

CERTIFICATE IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES ES4411

The work of a Church Administrator

Written by

John Truscott



Published by **St John's Extension Studies**, Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3RL
and the **UK Church Administrator Network (UCAN)**
69 Sandridge Road, St Albans AL1 4AG

Original version: February 2014
This update (v2): September 2016

Introduction to the module

- 1 The ten units
- 2 Intended students
- 3 The support of your church
- 4 Help from others
- 5 Aims for the module
- 6 Key outcomes
- 7 Practical exercises
- 8 Order of units and written assignments
- 9 Moodle
- 10 Background reading
- 11 Your module folder
- 12 Time taken
- 13 Terminology and capitalisation
- 14 The author
- 15 The UK Church Administrator Network (UCAN)

There are separate papers for:

The written assignments (*pages 17-24*)

Course material Units 1-10 (*ten separate papers: pages 25-184*)

1: The ten units

S1, etc. show the **Study** sections and A1, etc. the **Personal Applications**. This listing shows the appropriate references to the OCR Business and Administration textbook for NVQ Level 3 and to the author's resources on his website. Here 'A' stands for Article, 'TN' for Training Notes and 'HC' for Health-checks. See section 10 'Background reading'.

	OCR Business and Administration	Author's website	Page
Unit 1: Different roles	N/A	A6, A8, TN40, TN72, TN73, TN77	25
S1	Defining a Church Administrator post		
S2	Nine possible purposes		
S3	Job descriptions		
S4	One year aims		
A1	Your role		
A2	Your job description		
A3	Your aims for this year		
Unit 2: Character and people-skills	Q328, Q329	A27, A33, TN49, TN60, TN68 TN77, TN86	42
S1	The person profile		
S2	Witness through reception		
S3	How you come across		
S4	Customer care		
A1	Meditation		
A2	Your person profile		
A3	Customer expectations		
A4	Dealing with difficult people		
Unit 3: Biblical viewpoint	N/A	A15, TN21, TN48, TN72/73, HC4,5	59
S1	The place of administration		
S2	The purpose of a church		
S3	Biblical texts to study		
A1	Your church's health		
A2	Your application		
A3	Someone to help you		
Unit 4: The office base	Q303	A33/34, TN33, TN46, TN85	75
S1	Purpose		
S2	Location and layout		
S3	Security		
S4	Education		
A1	The purpose of your office		
A2	Be a consultant		
A3	Risk analysis		
A4	Environmental concerns		

Unit 5: Being well organised	Q301	A27, TN11, TN23, TN43, TN62 TN74, TN84	93
S1	Accuracy, reliability and memory		
S2	Setting standards		
S3	Diary and work planning		
S4	Tools to use		
A1	A time of reflection and prayer		
A2	Work with a mentor		
A3	A learning log		
Unit 6: Working with colleagues	Q305	A32, TN15, TN20, TN31, TN36 TN41, TN60, TN79	109
S1	Know yourself		
S2	Manage your team		
S3	Understand your line-manager		
A1	Understanding yourself		
A2	Managing others		
A3	Working with the staff team		
Unit 7: Principles of communication	Q309, Q312	A9, A11, A14, A21, A29, TN2 TN38/39, TN63, TN82, TN93	125
S1	The communications hub		
S2	Choice of media		
S3	Structure, legibility and colour		
A1	Church etiquette		
A2	Your church website		
A3	Improving the notice-sheet		
Unit 8: Systems and structures	Q318, Q322	A4, A24, TN45, TN58, TN61, TN71, TN88 + specialist topics	141
S1	Organising systems and events		
S2	Church meetings		
S3	Your own specialist topic		
A1	Research data		
A2	Minutes of meetings		
A3	Your own specialist topic		
Unit 9: Handling files	N/A	A36/37, TN53, TN57	156
S1	A theological reflection		
S2	The concept of sorting		
S3	The concept of filing		
S4	Electronic applications		
A1	Your sorting and filing principles		
A2	An office clear-out		

Unit 10: Development

Q302

TN4, TN17, TN32, TN54, TN91 171
HC4,5

- S1 A creative approach
- S2 Personal development
- S3 Thinking future possibility
- A1 Your personal vision
- A2 Your self-evaluation
- A3 Review of the module

It is not possible to include everything in one ten-unit module and at NVQ Level 3 what has been omitted includes matters to do with Human Resources management, employment law, charity law and trusteeship, finance and giving.

Church of England Administrators may be responsible for issues such as graveyards, wedding and funeral registers and other issues of ecclesiastical law, whereas other Administrators may not deal with any of these areas, so a section of Unit 8 allows such matters to be studied rather than including them in the main text.

This module is not the place to tackle pastoral issues within the Minister / Administrator relationship.

2: Intended students

This is a ten-unit module leading to an award from St John's College and also giving 20 credits towards the St John's Certificate in Christian Studies.

This module is designed for Christians who are employed by a local church of any denomination or none to work as an Administrator in some form. The work base is assumed throughout to be a dedicated church office.

Many people in such posts will be in employment that is somewhere between half and full time and a majority will probably work on their own, perhaps with some part-time volunteer assistance. But some will be employed in larger churches and be part of an administrative staff team.

A few people may undertake this responsibility without remuneration, but the module is not designed for traditional office-holders such as a Church Secretary or a Church Warden (see note later in this introduction about denominational language).

The module can also be taken by someone who aspires to be a Church Administrator but may not be in such employment at this moment. In this case it will be necessary to have familiarity with the workings of at least one church office, preferably at their own church, so that they can apply the material to that specific operation.

The material is set at NVQ Level 3 and so assumes a post at a level of responsibility that you might expect from post titles such as Parish Secretary, Church Office Administrator, Office Manager, PA to the Minister, etc. rather than titles such as, on the one hand, Administrative Assistant or Receptionist or, at a different level, Director of Operations or Business Manager.

3: The support of your church

We hope that your church will support you in taking this module. You should speak to your Minister at an early stage and show this introduction to him or her.

We hope that your church will:

- cover all or part of the cost of the module (£270) and your expenses (course book to buy, travel to other churches for assignments, other materials to purchase);
- allow you some time off your work as Administrator to at least help you cope with the study and assignments required (most students find it hard to make the necessary time for study without this);
- offer advice and information (eg. about commentaries to study for Bible passages, churches to consider visiting for relevant practical assignments, and possible mentors when suggested);
- encourage you in your studies in word and deed.

It is important that you have your Minister's backing for taking this module, if at all possible. It is our hope that you will be a more effective Church Administrator for having studied this material. You will also have St John's College credits that should be recognised by other churches in the future.

4: Help from others

Some of the exercises depend on finding other people to work with you in some way. It would therefore be wise to seek advice from your Minister or others as to who might be happy to support you in this way, seeing the value that they could bring to what you are doing. You might like to plan the following in advance so that you are not delayed on a practical exercise while you try to find someone to help you.

- Unit 1 Exercises A2, A3 – your line manager
- Unit 2 Exercise A2 – two people to help with person profile

- Unit 3 Exercise A3 – someone to talk through your answers to A2 on biblical material
- Unit 4 Exercise A2 – visiting another church office*
- Unit 5 Exercise A2 – working with a mentor*
- Unit 6 Exercise A1, A3 – three people to help you understand yourself, your staff team
- Unit 10 Exercise A1, A2 – vision and assessment with a mentor*
- Written assignments – Assignment 3 requires the investigation of two other church offices to extend Unit 4 Exercise A2 above.*

Items marked * will need the most planning and thought.

Several of the other exercises may require you to seek advice from others, but these are the main ones where you need to find people to give you time and their experience to help you.

5: Aims for the module

- 1 To enable those employed by local churches as Administrators and others to come to a clear understanding of the role of and opportunities for local church administration together with its challenges, set within a biblical framework.
- 2 To help such people to improve their business capability and performance in a number of skills required for such work including self-organisation, working collaboratively, desk management and communication.
- 3 Within all the above to encourage participants to develop a creative mind in devising appropriate systems and solving problems within any required denominational structures, rather than simply following traditional office methodology for its own sake.

and as a result:

- 1 To set a standard of achievement for Church Administrators in the UK that will be recognised by a wide range of churches.
- 2 To see the work of church administration become recognised as a discipline worthy of analysis and study.

6: Key outcomes

Those who successfully complete the ten units of this module can expect to:

- 1 Be energised and encouraged in their work with a renewed understanding of the subject of church administration as a valid, strategic and spiritual ministry.
- 2 Be better equipped to act in this role with a professional understanding of issues and ways of tackling the kind of difficulties regularly faced in such work.
- 3 Understand the need for Christian character to play a foundational role in their work so that they see their ministry as Christian service as well as daily employment.
- 4 Be enabled to work collaboratively with church leaders to free them for their priority ministries while handling the church's daily administrative requirements in a professional and effective way.

7: Practical exercises

The **Study** section in each unit includes a number of exercises. These should never be overlooked or treated lightly as they are designed to earth the study material.

The same is true for the **Personal application** section in each unit. Students will be expected to complete each of these. Approximate timings are provided to give some indication of how much should be done within each. But we would expect you to go into greater detail or to allow more time for the work in any which particularly interest you.

It is vital that in each you complete the whole exercise. So, if you are asked to consider something and then write a short report, it is the report that matters (and which ensures you have done the considering!). Never think you can leave out the last instruction – that is usually the one that will earth and enable you to take in the research that has preceded it.

If you are struggling with anything, consult your tutor who will offer help.

8: Order of units and written assignments

There are three written assignments to be submitted to your tutor for marking at various points throughout the module. So that these make sense for the material you have covered, we recommend you follow the ten units through in the order given. But if you get stuck on one unit it is quite permissible to go on to the next one and return to the previous one later,

provided you complete all of Units 1-3 before attempting Assignment 1, all of Units 1-8 before attempting Assignment 2, and the whole module before submitting Assignment 3.

If you prefer to start with the biblical material in Unit 3 rather than the purpose of the post in Unit 1 (skim read both to get a feel of the content), it is quite in order to follow in order: Unit 3, Unit 1, Unit 2, Assignment 1, etc.

The three Assignments to be submitted to your tutor are described in detail in the separate 'Written assignments' paper.

9: Moodle

Moodle is an Open Source Course Management System (CMS), also known as a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It has become popular among educators around the world as a tool for creating online dynamic web sites for their students.

This module uses Moodle to augment your solo learning environment with the opportunity to inter-relate with other students currently studying the material. You are able to use it as a chat room to discuss aspects of your learning such as:

- the study material in each unit;
- ideas for external sources to investigate, online resources to investigate and books to read;
- the practical assignments in each unit;
- the three assignments for assessment;
- sharing how your church is helping you (or not) to undertake the module;
- finding another church with which to exchange office visits;
- encouraging each other to keep going.

There are both chat rooms and forums for each of the ten units and one general one, all of them available to each student.

As our experience of running the module broadens, your tutor may add extra material or ideas to supplement the written units and to encourage feedback. So although you will undertake the module on your own, you will also be part of an online community of others who are working on the material at the same time as you are.

Moodle was completely revised by St John's in 2016 and we lost all the content up until then as a result. We are relaunching it in the autumn of 2016 and hope to grow it again to the valuable tool it had become.

10: Background reading

There are very few books available from a UK perspective that deal specifically with the subject of local church administration as a whole, and yet a confusingly large number of (secular) books that deal with some of the specific skills covered in the module (such as communication). Books that deal with church legal and structural issues tend to be written for the Church of England and issues here differ markedly between denominations.

Having said that, the recommendation is that candidates study from the following five broad categories:

1. The standard book and website for this module

Students will be expected to purchase and study the standard book for this module:

Sutherland, Jon & Diane. 2011. **OCR Business and administration. NVQ Level 3** (Hodder Education). ISBN 978 1 444 142 488.

This is a standard textbook from the business world which provides a helpful background to the more specific issues of managing a church office. Seven of the ten units in this module include one or more units to study from this book. It is available from any good bookshop or from Amazon.

Students will also be expected to read a range of Articles and sets of Training Notes from the author's website at <http://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources> which give a specifically church-based perspective on the issues being studied. All of these are available for downloading and/or printing out without charge.

2. Church and charity structures and management

Students will also be expected to access books that deal with the specific details of working in a church and charity environment. Those who work in a Church of England church should consider the following:

Behrens, James. (latest edition) 2014. **Practical church management: a guide for every parish** (Gracewing). This gives a wide overview as seen by a lawyer. It covers church people, church life, church property and church finance.

There are also a range of shorter books that can be studied with profit. Examples include:

MacMorran, Kenneth and Briden, Timothy. (latest edition) 2010. **Handbook for Church Wardens and Parochial Church Councillors** (Continuum). A standard textbook on how a Church of England parish church is run.

Pitchford, John. (latest edition) 2008. ***An ABC for the PCC: a handbook for Church Council members*** (Continuum). A more popular book covering a range of issues on an alphabetical basis.

Dudley, Martin and Rounding, Virginia. 2004. ***The parish survival guide*** (SPCK)
Dudley, Martin. (latest edition) 2009. ***Churchwardens – a survival guide*** (SPCK).

Nelson, John (ed.). 1996. ***Management and ministry*** (Canterbury Press). A collection of essays on a more managerial level from the MODEM organisation.

Those working in Baptist and independent churches should study

Tole, Rachel. 2006. ***Nothing spiritual about chaos*** (Baptist Union). A short book outlining some of the administrative issues faced by a Baptist Church Secretary

There is a range of books for the (secular) charity market that will be relevant too. For example see the resources available from the Directory of Social Change at <http://www.dsc.org.uk/Publications>. These are quality textbooks covering issues that churches are dealing with as voluntary organisations themselves. Look in particular at the sections on 'Information and communication' and 'Management and governance'.

Then there will be a range of materials from your own denomination or stream, or resources from denominational websites. For example, the Baptist Union site at <http://www.baptist.org.uk/resources/bugb-online-store.html> has links to materials on 'Leadership' and on 'Admin' that will be relevant. Also the section of the website for Church Secretaries at <http://www.baptist.org.uk/church-secretaries.html> has a range of articles and downloads, several of which you will need if working in a church office.

3. Bible commentaries

In Unit 3 in particular you will be expected to do some serious Bible study, but this module assumes an open Bible on your desk for several of the units. To help you, you should expect to make use of commentaries. If you do not own a range of these, you might like to take advice from your Minister and then, possibly, to borrow from him or her or to use any specialist library in your area. But to help you, we give here three series of Bible commentaries that we recommend at different levels.

Serious but accessible academic commentary series

The New International Commentary on the Old Testament / New Testament currently edited by Robert L Hubbard Jr (OT) and Gordon D Fee (NT) published by Eerdmans for those who would like to make a serious investigation of the passages that are recommended.

Mid-range academic commentary series

The Sacra Pagina series edited by Daniel J Harrington published by the Liturgical Press provide helpful interpretations of passages.

Entry-level commentary series

Many students will be familiar with The Bible Speaks Today series edited by Alec Motyer (OT) and John Stott (NT).

For this module a one volume commentary will not give enough detail, and devotional or daily use commentaries such as the 'Everyone' series by Tom Wright are not really suitable.

You might also like to study passages in more than one Bible translation, so NIV, NRSV and others may be helpful.

Another tool you may need is a Bible concordance, whether in print or online. A concordance gives you every Bible reference for any given word. This would be helpful in Unit 3. Your Minister will be able to advise you if you do not already possess one.

4. Particular organisational skills

Students who wish to focus on one or two specific applications from the module would find it more helpful to study texts on these specific units. As examples:

Communication: Thomas, Richard. (out of print). ***An introduction to church communication*** (Lynx).

Buildings: Durran, Maggie. 2004. ***Making church buildings work*** (Canterbury Press).

Self-organisation: Allen, David. 2002. ***Getting things done*** (Piatkus), which many church leaders have found helpful though not written for a Christian context.

5. Sets of papers on a creative approach to organisation

There are a number of booklets in the Grove Series that cover specific issues: ***How to worship with data projection*** (W192), ***An introduction to managing yourself*** (Y20), ***Loving volunteers*** (L3), ***Decluttering*** (S97). Most of the various series are aimed at clergy but titles such as these are well worth obtaining and are not expensive. Browse at www.grovebooks.co.uk.

If in your church's archive you can find sets of materials published by Administry in the 1980s and 1990s many are still well worth studying as practical guides to a wide range of church life.

11: Your module folder

You are advised to create a 'module folder'. You may prefer this to be a hard-back notebook which you write in, but it is probably better for this to be a set of sheets punched and held in a ring- or other binder. By using section dividers you can then keep material in order for each of the ten units and add to it whenever you wish.

The idea is to create this as you progress through the units, using it for the following content:

- 1 Notes you make yourself; highlights or summaries from the material presented in each unit.
- 2 Your output from the exercises included in the study section of each unit.
- 3 Notes on the books you read related to each unit. In particular you should keep reasonably detailed notes on your reading of the OCR book for the module as this will provide a different perspective on each topic from the material presented here.
- 4 All the output you prepare for the personal applications in each unit.
- 5 Your three main written assignments (which need to be submitted in typescript or electronic form for marking and so not in a fixed book).
- 6 Materials you have downloaded and printed out from websites.

You will gain far more from this module by taking the trouble to prepare such a folder in a format that you can then keep and refer back to. We recommend you set this up with any necessary purchases before you start on the material.

You are asked to submit a list of contents of your folder to your tutor after both Unit 5 and Unit 10 so we can check you have filled it with at least the items listed in the units and discuss with you your progress on reading and practical exercises in each unit.

12: Time taken

There is an 18 months limit in which you have to complete the whole module (or pay an additional fee) but we recommend that you aim to finish it within twelve months of starting. We assume you have a busy life as a Church Administrator and you may have to combine this with family responsibilities. It would be ideal if your church invested in your training by not only covering the cost of undertaking this study but by allowing you some paid time each week in which to work at it, even if this is only a part of the total time you need. But there will probably be some, sadly, whose churches will not take this view.

We suggest that, to complete in 12 months you should aim to have submitted Assignment 1 (after Unit 3) within 4 months of starting, and Assignment 2 (after Unit 8) within 10 months.

Each unit is shown with a timescale of 12 hours which would mean **five hours per week would cover the whole module in a year**, allowing breaks at Christmas, Easter and the summer but also time to complete the three written assignments and extend some of the units if you need to do so or if you find specific issues you wish to research further.

At the start of each unit you are given a rough idea of how to divide 12 hours between the study section, background reading and the personal application section. In the application section each exercise is given a target time, but these are only broad indications. Different people work at very different speeds.

In all this the point is not just to read the material and tick the box, as it were, but to give yourself time to ponder all that is said, to reflect on how it impacts your own ministry, to take your own notes and to talk it through with others.

We want to support and encourage you, especially those unused for many years to courses of study. We hope this module will prove to be a delight, not a burden nor something that gives you feelings of guilt if you slip behind your targets.

13: Terminology and capitalisation

The subject of church administration involves studying structures and using a language, both of which differ between Christian denominations. This module will, for the most part, either seek to use general terms that each denomination can apply to their structures and usage or give varying examples from different denominations.

For example, the main governance body for a church is usually referred to as the Church Council. Students should then consider this to refer to, depending on their tradition, the Parochial Church Council (PCC), the Elders or Deacons, the Trustees, the Kirk Session or Committee, or whatever.

At other times examples might refer to office-holders such as Church Secretary (a term used by Baptist and other churches) or Church Warden (a Church of England office). Examples from more than one denomination will be used in any such lists.

Note also that 'church' will be given a capital C when the word relates to the Church of Christ at large (or the name of a specific church) and a small c when it refers to a local church in general. So: *At St John's Church we believe that all churches should have a similar purpose based on the Church's role as set out in the New Testament.*

Similarly the word 'unit' will be capitalised when relating to a specific unit in this module but not when used in general. *Look back to Unit 5 and then check out the two units that follow.*

'Church Administrator' has a capital C and A for a post of this title. 'Administrator' has a small when used as a general term referring to any kind of administrator but will have a capital A if it relates to any kind of official Church Administrator. *The Church Administrator has a team of volunteer administrators. The same principle is extended to other offices too. The Treasurer paid the bills on time like any financial officer should.*

14: The author

John Truscott has spent over 35 years in church administration. He was the first executive Administrator at a large London church and then, in 1981, set up Administry, an organisation that sought to promote the use of God's gifts of administration within UK churches. As part of this he developed a network of employed Church Administrators in the 1980s but Administry was better known for its innovative publishing programme, and for a developing training and then consultancy ministry.

He moved on in 1999 to become an independent church consultant and trainer working with churches throughout the UK as he sought to champion the ministry of creative organisation. In 2009 he established the UK Church Administrator Network (UCAN) as part of his work to replace the earlier Administry network which had closed down a few years earlier. Membership has grown steadily since then to over 1,250 today. This module is jointly sponsored by St John's College and UCAN.

John has also written the Good Book College's distance learning course on Administration which is designed for anyone involved in or interested in church organisation in any way. The St John's / UCAN module is much more clearly aimed at those employed by a local church and working out of a church office.

John and his wife Eleanor live in St Albans where John is a Licensed Reader at a local Anglican church. Their daughter Ruth is married to Jon, as Associate Vicar in Cambridge and they have three children. Their son Andrew, working as an engineer in Manchester, is married to Nicola. They have two young children and are members of an independent church in South Manchester.

15: The UK Church Administrator Network (UCAN)

The network was established in 2009 and had grown to over 1,250 members by September 2016. The aim is to establish it as an independent charity by the end of 2017 when John will hand over to others.

It is designed for anyone employed by a local church in an administrative capacity, part-time or full time at any level. The network includes Directors of Operation, Church Business Managers, Church Office Administrators, Parish Secretaries, Ministers' PAs, Administrative Assistants, etc.

About 200 of these members hold 'senior manager' positions in their churches (such as Director of Operations). The network covers the majority of the largest Anglican and Baptist churches in the country and an increasing number of Independent, New and other streams. But many members come from small and medium-sized congregations of all denominations where they act as part-time Office Administrator, Parish Secretary or Minister's PA. UCAN is for everyone employed by a church in any administrative capacity.

Aims

The aims include

- to enable Administrators to network with each other;
- to co-ordinate specialist events;
- to increase professionalism;
- to provide an advice service; and
- to help people know they are not alone in this vital but often understated ministry.

But there is also the vision of educating the whole Church in the spiritual value of such appointments and providing a national resource, so that leaders can be set free for their priorities and churches handle their administration effectively and to a high standard. The plan is to work with those already organising denominational, local and other events for Church Administrators and to give this movement a national profile.

So far

UCAN has:

- an online database of all its members to promote local initiatives and networking;
- local groups being established around the UK;
- a membership of over 1,250 rising steadily;
- annual 'Cutting Edge' events for 'senior manager' Administrators (alternating day and residential conferences);

- Area Training Days around the UK;
- specialist IT training days;
- a growing range of online resources for members only;
- a bimonthly Update e-letter with news, resources and specialist information;
- regular news via Twitter and Facebook;
- a detailed remuneration survey results available free to all UCAN members.

We strongly recommend that all course students join UCAN (if eligible) if they are not already members.

Now read the paper 'The written assignments'.