who are deemed to present an unacceptable risk to children or vulnerable adults will not be admitted to a post. Checking of overseas candidates in the interests of child protection will depend on the particular systems in place in the country of origin.