

CFP Exam Committee Handbook

Approved by the CFP Exam Committee on
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Document Revision History

Version	Date	Change Description
0.9	10/26/15	Initial Draft
1.0	10/28/15	Final version approved (added clarifications in the election process; added minimum quorum for official Committee decisions)

Purpose

Simply put, the Exam Committee serves as both a **guard** for the church and a **guide** for the candidates by examining their soundness for pastoral ministry.

- As a **guard**, we protect the church from insufficiently qualified candidates for ministry.¹
- As a **guide**, we promote the church by encouraging and acknowledging sufficiently qualified candidates for ministry.²

Long version: The Exam Committee is charged to examine a candidate's "connection between faith and practice, truth and duty [so as to make] effective provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith" (adapted from BCO II. 4,5). It is the work of the candidate to pray, to prepare well in knowledge, understanding and application, and to fulfill stated requirements by stated due dates. It is the work of the Committee to communicate requirements, pray for and examine candidates, report, and make recommendations to the Presbytery. To see examples of "success" and "failure" for our Committee, see the Appendix.

Values

- **Bible** – We take God's Word very seriously and expect our candidates to do so as well. A candidate who has much theological knowledge and practical ministry experience but is weak in Bible knowledge is not fit for pastoral ministry in our Presbytery. We expect our candidates to demonstrate that they can ground their theological convictions and practical ministerial knowledge in the Bible.
- **Theology** – Because theology is a comprehensive summary of what the whole Bible teaches and because it serves as the interpretive framework from which all ministry flows, we expect our candidates to demonstrate a thorough grasp of correct, biblically-grounded theology.
- **Depth of Comprehension** – Not only should candidates demonstrate the ability to *understand* and *communicate* what they know, but also the ability to *teach* these truths winsomely and convincingly.
- **Godliness** – Paul warns, "Watch your life and doctrine closely" (1 Tim 4:16). Because fitness for pastoral ministry includes the quality of a man's spiritual life, personal character, morality, and relationships, we must be assured that the candidate is growing in grace personally before he teaches others how to grow in grace.
- **Experience** – Because gifts of spiritual leadership must first be tested (1 Tim 3:10), we rely on the Candidates Committee's recommendations concerning the adequacy of the candidate's internship experience. We also require a review of a recorded sermon in order to validate the candidate's abilities to preach. A man should not be licensed or ordained if he has not demonstrated sufficient ministry experience.

¹ Jude 3; 2 Tim 2:1-2

² Matt 9:37-38

- **Encouragement** – While this examination process is (by necessity) very serious and very difficult, we acknowledge that candidates need encouragement, good communication, and prayer along the way. We don't want candidates to drop out or fail merely because of frustration toward the process. We commit to treating every candidate with utmost care and respect as they walk through this process. We welcome feedback from candidates on how to improve this process.
- **Fairness** – We commit to maintaining clear and consistent standards of examination for all candidates in accord with the PCA, CFP, and general expectations for pastoral ministry.

Committee Organization

According to the Central Florida Presbytery Standing Rules (2006), The Exam Committee shall:

- Consist of no more than 9 voting members
- Consist of a mixture of Teaching and Ruling Elders as much as possible
- Be organized into 3 classes of three members each
- At the end of 3 consecutive years of service, each class shall have at least 1 year off
- Elections and changes of membership shall occur at the Fall stated Presbytery meeting

The quorum for all Committee examinations and official decisions is 3 members.

The Exam Committee may decide to organize itself internally with various roles and responsibilities, as they deem fit. Some examples may include:

- **Chairman** – Oversees the whole Committee, ensuring the charter is implemented; ensures Committee members are being cared for and rotated properly to avoid burn-out; ensures a good work-load balance across the team; ensures effective communication between all Committee members; attends annual Administrative Committee meetings to represent the Exam Committee.
- **Vice Chairman** – Stands in for the Chairman at official functions when he is sick or not available; also helps with overall tracking of the candidate examination process.
- **Oral Exam Coordinator** – Responsible for running all the in-person exams and establishes a rotation for Committee members to examine various topics over time.
- **Written Exam Coordinator** – Responsible for administering and assigning grading work for all online (written) exams and written papers.
- **Coaching Coordinator** – Ensures each candidate is assigned a “coach” (a member from the Committee) who can provide a “personal touch” to each candidate by being a go-to person, encourager, and prayer warrior for them. These “coaching” assignments can rotate among the Committee members as various candidates come through.
- **Recorder** - Takes minutes and handles official paperwork on behalf of the Chairman according to Presbytery and Committee requirements.

Election Process

The only position that must be elected by the Presbytery is the Chairman. All other internal positions (however they are defined) are elected internally by the Exam Committee. All positions must be elected (or re-elected) every year, according to the class and rotation guidelines above. The following procedures must be accomplished during the Committee meeting associated with the Summer Presbytery meeting (typically in August).

- **Nominations** – Nominations for all positions are taken and then closed. To be on the slate, each member must have at least two nominations, and he must accept the nomination. One of those two nominations can be his own.
- **Election** – After nominations are closed, the Committee votes to approve all elected positions (with a simple majority vote). The election for Chairman is provisional until Presbytery approves it. All new job responsibilities commence from that point on.
- **Class Rotations** – At this same meeting, the Committee must vote to rotate the appropriate class of members off the Committee and rotate the appropriate class back on.
- **Communication to Presbytery** – The recommendation for the new Chairman and the list of Committee members rolling on and rolling off must be communicated officially through the Committee minutes to the Chairman of the Administrative Committee, who will then recommend it to the whole Presbytery at the Fall meeting.

Appendix: Examples of Success and Failure for Our Committee

In order to gain a sense of whether we're adequately operating according to our stated purpose and values, it is helpful to paint a picture of various scenarios of success and failure for our team. This also helps us more practically evaluate how we're doing.

Example "successes"

- A candidate is fully qualified to serve the church in every respect and we recognize that and pass them.
- We pass a candidate who started off being very weak in certain areas of their theology, but we had to fail them multiple times and give them mock oral exams and clear feedback until they were able to pass.
- We pass a candidate who is theologically qualified, but has had a morally questionable past. However, it is clear that they have sufficiently repented and have current accountability structures in place to protect them from future failures in those areas.

Example "failures"

- We pass a candidate who may adequately believe and understand the doctrines, but are not confident or skilled enough to *teach* them to others.
- We pass a candidate who excels in all theological examinations, but has questionable moral problems or character issues without a sufficient demonstration of repentance or growth.
- We pass a candidate who has a lot of ministry experience, even though he is not up to standard in his theological examinations.
- We get too nit-picky about unimportant matters in our exams, or we are not clear enough or helpful enough with our process to the point that it frustrates the candidate and they drop out of the process, even though they are most likely qualified.