

## Unit Outline



# CA-CRT21 PRESBYTERIAN POLITY

QUEENSLAND THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

### About this Unit Outline

This unit outline contains information you will need to find your way around the unit, **Presbyterian Polity**. It attempts to provide a structure for your learning, giving details of the topics, and how they will be assessed.

## Information about this unit

### Unit description

This unit is an introduction to the polity (church government) practised within the Presbyterian Church. The unit touches upon the Biblical principles and historical basis for Presbyterian Church government. However, this unit primarily focuses on how these Biblical and historical principles are used both generally and specifically to form Presbyterian Church government as practised within the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

### Learning objectives

- (a) To introduce students to the Biblical and historical basis for the practise of a Presbyterian form of polity
- (b) To introduce students to the organisational "culture" of the Presbyterian Church of Australia
- (c) To equip candidates for the ministry from the Presbyterian Church of Australia to work with understanding, efficiently and effectively within the "culture" of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

### How this unit contributes to the course

The Church of Jesus Christ has a visible presence upon earth. The visible church requires a structure to allow it to function as the body of Christ on earth and as it relates to the community around about it.

The nature of this structure has been debated because of differences in our understanding of the Bible, the history of the church, and the circumstances that each denomination and congregation finds itself.

This unit will be a peripheral unit for students who are not candidates for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. It will enhance the core units of their course by exploring one of the denominational distinctives of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

### Pre-requisites and co-requisites

This unit is a core unit for students who are ***candidates for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Australia***. This course is offered by the Queensland Theological College to fulfil the requirements of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Every candidate for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Australia must successfully complete this course. There are no pre-requisites for this unit.

## **How this unit is organised and what we expect of you**

This unit will include two hours of lectures per week throughout the semester of 13 weeks. Students will be provided lecture outlines but it is recommended that students take relevant notes.

Students may be asked to participate in workshops during lecture periods, including being asked to discuss the strengths and weakness inherent within aspects of Presbyterian Polity.

## **Teaching staff**

Lecturer

REV LESLEIGH HALL

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## Unit timetable: topics & teaching & learning activities

	LECTURE TOPIC	READINGS /REQUIREMENTS	ASSESSMENT
WEEK 1	Biblical and historical basis for Presbyterian Polity	Titus; Acts 15 and 20; Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government First and Second Book of Discipline	Exercise 1
WEEK 2	GAA	GAA Basis of Union Articles of Agreement	
WEEK 3	GAA	GAA Regulations Code of Discipline	Exercise 2
WEEK 4	Standing Orders	PCQ Standing Orders	Exercise 3
WEEK 5	PCQ Regulations	PCQ Regulations, Constitutions, Guidelines and Forms	Exercise 4
WEEK 6	Kirk Session	PCQ Code Chapter 3	Exercise 5
WEEK 7	Congregational Issues	PCQ Code Chapter 1, 2, 9, 10	Exercise 6
WEEK 8	Presbytery	PCQ Code Chapter 4, 6, 7	Exercise 7
WEEK 9	The Minister and the Presbytery	PCQ Code Chapter 8	Exercise 8
WEEK 10	State Assembly	PCQ Code Chapter 5	Exercise 9
WEEK 11	Overtures	PCQ Code Chapter 11, 12, 13, 14	Exercise 10
WEEK 12	Revision		
WEEK 13	Revision		

## CA-CRT21 Assessment

ASSESSMENT TASK	DESCRIPTION
<b>Exercises in Polity</b> <b>5000 words</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>Ten individual exercises</b> touching upon an aspect of the course. Each exercise requires an answer of no less than 500 words. The Assessment Task will require a total of no less than 5,000 words.

In order to pass the unit, you must complete all exercises and attain >50% in each exercise

### EXERCISE 1

#### BASIS FOR PRESBYTERIAN POLITY

You have just been ordained as a Presbyterian Minister. Among the questions that you affirmed with passion was the following:

- (iv) Do you own the Presbyterian form of government to be founded on the Word of God and agreeable thereto; and do you promise that through the grace of God, you will firmly and constantly adhere to, and to the utmost of your power, in your station, assert, maintain and defend the same?

A friend, who happens to come from a non-Presbyterian denomination, asks you about why you felt comfortable affirming this question. What would you tell him, using the Bible to support your answer?

### EXERCISE 2

#### GAA

You are at the 2013 General Assembly of Australia. The agenda includes the items listed below. Based upon your understanding of the Basis of Union and Articles of Agreement of the PCA and other documents contained in the GAA Code, explain in appropriate detail:

- (a) Why it is competent (that is, lawful,) for the GAA to deal with the following agenda items.
- (b) In what form or forms the agenda item should be submitted to the GAA (example Overture, Petition, etc.) and why.
- (c) The process the GAA should use to deal with the agenda item (irrespective of its substance).
  1. To amend section XXI of the WCF on Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day.
  2. To amend Article 7.9 to allow women to be ministers of Word and Sacrament.
  3. To enact amended regulations for the Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee.

4. To amend the conditions for the eligibility of Home Missionaries and Elders to administer the sacraments.
5. To amend the Code Discipline.
6. To amend standing order 23.

### **EXERCISE 3**

#### **STANDING ORDERS**

You are present at the 2015 Queensland State Assembly and observe the proceedings of the Assembly as generally narrated below. From your understanding of the Standing Orders used in the PCQ what irregularities have occurred? (There is one irregularity per paragraph below).

The Report on the Committee for Ministries Training has just been circulated and received and the Assembly is considering the first of five clauses in the deliverance arising out of the report.

The convener moves the motion and a member of the assembly seconds it. The seconder decides to allow a few people to speak to the clause to see how the arguments are heading before he makes his speech.

In the course of the debate there are two amendments made. The first amendment added a few extra words to the end of the motion. Following that the second amendment added the words "in principle" after the first word of the clause.

It was nearly time to take up an order of the day. A member of the house moved that the debate be adjourned. The motion was seconded. After much debate it was resolved to adjourn and take up the order of the day.

After the order of the day the debate is resumed and the motion was carried on the voices. Three members recorded their dissent.

Clause 2 was moved by the convener and seconded by an associate member.

The motion was very controversial and the vote was equal. The Moderator ruled that, since a majority of the members of the Assembly had not voted for the motion, the motion had been disapproved.

Alarmed by the course of the debate a member stood on a point of privilege and another to make a personal explanation. After hearing the personal explanation, the moderator then ruled upon, and upheld, the point of privilege.

As a result, a member moved without notice that standing orders be suspended so that the motion could be voted upon once again. The motion was seconded and approved. There was only two members who disagreed. The Motion was resubmitted for consideration and defeated.

Clause 3 was moved by the convener and seconded. It was also attracted a great deal of debate. Finally, a member who had strongly spoken against the motion became impatient and moved the previous question.

After the motion to put the previous question had been debated the motion was passed.

#### **EXERCISE 4**

##### CONSTITUTIONS, FORMS, GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS

You would like to be elected by the State Assembly to the Council of the Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association. Identify, from among the Constitutions and Guidelines etc. contained within the PCQ Code, the documents relevant to the operation of, and your participation in, this body. Identify the key issues contained in these documents that you believe a member of the Council of the Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association should be aware of when seeking election and serving on the council.

#### **EXERCISE 5**

##### RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MINISTER

From your understanding of the PCQ code (particularly chapter 3) highlight in detail your rights and responsibilities as a minister of a congregation. Comment upon how they are distinct from the rights and responsibilities of the Kirk Session, particularly where there is an interrelationship between them. Provide examples where a Minister and elders must work together with their respective rights and responsibilities to achieve an outcome.

#### **EXERCISE 6**

##### CONGREGATIONAL ISSUES

1. Making reference to Chapter 1 of the PCQ Code:  
Outline what steps must be taken to call a congregational meeting. If it is an Annual congregational meeting, what items of business must be presented to the meeting.
2. From your understanding of the PCQ Code (particularly Chapter 2) what are the responsibilities of the Committee of Management, including those to the denomination. Particularly comment upon areas in which the power of the Committee of Management is limited.

#### **EXERCISE 7**

##### PRESBYTERY

From your understanding of the PCQ Code (particularly chapters 4 and 6) outline the responsibility of the Presbytery to:

- (a) Congregations. Highlight, in particular, ways the Presbytery could assist charges who are struggling financially or with interpersonal conflicts.
- (b) Candidates for the Ministry.

**EXERCISE 8**

SETTLEMENT OF A VACANT CHARGE

You have been appointed inter-moderator of the neighbouring charge which has just become vacant. After referring to the QLD code (particularly chapter 8) what are your responsibilities as interim-moderator? In particular, trace the process that you must oversee to fill the vacancy.

**EXERCISE 9**

STATE ASSEMBLY

You would like to serve on the Committee on Ministry Resourcing of the State Assembly. After having read the PCQ Code (particularly Chapter 5 and Regulation 160), outline the purpose, responsibilities and function of the Committee, including the following:

- (a) The various ways you can become a member of the committee.
- (b) The difference in the responsibilities and powers of the Executive and the Standing Committee.

**EXERCISE 10**

OVERTURE

Having read various portions of the PCQ code, identify a Rule of the church which you would like to amend in some way. From your understanding of the PCQ code (Form XVIII and chapter 13 in particular) draft an appropriate overture which seeks to have this rule amended in the way you feel is necessary.

## Learning resources

### ESSENTIAL REFERENCES

PCQ Standing Orders and Rules and Forms of Procedure - Edition 7

GAA Constitution Practice and Procedure (2013 Edition)

F M. Bradshaw, *Basic Documents on Presbyterian Polity*. Melbourne, Vic.: Christian Education Committee, Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1984.

The (Westminster Assembly) Form of Presbyterian Church Government.

Witherow, Thomas. *The Apostolic Church: which is it?* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Edinburgh: Free Church of Scotland, 1978.

## Grades

Grades in assessment instruments are awarded in the following categories-

Grade	Score	GPA
Fail (F)	0-49%	0
Pass (P)	50-57%	1
Pass+ (P+)	58-64%	1.5
Credit (C)	65-74%	2
Distinction (D)	75-84%	3
High Distinction (HD)	85+%	4