

The work of a Church Administrator

St John's College, Nottingham and the UK Church Administrator Network (UCAN) present:

A ten-unit distance learning module leading to an award from St John's College and giving 20 credits towards their Certificate in Christian Studies.

Applications accepted from January 2014.

At last! A nationally recognised course of study in the subject area of your work.

This new module has been prepared by UCAN and St John's College to offer a rigorous but highly practical foundation in the subject of local church administration in the UK.

Students who complete the module will have a qualification that shows their church, and any future churches they move to, that they understand and can apply principles of organisational management within a theological understanding of a local church context.

This module may be taken on its own or as part of the Certificate in Christian Studies. For full details contact tess@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk.

Who should undertake this module?

It has been prepared for local Church Administrators, most of whom will work in a church office, or those who wish to take up a post of this kind. Many will be employed by their church part-time though some will be in full time employment. It has not been designed for posts at a more senior level such as Operations Managers although all the material would still be relevant for them.

Do I need to be a member of UCAN?

You do not need to be a member of the UK Church Administrator Network to undertake this module but if you are employed as a local church Administrator it will be to your advantage to join if you are not already in membership.

What does the module involve?

This is a ten unit module which can be taken in your own time at your own pace. Each unit takes one topic of relevance to working for a church as an Administrator and provides

- 1 a study section with vital input relating to your work or the church office plus some exercises to complete;
- 2 recommendations for background reading in both secular and church-based spheres - in particular you will be expected to follow one standard NVQ textbook;
- 3 a range of personal applications: Bible study, meditations, practical exercises, visits, working with a mentor.

Do I have to submit essays for marking?

There are, in addition to the ten units, three written assignments to be submitted to demonstrate that you are understanding the study material and able to apply it to your work. One consists of a self-reflection on your role as an enabler of others in their ministry, there is a main essay to compare and contrast commercial office management with church administrative practices, and the third consists of a write-up of a practical assignment based on visits to two churches other than your own.

What sort of topics are covered?

The ten units cover the possible roles of a Church Administrator, building people-skills, running a church office, being well organised, working with others, communicating well, designing systems, handling files and personal development. One unit focuses on relevant biblical material.

How much time do I need to set aside?

Each unit is expected to take you at least 12 hours in study, background reading and personal application, but it is up to you how much more you give to particular topics. So think in terms, perhaps, of completing the module in one year giving a half-day a week to it with holiday breaks. For those employed by their church, we hope that you will be allowed to undertake some of the material within work time (though not in the church office with all its interruptions!).

What time of year do I need to start work?

You can start at any time to suit you.

What level is it pitched at?

The basic textbook that you will be asked to study as part of the module is at NVQ Level 3 and the study material has been pitched at about this same level.

Is it just for Anglicans?

Not at all - the material does not assume a single denominational base and so does not go into detail on issues that might affect one denomination rather than others, such as graveyard administration, faculty applications, etc. One of the units gives scope for exploration within areas of special relevance to your own church or denomination.

Will I be able to cope?

The material does not assume any tertiary education qualifications but to complete the module you will need determination and discipline to set aside the time for study, reading and note-taking. But if you already work as a Church Administrator you should find real excitement in learning more about the kind of issues that you deal with day to day. The idea is that the material itself will motivate you to continue.

Will I be on my own?

Your tutor will be available throughout the module and you will have online access to other students through Moodle, a learning management system, with chat rooms and forums on the material. You might also decide to take the module at the same time as another local Administrator so you can share your experiences.

Why have St John's and UCAN prepared this material?

We have three clear aims.

- 1 To enable you come to a clear understanding of the role, opportunities and challenges of this understated subject.
- 2 To help you improve your business capability and performance in a number of skill areas relevant to your work.
- 3 To encourage you to develop a creative mind in devising systems and solving problems within your work.

But we also have a wider vision of setting a standard of achievement for UK Church Administrators that will be widely recognised, and seeing such work become accepted as a discipline worthy of analysis and study.

Why should I bother?

Because as a result of completing these ten units you can expect to

- 1 Be energised and encouraged in your work.
- 2 Be better equipped to fulfil your responsibilities in a professional way.
- 3 Understand your work as Christian service not just daily employment.
- 4 Be enabled to work collaboratively with church leaders to free them for their ministry.

What's the cost?

The module costs £260. This includes registration with St John's, course materials, the marking of the three projects you submit and the involvement of a tutor throughout. We very much hope that your church will pay for you to take the module as they will receive the benefit of all that it gives.

Can I talk it over with you and ask questions?

Of course. If you want to discuss the content before coming to a decision, contact the UCAN Co-ordinator and author of the material, John Truscott, on john@john-truscott.co.uk. If you have questions about how the module works or about the Certificate in Christian Studies, contact Teresa Harrison-Withe at St John's on tess@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk.

So how do I apply?

Visit the St John's Nottingham website at www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk and then choose 'Distance learning'. See 'Certificate in Christian Studies' for further information. Download and complete the application form showing just the one module for Church Administrators (unless you intend to take this as part of undertaking the whole CCS) with a fee of £260 not the whole certificate fee shown there. You will be able to extend this to the whole CCS later if you wish.

What do people who have seen the material say?

This course should be really worthwhile for Church Administrators who want to know how they can get better at what they do. I suspect I am not alone in having had to learn on-the-job and sometimes muddle through. The discipline of having to follow a course of study in the various aspects of church administration will be invaluable.

The combination of general business and administrative theory with the accompanying theological reflection and practical exercises will enable administrators to refine their ways of working and to become more effective for their churches.

Elizabeth Hill, Parish Administrator of Christ Church, New Malden

I think it's great and I am glad that this subject is being taken seriously - you are treating the participants as adults and giving them the core skills to be really good administrators - rather than somebody just doing a job.

The Revd Jennifer Cole MBA School of Formation - Diocese of Bath & Wells

This module, designed for anyone employed by their local church as their Administrator or anyone who aspires to such a role, enables the student to develop best practice in running a church office. Students engage with contemporary administration theory and practice and apply this to the church setting as well as looking specifically at different areas of church organisation.

Students are required to apply all they learn to their own setting and need to be able to reflect on their experience to take the module. The module is designed to transform the working lives of all those involved in this vital but understated ministry.

Dr Andy Angel, Vice-Principal of St John's College, Nottingham

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Church Administration