

Arrangements for flexible retirement

These Guidelines have been approved by the Stationing Committee at the request of the Connexional Allowances Committee. The 2007 Conference Reports [Policy on Part-time Appointments](#) and [Policy on Flexible Retirement](#) should also be consulted.

These guidelines are designed to help circuits and ministers negotiate the ministerial and financial aspects of a minister's taking up a part-time appointment together with an element of their pension, under the provisions for phased or flexible retirement approved by Conference 2007.

Please note that the guidelines are designed specifically for the situation where a minister is taking part-retirement together with part of their pension ('phased or flexible retirement') before the date when their full pension becomes payable. Section 2 applies **only** to this situation and not to those ministers who have reached normal pension date and offer help (**as supernumerary ministers**) to the circuits.

For detailed advice in any particular situation please contact:

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 - For pensions – Nigel Wrighton (wrightonn@methodistchurch.org.uk) 020 7467 5258.
1. The first step is to decide what proportion of the week is to be devoted to the work of ministry. Although the 2007 report [Policy on Part-time Appointments](#) calls for appointments to be defined as x sessions week (a day consisting of three sessions, two of which are devoted to the work of ministry), most people naturally begin by thinking in terms of x days. The importance of the 'sessions' method is to emphasise that there must be time in the minister's 'working' day for the activities of normal life and for relaxation. This is as true for those in part-time appointments (whether or not combined with part-retirement) as for anyone else. Defining the appointment as e.g. 'three days' or 'six sessions' a week including Sundays equates to 'half-time'. 'Half-time could also be defined as 'two days or four sessions a week and Sundays in proportion'. Common sense must be applied in the interpretation of these principles – but it is important to note that the 2007 report includes Sundays in the days that define the size of the appointment.
 2. This definition then gives the proportions of stipend and pension that are to be applied.
 - Two days a week appointment = one-third stipend, two-thirds pension.
 - Three days a week appointment = half stipend, half pension.
 - Four days a week appointment = two-thirds stipend, one-third pension.
 3. The appointment must be approved by the Circuit Meeting and the District Policy Committee. The DPC will already be involved if a full-time appointment has been curtailed.
 4. The appointment must be clearly agreed and defined in writing in respect of:

a) Location and scope of appointment

It must be made clear (a) in what circuit(s) the person is to serve (b) what their specific responsibilities will be, both in terms of responsibility for local churches and

other specific tasks associated with the appointment (e.g. local preacher tutoring) as far as can be foreseen at this stage. Given that things under this heading may emerge later, care must be taken about the time-limits specified in above.

The extent of commitment to offering appointments to the plan must be made clear, in terms both of (a) number of appointments per quarter and any special provisions about their distribution (b) specific commitments to particular churches etc.

Arrangements for weddings and funerals should be made clear.

b) Duration of appointment

The length of time for which this appointment should last must be clearly defined, together with any arrangements for review and/or extension.

c) Accountability

There must be clarity about the ways in which the minister (a) will be accountable for her/his work, and (b) will be accounted for by being supported.

SOs 502, 792(3) and 793 do not take account of flexible retirement. SO 792(3) does not permit a minister not in the active work to have pastoral charge of a local church. This is so that proper accountability (through the obligation to attend staff meetings, circuit meetings and representative sessions of Synod) can be maintained.

Accountability and collegueship are important also for those (e.g. all deacons) who do not have pastoral charge. A presbyter or deacon wishing to take flexible retirement should therefore not seek permission to become supernumerary: this permission (to 'sit down') should only be sought when the person wishes to take up his or her full pension.

It is important to specify the means by which the minister will be able to 'give an account' of their work so as to receive proper collegueship. Expectations about attendance at meetings should be very clearly spelled out.

d) Obligatory reimbursement

Expenses incurred in the performance of ministerial duties must be reimbursed on a monthly basis. Mileage should be paid on the same basis as for ministers in the full-time work. The proportion of telephone and broadband charges and call costs to be reimbursed by the circuit must be agreed. Fees for weddings and funerals are to be offered on the same basis as to other ministers in the circuit.

e) Discretionary reimbursement

If the work of ministry is to be carried out from the minister's home, the circuit may offer to reimburse a proportion of heating and lighting costs. A book/resources grant may be offered.

e) Housing

The provision of a manse cannot be guaranteed for a part-time appointment but if one is available it may be provided.