

Frequently Asked Questions

Joint Notice of Motion for Oasis 2021

1. How did this originate? Why are changes being recommended to the CBAC Ordination process at this time?

As with any ministry organization, it is helpful to step back and evaluate how its structure and processes are working. The Board of Ministerial Standards and Education (BMSE) appointed a working group consisting of Dr. Peter Reid, Dr. Garth Williams, Dr. Robert Knowles, Dr. Frank Guinta, Mrs. Wendy DuBois, and Mr. Andrew Myers (replacing Ms. Dale Taber) to look at our process from start to finish. We asked: Are we operating with an effective and efficient process? Have we made changes to the way we operate that need to be more clearly reflected in the Regulations? Are there changes in our CBAC family (either current or future) that require changes to our processes? What, if anything needs to change?

2. What areas did the committee explore?

One of the areas, that has been reinforced by CBAC staff and Council, is raising up a younger generation who will give leadership to our churches. Therefore, we spoke to educators, camp directors, emerging leaders themselves, the Youth and Family Working Group, and others to help determine what students might be thinking with regard to following God's call. With significant numbers of retirements pending in the next 10-15 years, there is a great need to raise up leaders for our churches. A couple of key takeaways is the overall decline in commitment to structures such as denominations, and a desire for younger leaders to serve in ministry but not necessarily in traditional pastoral positions as we have known them.

3. Other than identifying and encouraging emerging leaders, what else emerged in the discussion?

Another major need that the working group identified is for greater reinforcement from the local church and the Association. In some cases, there is a disconnect for candidates coming out of local churches through their preparation period, or a student arrives late to the ordination process without endorsement from a local church and lacks an understanding regarding who we are as a family of Baptists. Coupled with that are inconsistencies in our process around functional Associations and the need for Ordination candidates to have a valid license. Many of our Associations are struggling, yet provide a necessary piece of the Ordination process puzzle. Greater consistency is needed.

4. Since part of the Board's role is setting the educational standards for Ordination, did you explore this in detail?

While the working group did discuss this and has looked at possibilities, we have not arrived at anything conclusive at this point. We did receive some feedback that candidates find the process long and expensive. Also, delivery of seminary education through part time distance learning is becoming more the norm.

5. Regarding current Ordained ministers and Recognized Convention Lay Pastors, does anything change regarding their credentials?

In a word, “no”. Anyone who has previously gone through the Ordination or Recognition process continues on as is.

6. What about those who have had an entrance interview with the BMSE, but have not been ordained/recognized?

If approved at Oasis 2021, those who are in process will be subject to the updated licensing process beginning in the fall of 2021. (Note: A licensing kit will be circulated to churches to lead them through the updated process)

7. Our Association has an effective licensing process. Are we required to change anything?

The licensing process changes but not the Association licensing committee if it’s active and effective. The committee will work with the local church representatives to interview and assess the candidates.

8. Why combine the licensing process? What advantages do you see coming out of this?

Simply put, it brings greater ownership, objectivity and breadth of experience. We feel that it makes our process stronger, not weaker. Both the local church and the Association will affirm and sign off on a candidate pursuing ministry. If a candidate moves their membership because of studies or call to a ministry, they can transfer their license and continue the process. This will lighten the load for all Associations particularly for those that are struggling to function.

9. Why will the license be renewed every two years instead of annually?

Recognizing the probability that this change in process will increase the work of Licensing Committees, and recognizing that most candidates are in the process for three or more years, it makes sense to have the renewal time frame increased to two years. This eases the load on the Licensing Committee and on the candidate while maintaining the mutual responsibility.

10. How will Licensing Committees maximize healthy balance and accountability?

In our current structure, the Association license replaces a local church license and is required for a candidate to appear before the Examining Council for Ordination. Therefore, our recommendation is that the Association representatives would make up at least fifty percent (50%) of the licensing committee.

11. Please clarify the changes to the Examining Council.

You will note a few things:

1. Clergy not accredited by the CBAC will be ineligible to serve on Examining Council. This is due to the fact that they themselves have not completed the process to become a minister who is credentialed by the CBAC.
2. The Executive Minister will be given the responsibility of recommending a chair. Normally it has been the CBAC Past President, and this could very well continue, but

it leaves an option should the Past President not be the best person to take on the role. This will be voted on by the Examining Council.

3. We are encouraging stronger representation on the council from the Associations – i.e. knowledge of Baptist beliefs and polity.
4. It appears as a “tightening up” of the composition of the Examining Council. Candidates have worked hard to get to this point in the process; our desire is to give them the best possible experience at Examining Council. Members must be prepared to enter into process with the candidates and be able to ask questions around theology, doctrine and Baptist beliefs (both ordained accredited pastors and qualified lay persons).

12. Why is there a BMSE appeals committee appointed from among the Examining Council?

While there are no appeals for Examining Council decisions, there is a mechanism to appeal decisions of the BMSE. The appeals committee is not a new committee. It is appointed annually to bring neutrality regarding the decisions of the BMSE which may involve the suspensions or removal of credentials. This is an “arm’s length, as needed” committee made up of non-BMSE members who serve for the purpose of bringing greater integrity to our processes.

13. In section 1.2, it outlines that the BMSE could see candidates who have no CBAC local church membership? Why is this included?

Although this has been rare to this point, we have been seeing an increase in these inquiries and it allows the Board some flexibility. In this day of increased mobility and information, people can be introduced to us in new ways and may simply come by way of an unconventional route. In the past, Regional Ministers recommended to the Board those who had not come through normal process. The Board will not be letting up on educational and ordination requirements, but in fact would like to know candidates who desire to serve among us and admit them to the credentialing process rather than not making room for them at all.

14. Are there any more changes to come?

In addition to the changes for Oasis 2021, the BMSE has reviewed its own internal processes and is bringing changes to the interview and internship process, marriage permissions, as well as local church ownership and connection to ordination candidates. Educational requirements are being discussed to see if revisions may be needed.

Further changes to the way the Examining Council functions such as size of the group, format of questioning the candidates, etc. was discussed at length but no changes are forthcoming at this time.

The following FAQs relate directly to the additional changes approved by the BMSE & CBAC Council (July 2021):

15. Why can churches still issue local licenses (mentioned in Preamble)? *(see page 1 of Oasis-2021-Joint-Notice-of-Motion-Oasis-2021_UpdatedJuly2021.pdf)*

Churches have always had the privilege to do this outside of the current Regulations Concerning the Ministry but it was never promoted. As we move toward a single license, we wanted local churches to know that they can still issue these types of licenses for local ministry apart from a path to ordination or recognized lay leader designation.

16. Re: additional paragraph to Sections 1.1 A and 4.1 A – is this the same as a local church licensing committee? Why is this necessary? *(see pages 2, 17 of Oasis-2021-Joint-Notice-of-Motion-Oasis-2021_UpdatedJuly2021.pdf)*

The local church has always been responsible to decide whether or not they have confidence in an individual's gifting and calling. If the local church affirms an individual by requesting their appearance at a meeting with the Association, this provides a starting point that displays this confidence.

17. Why do Associations have more authority than the local church (see Sections 1.1 B and 4.1 B)? *(see pages 2, 17 of Oasis-2021-Joint-Notice-of-Motion-Oasis-2021_UpdatedJuly2021.pdf)*

This maintains the same balance we have in our current model where an individual journeying toward ordination cannot advance with the BMSE without the approval of the Association.

18. Why are there three options described in the Note under Section 1.2? *(see pages 5, 6 of Oasis-2021-Joint-Notice-of-Motion-Oasis-2021_UpdatedJuly2021.pdf)*

The proposed change was always designed to help the candidate's process move forward smoothly and remove barriers that have emerged because of the collapse of some Associations. However, in our Q&A sessions, we heard that some Associations would like the option to keep the current system (church license and Association license). These options will allow for some Associations to maintain what they have, and for others, have healthy and intentional pathways forward.