



Established by the **17th Assembly Minutes 24.08.02-05.**

These Terms of Reference were approved by the Assembly Standing Committee on **16 March 2025, amended on 31 May 2025** following consultation with Congress, Congregations, Presbyteries, Synods, Assembly and agencies, and further **amended on 19 July 2026** following the introduction of the role of Director, Faith and Theology.

The Commission for Theology, Formation and Leadership

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1 NAME AND SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

- 1.1 The name of this body shall be *the Commission for Theology, Formation and Leadership* (hereafter referred to simply as “the Commission”).
- 1.2 Source of Authority – This Commission was established by the 17th Assembly, Minutes 24.08.03, 24.08.04 and 24.08.05.

2 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the Commission is to progress, implement and realise the vision for a National Network for Theology, Formation and Leadership adopted by the 17th Assembly:

“A visible and accessible network of intentional communities engaged in life-long learning to equip people to courageously follow Jesus and participate in God’s mission in contemporary Australia.”

(This vision statement can be accessed in Uniting Church community languages other than English [HERE.](#))

3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS

- 3.1 The Commission shall:
 - (a) lead, operationalise and enact the vision of the national network;
 - (b) have the authority to work with Ministerial Education Boards on integrated national oversight, leadership, and accountability in theological education and ministry formation;
 - (c) have authority to work with the Standards for Ministry Committee



to transition responsibilities to the Commission over time;

- (d) identify, resource and progress ways for the Assembly to better exercise its responsibilities in relation to the Church's theological culture.

3.2 The 17th Assembly has adopted the following principles to guide the work of the Commission (17th Assembly *Minute* 24.08.24).

- (a) The purpose for which the Uniting Church constitutes and resources intentional theological communities is to equip the whole people of God to participate in the prophetic, disruptive, healing and reconciling reign of God in the Church and the world.
- (b) These communities will manifest the cultural, geographic and theological diversity of the Church in their people, programs and processes.
- (c) Christian theological education for discipleship, mission and ministry is a gift and responsibility of the Church for the whole people of God.
- (d) The faith and obedience of the Church is nourished and regulated by the Biblical Witnesses as described in the Basis of Union.
- (e) As an expression of the Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and in response to the Preamble, Indigenous theology will be a core part of theological education and formation, which will include a continued rich relationship with Nungalinga College.
- (f) As an expression of our commitment to be a multicultural, cross-cultural and intercultural Church, our theological education and formation will be cross-cultural, intercultural and multilingual.
- (g) As an expression of our global and ecumenical scholarly commitments, our communities of theological education will draw upon and contribute to local, global and ecumenical scholarship, research and teaching.
- (h) National collaboration in theological education and ministry formation will enable more effective, equitable and adaptive education of the people of God for discipleship, mission and ministry.
- (i) National collaboration in theological education and ministry



formation will occur most effectively if structural change is made to establish a governing body for integrated national oversight, leadership and accountability.

- (j) National unity in the oversight of theological education and ministry formation does not mean national uniformity. Diversity and contextuality are of fundamental value to theological education and ministry formation. A new national governance body will be responsible for preserving those values.
- (k) The Church is committed to high quality and accessible theological education and formation in a variety of modes and locations, including in person, online and by distance. Formation for discipleship and ministry is most effective within a formation community.

4 MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 Members of the Commission shall be appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC).
- 4.2 The membership of the Commission shall be made up of a minimum of 12 and up to 23 members with skill and diversity appropriate and commensurate to the responsibilities of the Commission:
 - (a) one Commission Chairperson;
 - (b) up to six nominees from Ministerial Education Boards ("MEBs") or their equivalents. To the extent that it is possible, all current MEBs shall have a nominee on the Commission;
 - (c) a nominee from each of the Uniting Church theological colleges including Nungalinga College;
 - (d) up to three members with experience and expertise in lay education, leadership and ministry formation and the discipleship of the whole people of God;
 - (e) one nominee from the Board of the UnitingCare Australia network;
 - (f) two appointees from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress to serve on the Commission;
 - (g) the Assembly President (associated member, non-voting);



- (h) the Assembly General Secretary (associated member, non-voting);
- (i) the Assembly Director, Faith and Theology (associated member, non-voting)
- (j) up to three members co-opted by the Commission for particular skills, experience or diversity as required;
- (k) the Commission may form an executive (or similar) and/or task groups (or similar) to assist in progressing its responsibilities and functions. Membership of this executive and/or task groups shall be reported to the Assembly Standing Committee.

4.3 Participants

In addition to the members, the Commission may from time to time invite staff members directly involved in the work to attend and resource meetings of the Commission. To the extent that this occurs, these additional participants do not participate in the determination phase of decision-making.

4.4 Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Commission is directly appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee. In addition to the meetings of the Commission, the Chairperson may also participate in a Coordinating Committee which would coordinate and prioritise work across both Commissions. The Commission may also choose to appoint a Deputy Chair from among its members.

- 4.5 The 17th Assembly has requested (17th Assembly *Minute* 24.08.04) the membership of the Commission be comprised of people with skill and diversity appropriate to the responsibilities of the Commission, ensuring that it will reflect the theological and wider diversity of the Church and its councils, of which at least one half shall have qualifications and experience in theological education and the formation of ministers and leaders.

4.6 Gifts, Skills and Experience of Commission Members

The Commission brings together skilled, qualified and experienced people who together share the following complementary attributes:

- a) A love and commitment to the vision of the Uniting Church in Australia as described in its foundational documents including the Basis of Union.



- b) A commitment to excellence in Christian thinking, practice, formation, equipping for discipleship, ministry training and lay education.
- c) A knowledge of the Higher Education Sector governance in Australia.
- d) A knowledge of the polity, structure, practices, and culture of the Uniting Church.
- e) A commitment to the Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.
- f) An appreciation of, and commitment to, the Uniting Church as a multicultural Church.
- g) A commitment to the vision and principles of the Act2 Project's Network for a Flourishing Theological Culture.
- h) Demonstrated experience in new and imaginative ways of giving expression to the Church's vision and calling.
- i) Knowledge of the Church's legal, ethical, and social obligations.
- j) Experience in the oversight and governance of complex projects.
- k) Experience in utilising design thinking, organisational development and change management within large, complex organisations.

5 CASUAL VACANCIES

5.1 When a member ceases to be eligible for membership by reason of

- i. resignation; or
- ii. death; or
- iii. for such other reasons as the Assembly Standing Committee determines,

then a casual vacancy shall arise.

5.2 The casual vacancy shall be filled by appointment by the Assembly Standing Committee after it has consulted with the Commission.

5.3 Persons appointed to fill casual vacancies shall hold office for the duration of the term of the person who they replace.



6 LENGTH OF SERVICE

- 6.1 The Commission is appointed for the triennia between the 17th and 19th Assemblies.
- 6.2 Members shall be appointed for terms of six years or until the 19th Assembly, whichever occurs first.
- 6.3 Co-opted members may be invited to serve for a shorter term.

7 MEETINGS

- 7.1 The Commission shall normally meet at least five (5) times a year at a time and form determined by the Commission.
- 7.2 A quorum shall be the nearest whole number above 50% + 1 of the number of members of the Commission.
- 7.3 Confirmed minutes of proceedings detailing all resolutions passed at each meeting shall be kept and provided on request to the Secretary of the Assembly Standing Committee.
- 7.4 Meetings may be held in person or through the use of technology.
- 7.5 Additional work outside the meetings of the Commission may be required.

8 REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 8.1 The Commission is accountable to the Assembly Standing Committee and will provide a report to each meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.
- 8.2 Where relevant and appropriate, subject to the advice of the ASC, the Commission will also regularly update Ministerial Education Boards (or equivalent), councils, bodies and agencies.

9 INDEMNITY

- 9.1 Any person acting as a member of the Commission and its committees shall be entitled to be indemnified in accordance with Regulation 4.11.2.



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