

The written assignments

Introduction

Students are required to submit three written assignments for marking by their tutor (listed here as their 'assessor'). These are in addition to the practical exercises included in each of the units within the module. These three are as follows.

Assignment 1

A self-reflection exercise of no more than 1,000 words
To be submitted once Units 1-3 have been completed.

Assignment 2

The main essay for the module of about 2,500 words
To be submitted once Units 1-8 have been completed.

Assignment 3

A report on visits to two other church offices of no more than 1,500 words
To be submitted once all units have been completed.

Your assessor will give you a grade on each of these (explained in St John's papers) and add some comment on your submission. All the tutors for this module keep in close touch with each other on their marking so that grades are given consistently. This paper explains the three assignments in more detail.

A summary of the assignments for the module including the timing of their completion is given in the table on the next page. Keep all this in mind as you tackle each of the module's units. For example, in Assignment 2 there is a hint to all students to be preparing for this as you study each of Units 1 to 8.

IMPORTANT: You will lose marks if you fail to address issues specified in the assignments or if you go significantly over the word-count. There is further advice on how to undertake this work on the UCAN distance learning webpage and students are strongly advised to study this before beginning work on each assignment. See also the St John's document, 'Study skills guide' for more general points.

As well as these written assignments you are asked to send your tutor, after both Unit 5 and Unit 10, a one-page listing of what you have put so far in your module folder

	Assignment 1	Assignment 2	Assignment 3
Outline of the assignment	Self-reflection on 'the principle of release'	Main essay: compare and contrast office management in commercial and church settings	Report for your church: report of visits to two other church offices
When best written	After Unit 3	After Unit 8	At any point after Unit 4 but only to be completed and submitted after Unit 10
Number of words	1,000	2,500	1,500
When to start preparations	Have this assignment in mind as you study both Units 1 and 3	This essay is based on the whole module to date; have it in mind as you read each section in the main textbook	Application A2 in Unit 4 can form part of this assignment so be aware at that point

Assignment 1: Self-reflection

To follow Unit 3. Allow 5 hours or so split between reflection, research and writing up. Do not hurry this assignment.

The following statement might be termed 'the principle of release':

The appointment of gifted administrators to official posts in churches has a fundamental aim to release Ministers and other spiritual leaders for the work for which they were ordained/commissioned/appointed and, as a result, churches can be true to their purpose and grow.

- 1 Reflect carefully on this statement by identifying and listing specific instances in your own work (or aspects of your post) where you have been conscious of this principle in operation.

- 2 Consider what might have been done to help it to work even better in the cases you have identified, both through your own actions and through what your Minister and other leaders did or did not do.
- 3 Reflect too on times (or aspects of your appointment) when the principle was not achieved and list what went wrong or failed to match up to what might have been possible.
- 4 Consider both the presenting reasons and the underlying causes why the result in 3 fell short of what might have been achieved. What practical actions might be put in hand to improve matters in future?
- 5 Write up your reflections as a list of numbered points under headings appropriate to the four areas numbered above, with brief comment in note form on each one. The whole should not exceed 1,000 words. Submit this to your tutor for assessment.

The assessor will be looking to see what you have learnt from this self-reflection for your future ministry, whether you have the ability to improve matters yourself or whether you feel it is out of your hands.

Your assessor will be looking for evidence that you have taken the following points into account.

- How the idea of 'purpose' (S2.3 in Unit 1) works out in your own case.
- Acts 6.1-7 covered in S3 in Unit 3 (study this passage carefully in different translations and with commentaries) related to your own appointment.
- Other biblical passages mentioned in this module or chosen by you that have had an impact on you in your present responsibilities.
- Any books or articles that you have read that bear on this theme (cite sources if you quote these). For Anglicans: The Ordinal* (see <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/ordinal/priests.aspx> and the wording that follows the heading 'The liturgy of ordination' as spoken by the bishop) and the gifting and role of your own Minister (whatever his or her denomination)

*This is a Church of England term for the wording used at the ordination of Deacons and Priests and, in this instance, could still form the basis for this point by those from other denominations. Do not worry about Anglican terminology if this is strange to you - Ordinands are those to be ordained, for Priests take Ministers or Pastors – instead focus on what their role is to be. But, if you come from a different

denomination, you may prefer to find the equivalent wording for those ordained or appointed as congregational leaders and work from that instead. Hence the next bullet.

- For non-Anglicans: if you decide not to follow the idea in the previous bullet point, take instead the ministerial job description of your church's Minister and consider that instead. Or any other literature from your denomination or stream that defines the purpose of a church leader.
- In any case, you might like to talk to your Minister about their role definition or job description and where they feel they need to be freed from inappropriate tasks to focus on their priorities.

Hint to all students: you will do well if you read the above instructions carefully and then follow them!

Assignment 2: Main essay

To follow Unit 8. Allow at least 10 hours perhaps spread over some days.

By now you have studied the majority of a standard textbook on commercial office management alongside material on issues that affect the work of running a church's office. Compare and contrast these two disciplines under a number of headings and discuss in each case what each discipline can learn from the other. Your essay should be about 2,500 words in length. If you add references, these do not need to be included in the word count.

Notes 1 and 2 below suggest some possible headings that you might want to select, but do not necessarily restrict yourself to these. A quick scan through the NVQ textbook may well suggest others from the topics that are covered there.

In this case the assessor will be seeking to discover how much you have understood of the main textbook when that is placed alongside material that is church-specific. You will do well if you demonstrate evidence that you have studied a range of material within the textbook and a variety of church-specific writing.

Notes to help you research and write your 'compare and contrast' essay

- 1 Identify areas where there are similarities between these two sets of material. You should be able to demonstrate that:

- you are able to choose a few key headings which show that you understand where the two disciplines follow similar lines;
- you can illustrate your choice and the points you then make with reference to specifics in what you have been reading (citing page references, etc.);
- you can do the same from your own experience in your role as a Church Administrator.

For example, there are bound to be similarities in the daily detail of how you

- run an office;
- handle IT;
- maintain equipment;
- manage a team of people;
- apply customer care ideas;
- communicate with other staff;
- design documents;
- use the internet;
- devise systems, and so on.

How might you group such things into a few key headings?

2 Now, in the second part of the essay, contrast the two sets of material, identifying a number of key differences. Here you should be able to demonstrate that:

- you are able to select headings which show you have noted where the two disciplines follow different paths;
- in these cases you can distinguish between what 'is' and what 'might be' – in other words you may feel that many church offices do not achieve what they might because they are under-staffed or have insufficient budgets;
- you can illustrate these points with logical arguments, again illustrated from selected sources in the material you have been studying;
- you can do the same from your own experience in your role as a Church Administrator.

For example, you might consider:

- how Christian witness might differ between what is possible in a secular and a church office;
- the place of motivation in the two environments;
- the definition of success for a church compared with a commercial operation;
- working in an organisation staffed mostly by volunteers;

- working solo for those who do rather than in an office team;
- how line-management works, or should work, in the two environments
- operating out of buildings that were never designed as offices;
- working in an environment where finance is provided by gifts not sales, and so on.

3 In the final section of your essay, draw some clear conclusions that follow from the two earlier sections. Is there any fundamental difference between the work of an office in a doctor's practice (say) and an office in a church? Or between an office in a bank and an office in a church? Are they just serving different institutions with skills easily transferable from one to the other? If not, in what ways are they different and to what degree? End with some definite findings from your research and thinking.

The assessor will also be looking to see what you believe each discipline can learn from the other, and how this might be put into practice in some way both in your own ministry and elsewhere.

Hints to all students: If you carry out a mini 'compare and contrast' for each unit you study, you will have material to help you construct your essay by the time you come to this point. And do not fail to omit the idea of Christian discipleship (eg Unit 3) in all this.

Remember: there are further hints for completing this assignment on the UCAN distance learning webpage. These are updated in the light of assignments received.

Assignment 3: Report for your church

To be undertaken at any point throughout the module but submitted once all ten units have been completed. Note that the Personal application A2 in Unit 4 can form part of this assignment. Timing will depend on travel times, but you need 6 hours for the visits, time to plan these first, and at least the same time again for thinking, analysis and writing up your report.

- 1 You are to visit two church offices other than your own of which at least one should be of a 'large' church (weekly congregations totalling over 350 including children) and at least one should be of a Christian denomination or stream other than your own. If you work in a large church, try to find one larger church to visit.
- 2 These visits should only be undertaken with the express permission of the Ministers and (senior) Administrators concerned. Explain why you are asking to do this and

citing these instructions. Do not force yourself on any church that seems uneasy about allowing you to investigate them in this way.

3 Visits might last about 2-3 hours and include

- a tour of the plant;
- an interview with the Administrator;
- a check of the office position;
- an inspection of the office layout;
- a listing of the equipment there;
- an analysis of the church's website;
- an analysis of the literature produced by the office;
- an inspection of how the office handles visitors;
- a check of whether other staff share the space

You should ask to see any office documentation such as purpose, standards, etc. that the church concerned is prepared to show you. You should only see the Administrator's job description if they are happy for this. Be sensitive at all times: they are after all serving your needs.

4 Keep in mind the scope of this module throughout your visits. So be ready to learn something new about any of the ten units covered here.

5 Take careful notes during your visit and write/type them up soon afterwards while everything is fresh in your mind. List in particular what was a new idea for you, or areas where you feel you could suggest improvements.

6 Your task is to reflect carefully on what you have observed and, in particular, what has surprised you or come across as different from what you are used to in your own church office. To do this, analyse your notes under headings such as the following.

- Ideas that impressed me
- Aspects I would criticise
- Ways of working which I need to ponder on
- What I might do there if I had the financial resources
- Changes I would now like to consider for my office

7 Consider how these points might be affected by issues of

- church size;
- denomination;
- staffing levels;
- volunteers available;
- standards of output required;
- financial resources.

8 Now write a report on ideas for improvements that could be made for your own church's administration, with some idea of costings and other implications such as staffing, plant, etc. Your report should be laid out in a clear way so that its recommendations and the reasons for them are clear to someone reading it quite quickly and the whole should not be longer than 1,500 words.

The reasons you give for each recommendation should clearly relate to at least a couple of key principles covered by the course including biblical as well as practical perspectives.

Here are some possible headings you might use (you would only choose the relevant ones) for issues to raise and improvements to suggest. Have a look through the contents list for this module as this might give you other headings.

- office location and accessibility;
- priority purposes;
- use by other church staff;
- suitability of the office spaces for purpose;
- administrative paid staffing;
- use of volunteers and teamwork;
- customer care;
- staff handbook and HR issues;
- quality and type of furniture;
- quality and type of equipment;
- filing and storage areas;
- use of IT, social media, other tools;
- printing and stationery;
- communication channels;
- safety and security;
- development of staff and output.

The assessor will be wanting to understand what you have learned from seeing other Administrators and offices in operation and how you might apply these points to your own post whether as examples to follow or adapt, or methods to avoid.

Hints to all students: Your assessor will be looking for evidence that you can think and write across the whole breadth of this module and see significant issues rather than just small matters of detail. The assessor will also want to see evidence that you have had both practical and theological issues in mind throughout this exercise.

Remember: there are further hints for completing this assignment on UCAN distance learning webpage. These are updated in the light of assignments submitted.