

Professional Supervision for QB Pastoral Leaders

Frequently Asked Questions



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Questions About the Nature of Supervision

What is Professional Supervision?

Professional Supervision may be defined as “a relationship between two or more disciples who meet to consider the ministry of one or more of them in an intentional and disciplined way. Such an arrangement allows each person being supervised to give an account of their work, to explore their responses, review their aims and develop their strategies and skills.” (Leach & Patterson 2015)

At its core is the opportunity to reflect critically with a trained supervisor on one’s work. It enables a pastor to unpack the challenges, dilemmas, disappointments and achievements in their work and put them back together in ways that will help them grow in their own self-awareness of who they are and how they act and react. It also gives opportunity for a pastor to learn and therefore grow in competence in regards their ministry practice, in theological understanding of their circumstances and God’s influence as well as in their Christian faith, commitment and practice. A further benefit of good supervision is that a supervisor will help a Pastor to consider their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of those they minister to as well as to identify any potential for their wellbeing to be compromised.

In the light of this, the National Baptist Supervision Framework defines Supervision as

- regular, structured, and intentional conversations between supervisor and supervisee
- focused on work and practice
- paying attention to the supervisee’s current context
- within the framework of a shared theological, spiritual, ethical and legal understanding
- paying attention to issues of fitness to practice, skill development, management of boundaries, professional identity, and the impact of work upon all concerned parties including the individuals and communities the supervisee serves and leads

What is the difference between Pastoral Supervision and Professional Supervision?

‘Pastoral’ Supervision in its technical sense is a specialty area that a Professional Supervisor can be trained in. It has arisen out of the increasing use of Professional Supervision in religious denominations and is used to differentiate between Professional Supervision that is focussed on supporting professionals in the counselling, psychology and social work spheres. This latter specialty is typically referred to as ‘Clinical’ Supervision

A reading of the Royal Commission’s recommendation 16.45 confirms this understanding as it groups ‘Pastoral’ Supervision under the all-encompassing heading of Professional Supervision.

‘Pastoral’ Supervision does not simply mean supervision by a more experienced pastor. This would be more like the current mentoring arrangements that are already in place for QB pastors. Instead, it refers to supervision by someone trained as a Professional Supervisor.

It is possible for existing pastors to be trained and gain qualifications as Professional Supervisors. Many pastors are in fact presently undertaking this training. This is being encouraging as it is believed that having supervisors with good pastoral experience will be beneficial for the supervision of our pastors.

Therefore, when the term ‘Pastoral Supervision’ is used in QB documentation, it will always refer to Professional Supervision by a person who has trained in the speciality area of ‘Pastoral’ Supervision as

distinct from 'Clinical' Supervision. It will not refer to supervision from someone who happens to be a Pastor.

How is professional supervision different from (a) line management, (b) coaching, (c) spiritual direction, (d) counselling, (e) mentoring?

While there are some specific and unique distinctions between these disciplines, in practice, there is often considerable overlap between all these disciplines and practitioners share many of the same skill sets.

(a) Supervision and Line Management: Professional supervision is primarily exploratory and reflective; it has three dimensions in focus – restorative, formative and normative (boundary checking); it is carried out by someone who has some independence from the pastor's organisation and who has specific supervisory training; and is governed by an agreement (Covenant/Contract) between the supervisor and the supervisee. Unlike line management it does not involve task management; it is not focused on achieved results rather it focuses on personal development and relationships; and the responsibility for the work remains with the supervisee. A line manager is focused primarily on achieving results for the organisation and holding subordinates accountable for those results. A Professional Supervisor is focussed on the wellbeing of the Supervisee and those who he/she ministers to and will consider relationships, even those with their line manager.

(b) Supervision and Coaching: Coaching is usually governed by an agreement between the coach and the practitioner. It can consider any aspect of life or work by mutual agreement and is primarily focused on the development of the practitioner in some area or the development of plans and implementation strategies for the area of life being considered. The accountability is usually purely between the two people concerned and the coachee is held accountable for the planned actions. Supervision has a narrower focus - on work related matters, but has a wider interest than purely a development of ministry outcome or plan. Supervision may involve attention to practitioner development (the formative dimension), the ethics of practice within the organisation for the sake of those ministered amongst (the normative dimension), or to the wellbeing of the practitioner or those who are being ministered to (the restorative dimension). While it may result in planned action steps, these are not always present. The accountability within supervision is not only mutual, but also to the wider Church congregation and community.

(c) Supervision and Spiritual Direction: Spiritual direction focuses on living one's life in the light of God's presence, work and call to discipleship. Its focus is broader than merely work related items and it involves primarily theological reflection. Whilst supervision includes spiritual and theological perspectives and reflection, it focuses upon the broader concept of wellbeing of the person which may include spiritual health, relational health, emotional health and physical health as these impact a supervisee's work practice. Work practice is always the focus of supervision, even if the questions raised are theological or spiritual.

(d) Supervision and Counselling: Counselling is focused upon the mental health of the client and seeks to bring personal growth and wholeness. The topic of focus in a counselling session could be drawn from any part of a client's life. While supervision may identify areas of work which are having an impact on the supervisee's mental health or areas of mental health that are having an impact on the supervisee's work, the focus of supervision always has a connection to a supervisee's work. The role of supervision is to explore these impacts but not to work specifically on any mental health concerns raised. If needed, referral to counselling may sometimes be an outcome of supervision. Counselling normally has a limited duration while the client learns tools or strategies for addressing the specific issue being addressed whereas, supervisory relationships are typically of a longer duration. Supervision can focus on a broad range of things that impact work. Both counselling and supervision are formal, structured and professional relationships.

(e) Supervision and Mentoring: Mentoring is commonly an informal relationship where a more experienced practitioner willingly shares their life experience with a mentoree. Even though a relationship may be formalised through a work assigned mentor for example, the process of mentoring is typically an informal and relational one that often does not have any specific goals or processes guiding it. The mentoree is typically seeking advice that can be applied into their life which may include work practice. The Mentor normally does not have any formal qualifications to support this relationship other than experience and wisdom. However as mentor, they take the role of teacher and expert guide sharing from their learned experience. Supervision is a formal relationship with a trained supervisor. Supervision identifies the Supervisee as the “expert” who is best placed to work through the issues and challenges at hand. The supervisor seeks to provide a place for the supervisee to explore and reflect on the issues and identify areas for restoration, growth and for ongoing monitoring.

Each of these disciplines mentioned above brings value to the life of a Pastor and each can provide valuable input at various times in one’s ministry. It is not reasonable to expect one discipline to meet all the needs that a Pastor may have.

The unique contribution of Supervision to a Pastor’s life is the focus on the broad wellbeing of the Pastor and those they interact with (church leadership, church congregation, Pastor’s family and community). Secondly, it’s focus is on work practice in a structured way can enable a supervisee to consider all aspects of their work relationships. Lastly, it brings a unique and regular attention to standards of practice for a Pastor as laid down in their Code of Conduct and other policies governing their practice and helps the pastor identify areas they might be tempted to cross these boundaries. For these reasons, Professional Supervision is seen as a crucial support for all Queensland Baptist ministers.

What is the nature of a pastor’s accountability to the Professional Supervisor?

Professional “supervision” for many conjures up negative connotations. It is linked to images of “institutional surveillance and big brother watching over your shoulder” (Paterson, 2020). But Michael Paterson suggests something different if we look at the etymology of the word “supervision”. He writes

In Latin, *super* denotes over or above and *videre* means to see. Putting those two words together gives us over-seeing; a view from above; a bigger picture; a broader horizon or a panoramic perspective. Supervision is all about vision and, at its best, the supervisory encounter is the meeting point of visionaries: people who have been captured by a vision of their role in the world, of how life can be and of how best to express their care for others.¹

Lack of accountability is not a healthy thing and there is much research that shows that increased accountability leads to improved outcomes for a business or indeed for any organisation. But the positive benefits of accountability can be hindered by suspicion, fear or when power struggles exist. These and other obstacles unfortunately are present in some churches and will limit the benefit of accountability for our pastors and churches.

When talking about accountability, many think simply in terms of being accountable for one’s performance. But the focus of accountability as it exists in supervision is not in the first instance performance, but rather wellbeing – the wellbeing of the pastor being supervised and those they are ministering too. Supervision

¹ Paterson M. 2020, Pastoral Supervision: Reclaiming the soul of supervision in *Reviving the spirit: the gift of pastoral supervision*, St Mark’s Review, No 254, December 2020.

seeks to help a pastor cope better with the demands of their work to allow them to minister more effectively for the benefit of the kingdom, their family and indeed their own selves.

But who is a pastor accountable to in supervision? We would all agree that the pastor being supervised is ultimately accountable to God for the work they are called to and their growth in all facets of their being. A pastor in our Baptist Ecclesiology is also accountable to the members of their congregation through the appointed leadership team for their ministry. And this is where accountability for our pastors rests and it is what supervision encourages. In supervision, the pastor being supervised is not accountable to their Supervisor for their learning and growth but to God, and their church (leadership) who has called them to ministry and who they minister to. The supervisor assumes a measure of responsibility, not for the learning or any other results of supervision, but for ensuring that the processes and the space are being maintained which allow that personal learning to occur. These mutual aspects of accountability (that of the Supervisee and the Supervisor) are typically defined in the contract or covenant that governs how supervision will take place.

Perhaps a better way of looking at supervision is to see it through the framework of helping to reframe our vision. In a ministry context, Kenneth Pohly has suggested that the supervisor stands *with* us in the sense of being alongside us, rather than *over* us². The role of the supervisor is not to direct the supervisee or to assess their performance, but rather, to provide support so the one being supervised can reflect on their own circumstances in order to gain a new perspective, greater clarity, deeper understanding, more awareness of the pitfalls and a clearer vision for what the next steps could be.

Questions about The Benefits of Supervision

What is the benefit of Professional Supervision for pastors?

Pastoral Ministry is complex.

- It is complex because pastors care for people who are ravaged by sin and its effects.
- It is complex because it is based around many relationships where the Pastor is expected to fulfill multiple roles.
- It is complex because there is increasing demands placed on pastors for which they often have not received training for.
- It is complex because there is a spiritual dimension to all that happens.
- It is complex, because being a pastor is a lonely experience and there are few people who able to care and support them individually.
- It is complex because every pastor is different with a unique history, personality and experience that shape their conscious and their unconscious fears, anxieties, beliefs and practices.
- It is complex because pastors are fallen themselves and often operate in a place of tiredness and brokenness that can spill over into their work and ministry.

Professional Supervision provides a safe place with a trained supervisor where the complexities of ministry can be reflected on. A good illustration is a tangled ball of wool. When pastors find themselves in the midst of the tangle of ministry, they often don't know what to do or how to begin to untangle the mess they are faced with. It is often overwhelming and debilitating. But a Supervisor who sits outside the situation with a broader perspective than theirs is often able to help the pastor pull gently on various strands of their tangle

² Kenneth H. Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry of Supervision*, 2nd ed. (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2001), 146.

and help them figure out how to unravel the tangle (even partially) and give them the freedom, ability and capacity to move forward in a productive way or make better sense of the mess before them.

A supervisor is trained to facilitate a pastor's learning from past events and help them imagine how they can apply that new understanding to similar situations that might occur in the future. Alternatively, they can provide support for the Pastor to evaluate and select an appropriate response to current situations; provide a place for healing as a pastor is affirmed and encouraged in their ministry; or even help a pastor honestly evaluate their practice against acceptable standards of ministry to ensure that one's ministry is above reproach in all senses.

Being outside of the circumstances, enables the Professional Supervisor to bring a whole new perspective to the complexities of ministry.

What is the relationship between supervision and safe ministry practice as it relates to the prevention of child abuse?

While some would see that Supervision is a reaction to the problem of child abuse by citing recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, the reality is that Supervision has been an important support to many helping professions and even some religious denominations long before the Royal Commission. Professional Supervision should not be seen as a silver bullet for child abuse on its own but is part of a change in culture that seeks to have a far greater impact.

Even within the Royal Commission's recommendations, Professional Supervision sits within Child Safe Standard 5. This is one of ten Child Safe Standards adopted nationwide which specifically addresses human resource management practices of screening, recruiting and ongoing performance reviews to ensure people are suitable and supported. Introducing better practices in these areas will have wider impact and benefits than just minimising child abuse and should not be seen in isolation as being the magic solution to all child abuse cases.

QB recognises that Professional Supervision can help to support a change of culture from isolated practice to more accountable, transparent and supported practice. This aligns with QB's desire to see churches and pastors functioning in healthy and sustainable ways and fits within our priority of Collaborative Autonomy.

With greater accountability, transparency and support, pastors will be far better equipped to process and work their way through complex situations and demands that could potentially result in burnout or harm to themselves or indeed to others. Supervision will not on its own prevent any individuals in ministry intent on harming others from doing so. However, supervision will help pastors reflect on the impacts of their own patterns of ministry and help them take steps to work more safely for themselves and others, e.g. in taking appropriate time off, in observing the code of conduct, in sharing difficult decisions, in making wiser decisions, etc.

Are we seeking more from Professional Supervision than simply improving child safety?

Pastors struggle in many ways including through

- criticism and conflict,
- pain and sadness,
- isolation and loneliness,
- pressure to make the right decisions and live up to everyone's expectation,
- dealing with power and position,

- a never-ending workload,
- helping people through times of trauma and trouble,
- the dynamics of spiritual attack on themselves and their family
- constantly changing demands and expectations that they were never trained to deal with

You may like to add to this list, but each of these things have a way of wearing a pastor down. Add now to this list all the non-work-related items a pastor might face and the situation becomes even more dire. Some cope better than others in the light of these challenges, but the constant bombardment of things means that pastors are carrying a heavy burden. Is it any wonder that pastors burn out, drop out, stumble or make knee jerk or unwise decisions?

Child sexual abuse could likely be one result of a pastor who is struggling with life and ministry. But it is not the only one, or probably the most common result of a Pastor who is struggling.

Professional Supervision has at its heart, to ensure the wellbeing of the Pastor and those they minister to. Wellbeing in this instance has a far greater focus than simply preventing child sexual abuse and therefore it is suggested that Professional Supervision is best positioned to assist QB pastors when it is non-prescriptive and applied in a broad sense.

Supervision will assist some by bring restoration and healing to a tired or disillusioned pastor. It may assist to clear roadblocks and reframe situations that once seemed impossible in ways that enable a pastor to recover a new vision for the future. It may help a pastor reflect on situations and learn more about themselves and how they might be able to minister better in different circumstances. It may also help to identify areas in ministry where the margins have been eroded and a pastor is at risk of moving into unhealthy practices or dangerous places.

One writer has put it this way, Professional Supervisors are “Ideally placed to empower and facilitate experiential learning and transformational learning with supervisees, to critically reflect on practice, to find new perspectives, bring into awareness our preconceived ideas and assumptions, cherish difference, encourage creativity and reframe our experience in the wider world” (Creamer 2011, pg. 146-160).³ QB’s hope is that each of our Pastors are better equipped, better supported and have their resilience increased through the gift that is Professional Supervision.

What is the Government expecting of us?

By way of background, The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was a five year inquiry announced by the Federal Government at the end of 2012 to investigate institutional responses to child sexual abuse and related matters. It was initiated because of increasing awareness of the problem of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts and the growing calls from the broad community for a national inquiry.

The Royal Commission handed down a number of preliminary reports that dealt with Working with Children Checks (2015), Redress and Civil Litigation (2015) and Criminal Justice (2017) before it handed down its final

³ Creamer, Mary. (2011) Reflections on Learning and Transformation in Supervision: A Crucible of My Experience. In *Supervision as Transformation*, edited by Robin Shohet, pg. 146-160. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

report on 15th December 2017. Contained in these reports were numerous recommendations made to Government and institutions (both secular and religious) that were responsible for caring for children.

The recommendations were progressively considered and addressed by Federal and State Governments. The Federal Government in their response clearly identified those recommendations that were within their jurisdiction and those which were not. It should be noted that many of the recommendations of the Royal Commission have already been implemented through policies and legislature at a state and federal level. The Redress Scheme is an example of this.

For all matters that related to religious institutions the Government's response was the same ... "These recommendations are a matter for religious institutions."

It is clear that the Australian Government expects all institutions (secular and religious) to act consistently and effectively to protect children from sexual abuse. This includes the expectation that all institutions act consistently with the National Principles for Child Safe Institutions that have been broadly adopted throughout the national landscape at all levels of government and society.

The stated expectation is that all institutions will consider the recommendations made and provide an appropriate and considered response to them. At this time the Government are refraining from dictating specific requirements at this time and it is not expected that the Government will provide any further direction or clarification about these recommendations, preferring instead to give institutions some freedom to design approaches that fit their operation. Institutions are however, being asked to report annually on what actions they are taking in response to the recommendations to the National Office for Child Safety. While QB or the Australian Baptist Ministries have not yet been compelled to go on the public record and report on their progress of work in these areas to date, this will become a requirement in the coming years. At this time, we will have to justify what we have done and why we have chosen these actions.

It is also increasingly becoming apparent that non-action is not an acceptable response. As seen in recent legislature that will allow ACNC privileges to be removed from institutions fielding allegations of abuse who do not sign up to the voluntary national redress scheme, there is likely to be sanctions brought against institutions who do not choose to respond appropriately. It is likely that the appropriateness of responses by institutions will be measured by what the Royal Commission has recommended, what other institutions have put in place and by general community sentiment.

In terms of the recommendation into Professional Supervision, the royal commission makes it clear what they have in mind and what it is that Professional Supervision is seeking to achieve. Australian Baptist Ministries and Queensland Baptist have taken this into consideration when formulating their frameworks and policies.

What are other denominations doing?

Most other denominations around Australia are well advanced in the development of policies and the implementation of Professional Supervision for their ministers and clergy. QB have reviewed the work of the Anglicans, Uniting, Churches of Christ (Vic & Tas), Salvation Army and Catholics as well as some other denominations overseas (Methodists and Presbyterians) and other institutions such as Scripture Union and Chaplaincy Australia. These have been helpful in drafting the QB policies and proposals.

Similarly QB representatives have been consulting with interstate colleagues who together have drafted a National Standard for Professional Supervision which the Australian Baptist Ministries have endorsed. This has guided the development of the QB policies regarding Professional Supervision.

The standard response of most of the mainline denominations to the Royal Commission's recommendations is to implement a system of Professional Supervision, though the details of their policies vary between denominations and between dioceses.

Could supervision be used as way to gain control of Pastors or evaluate the performance of the Pastor by the Government, QB or the local church?

No, Supervisors do not work for or answer to the government, QB or the local church for their practice. They are not "secret police" acting for any other third party and the content of their supervision is not made available to others or for other purposes unless agreed to by the Pastor⁴. In Professional Supervision, the supervisor works for and with the Pastor and is bound by confidentiality arrangements agreed directly with the Pastor. These confidentiality agreements are part of a wider code of conduct which govern the actions of Professional Supervisors. These codes ensure that they operate free from interference of outside bodies.

When working with a Pastor in a compliance space, the Professional Supervisor references the Code(s) of Conduct which the Pastor has themselves signed up to. These Codes identify the boundaries of acceptable and healthy practice. They do not reference vision statements, strategic plans or other such documents from the local church, QB or any other source and therefore the Supervisor has no mandate or measure by which they can check alignment of the pastor with any such documents. The Professional Supervision is interested in the wellbeing of the pastor and those they minister to, not the performance of the pastor in relationship to any Key Performance Indicators that an organisation may seek to impose on them. As such they can not be used by a Pastor's church leadership to evaluate performance.

Some fear that Supervisors will be forced to report pastors to the government based on their conversations and point to laws such as Victoria's Conversion Practices Bill. These fears are speculative as there are no plans for any such laws in Queensland. While it is true that when mandatory reporting laws are introduced, such as the laws surrounding Child Sexual Abuse reporting, Professional Supervisors will fall under its requirements, it should be remembered that so does the pastor himself, a pastor's local church leadership, pastoral peers, staff members and congregation. If a pastor was actively breaking a law, it would be more likely that they would be reported by a member of their local church leadership or congregation who are required to report criminal actions well before the issue would be raised at Professional Supervision.

In a similar way, if a pastor is actively acting in a manner that falls outside of acceptable practice as might be defined within the code of conduct, it would be expected that members of their congregation or the people impacted by this unacceptable behaviour would be reporting them to their local church leadership or to QB well before a Supervisor became aware of it. Such reporting by congregational members and leadership already happens and is managed through existing QB processes and procedures. A Pastor accessing a Professional Supervisor would not make this eventuality more likely but would add another layer of protection for themselves against such an eventuality. By accessing Professional Supervision, a pastor can provide a short circuit that would interrupt harmful behaviour (if it were raised) and allow the Pastor to reflect on better ways responding.

⁴ The one exception to this is where the case notes of the Professional Supervisor may be the subject of a subpoena from a court of law. This may occur if there was a criminal or civil case brought against the Pastor being supervised, but would obviously be a serious and unusual situation. Most Professional Supervisors would not keep detailed notes on sessions and the content of these notes would likely not reveal much detail. Professional Supervisors may also choose to refuse such a request in some instances based on client privacy privileges. The subject of note keeping is normally a key discussion at the beginning of any Supervision relationship.

In addressing the fears around expanding mandatory reporting requirements, Queensland Baptist are active in advocating for religious freedom and representing QB pastors to all levels of government in conjunction with other bodies such as heads of churches. Should any proposal for mandatory reporting for religious activities be suggested in the future, QB and other denominations will consider the impact and an appropriate response at that time. It should be noted that our Baptist Brothers and Sisters and indeed those in other denominations in Victoria are not avoiding implementing Professional Supervision because of these fears.

[What are the implications of not implementing a Professional Supervision policy?](#)

It is becoming increasingly clear that government and community expectations are increasing in regard to accountability of Ministers in religious organisations. The failure of religious institutions (including Baptist churches) has been clearly brought into the light in the last decade and the government has clearly placed the onus of responsibility on religious organisations to improve how they manage and supervise their pastoral workers.

Institutions that do not act to improve their management and supervision of pastoral staff can expect to suffer significant reputational damage when they fail in their duty of care as has been witnessed recently in Australia and abroad. They will also likely leave themselves exposed to greater legal and insurance exposure if they do not implement adequate policy measures and may even suffer government sanctions in regards their ACNC status or the like. This is what is currently being seen in relationship to some of the earlier recommendations made by the royal commission around the National Redress Scheme and the implementation of Child Protection Policies. The Federal Government has legislated those institutions that do not subscribe to the voluntary National Redress Scheme where allegations of abuse have been made will lose their basic religious charity status. Similarly, insurance cover for child molestation is now conditional on churches having implemented the best practices in child protection policies, code of practices, child protection training and other processes relating to screening of applicants, handling allegations and mandatory reporting. As Professional Supervision becomes a best practice approach to people management across religious institutions, it is likely that there may be similar repercussions facing institutions which do not implement these best practices in relationship to the management and supervision of their staff. The failure to applying best practices will also undermine any legal defence a church has in the case of them being sued for any harm done to any person in their care.

[Questions About Supervisors](#)

[What qualifications are required for a Professional Supervisor?](#)

There are two important aspects needed for Professional Supervisors – formal training and experience.

We recognise that there are several pathways to obtaining the appropriate training for Professional Supervisors. Therefore, supervisors working with QB pastors, will be required to satisfy the following requirement

A Supervisor must be trained and hold a recognised qualification in Professional Supervision or an equivalent discipline that provides them with the necessary skills for a Supervisor. This would typically be a qualification that would satisfy the academic requirements for membership in the

Australasian Association of Supervisors or other equivalent professional body as a Professional Supervisor.⁵

They will also be required to be able to demonstrate that they are competent and experienced in supervisory practice, be regularly supervised themselves and hold appropriate professional indemnity insurance.

Some would seek to add to this list that Professional Supervisors should be familiar with pastoral ministry, be familiar with Baptist polity and governance and be committed Christians. These are things that may be beneficial and helpful to consider for most pastors seeking supervision. However, each Pastor, individually is best placed to identify the type of supervisor that would best benefit them. Some pastors may prefer a supervisor who is from another denomination or even from a clinical background depending on their ministry circumstances. And so, while recommended, it is up to local autonomous churches and pastors to decide what is best for their staff, these additional criteria are therefore not mandatory for a Professional Supervisor of a QB Pastor.

All Supervisors who are to Supervise QB Pastors, must complete an induction which will outline some of the expectations of supervision for QB Pastors including the QB code of practices for Pastors.

[A Professional Supervisor doesn't understand my context, how can they help me?](#)

There are some advantages if a Professional Supervisor has some understanding of a pastor's ministry context, Baptist ministry or Baptist polity in general, but it is not essential. One of the tasks of a Professional Supervisor early in a relationship is to grow an understanding of the supervisee's ministry context including the community, congregation, church leadership and denominational peculiarities they work within. Some people find that having a Professional Supervisor from outside of their "denominational bubble" can bring other useful perspectives and provide challenge in ways never imagined.

Professional Supervisors are trained and equipped with tools that can be applied across disciplines. What is more important than an in depth understanding of the specific ministry context is the ability for the supervisee to build an open, honest and transparent relationship of trust with their supervisor.

[If Mentoring does not meet the requirements, why don't we fix it so it does?](#)

Mentoring as implemented for QB Pastors is variable in its application and effectiveness. It is applied ad hoc because of the lack of guidelines, standards and training required for its mentors. Mentors are usually chosen based on their experience and not because they have any skills in mentoring or because they know how to mentor. QB has identified that it would be beneficial to produce some resources / training to help QB mentors be more equipped and more effective in their role as mentors, and these are in production now.

Even with improved equipping and resourcing of mentors, it is unlikely that mentors could provide what professional supervisors can due to the formal training required of Supervisors. While there is no doubt many things are shared, there are also some specific differences. Mentoring has a different focus (all of life) and is based around the development of skills and character in order that the mentoree be more effective and perform better. Supervision can consider broad skill and character development, but typically has a narrower focus on things that impact on work and more particularly, on wellbeing of those involved in that

⁵ From the Minimum Standards for Professional Supervision from Professional Supervision – A Guide for Queensland Baptist.

work. The wellbeing of the Pastor, those they minister to and even the organisation they work with is the primary concern of the supervisor and rigorous consideration of these is often missing from mentoring.

Professional Supervisors are also uniquely trained to be able to recognise and help their supervisees process complex relationship dynamics and ethical dilemmas. They are not the “experts” as a mentor is expected to be but are facilitators of a reflective process where the pastor considers their responses and actions and explores new perspectives and alternatives. Supervisors, unlike mentors, are held accountable for their practice by professional bodies, codes of conduct, professional development and their own supervision which all work together to protect the quality and effectiveness of the supervision being given.

There is no doubt that QB could upskill mentors with some additional skills and provide some basic models of supervisory practice, however, simply providing some additional training will not fix the issues of variability or raise the bar substantially. Without a major change in the way mentoring is practiced, many of the greatest benefits of Professional Supervision would not occur. And if the major changes needed are realised, then what is being provided is a Professional Supervision service, not a mentoring one.

There is value in both mentoring and Professional Supervision. Both have a slightly different focus and utilise the gifts, abilities, experience and training of individuals in different ways to achieve different results. This is why the proposal is not to eliminate Mentoring, but to supplement it with some Professional Supervision so that all Pastors can benefit from the best of both if they choose to continue with mentoring.

Couldn't QB train pastors to be a Professional Supervisor?

Various courses of study (eg Graduate Certificates, Graduate Diplomas, Masters) are being developed by theological colleges around Australia to train Professional Supervisors. Theological colleges are uniquely placed to be able to provide this training that meets the standards of professional bodies and QB believes training of Professional Supervisors is best undertaken through them.

Malyon College in coming years is likely to become a provider of such a course of study for QB pastors and others interested in gaining such qualifications. QB encourages interested pastors to consider completing a course of study and becoming an accredited Professional Supervisor.

Can I train as a professional supervisor?

We encourage pastors to consider undertaking training as professional supervisors if they desire to help support their colleagues in this way. There are various training programs currently available and information on these is available by contacting the QB Director of Pastoral Services.

Who decides who will supervise me?

Individual pastors will be able to select their own Supervisor who satisfies their own personal needs and goals provided they meet the qualifications of a supervisor as laid down in the church's or QB's policy.

QB will maintain a list of recommended supervisors who have completed an induction into QB Supervision processes which will be made available to all its Pastors. Supervisors who want to be listed as a recommended supervisor will need to demonstrate that they meet the minimum requirements laid down and attend an induction program. Pastors can choose supervisors from the recommended list or find another suitably qualified supervisor who can apply to be recognised by QB.

Can I be supervised by someone in my church? What does it mean for a supervisor to have a degree of independence?

No, a pastor cannot be supervised by another pastor or direct report in their church or by a person who is a member of their church. It is important that a Professional Supervisor has a degree of independence from the pastor's local ministry setting and its functioning. This ensures they are better able to identify any blind, deaf or dumb spots which may exist in the pastor's ministry and not have to manage the complexities of dual relationships.

It is likely that pastors will already have accountability structures in place within their local churches (e.g. through leadership groups, line management relationships to senior pastors or even to the congregational membership at large) which will serve the demands of the local congregation. These relationships, while important, are part of the overall church system and therefore struggle to step back and take an independent and unbiased position that is necessary for Supervision. It should be remembered that Supervision is not just about serving the needs of congregation but is broader and concerned about the wellbeing of the pastor in the first instance and the wellbeing of those they minister to in the second instance.

Similarly, if a pastor has a close personal relationship with a supervisor, they would not be suitable to be their Professional Supervisor as they will struggle to be objective in their approach.

Because of the need for independence, QB is not employing any "denominational" Professional Supervisors, but will be using supervisors who are operating as independent professionals in their own right.

Questions About Supervisory Practice

How will I fit supervision in with everything else?

It is recognised that in ministry, there is always more that could be done than what time allows and so pastors are always making decisions about how to use their time most effectively. It is also recognised that Pastors already invest significant time into mentoring relationships and that the introduction of supervision may be perceived as an additional load.

However, many who regularly participate in supervision would attest that supervision provides them with an effective way to reflect, consider the work at hand and become more intentional about their priorities, use of time and overall wellbeing. Prioritisation should be a regular topic within supervision. Good time management involves reflective conversation about what to choose to neglect. Sustainable ministry also requires that the pastor maintain their wellbeing and become aware of aspects of ministry that may compromise their ability to minister effectively. Supervision can help a Pastor to be more effective and efficient in their work and thus reduce the pressure of their ministry. To many pastors, Supervision is looked forward to and is a gift to them personally and their ministry in general.

With the introduction of 4 supervision sessions per year, the demands for mentoring will be reduced from 6 times per year to 4 times per year and the total support expected for pastors will increase from 6 times per year to 8. For anyone who is mentoring another pastor, the time they invest in personal development will be the same. For anyone mentoring more than one pastor, they will recoup some time through the reduced demands for them to act as a mentor. Only those who are not mentoring another pastor, will have a slightly greater commitment in terms of their personal development of nominally 2 hours per year.

What reporting is involved in supervision?

In the most part, the supervision that occurs between a Professional Supervisor and a pastor will be confidential and the matters discussed would never be divulged to others. Confidentiality is essential if a safe and trusted space is to be established in supervision. The contractual arrangement set up at the beginning of the supervision relationship would make this clear.

However, there will be an expectation that there will be some reporting, and this will potentially be on two levels.

Firstly, there will be some basic compliance reporting to the responsible body. Nominally this will be to QB who will be overseeing the process for most pastors. This reporting will take 2 forms. Firstly, when a supervision relationship is established, the Pastor will need to register this relationship by sending to QB a copy of the covenant or contract that has been established with the Supervisor. Secondly, an annual report signed by the Supervisor must be submitted that will document that the required number of supervision sessions have been completed for that year. If a church assumes responsibility for the Professional Supervision of their pastors, the compliance reporting will be directly to the local church. The Pastor will report similarly on the number of supervision sessions received through their re-registration application.

Very occasionally a second level of reporting may be required when a Supervisor determines that there is an immediate and real potential for harm to either the Pastor being supervised or another person to whom they are ministering. These would normally relate to the identification of situations where the Pastor is acting beyond acceptable boundaries of ministry and thus likely breaching a code of ministry. The first response of the supervisor would be to discuss these matters with the Pastor in supervision and seek to elicit a change in behaviour or attitude. If corrective measures were put in place, in most cases, this would be the issue dealt with and no reporting would be undertaken. But if there was not a willingness to correct the behaviour, and the risks for harm continued, the duty of care that a Supervisor carries would require that they report their concerns to the organisation responsible for the pastor – this would likely be to QB and/or the local church. Existing policies and procedures for dealing with matters of concern (e.g. Code of Conduct and Ethical Investigation Response Group Procedures) would be followed. It would be normal in such situations that information would be shared and an appropriate response would be decided between QB and the local church leadership. Mandatory reporting around the abuse of children would fall into this category.

Is supervision confidential?

In most instances, the details of items discussed during supervision will be kept confidential between the supervisor and the supervisee in accordance with the codes of practice that govern the supervisor's practice.

However, supervision like any other form of pastoral counselling or pastoral conversation can never be completely confidential because it is not only for the support of the pastor as a practitioner, but also for the wellbeing of those amongst whom the pastor works. If something emerges during supervision that has the potential to inflict harm on the pastor as the supervisee or on another person, the supervisor has a duty of care to do something about this.

Legally, if there is disclosure about a case of child abuse, this would need to be reported to the appropriate authorities as is the case in any disclosure of this type in local church ministry. These are familiar requirements for local church ministry leaders.

For other items of concern, these would normally be discussed in the first instance within supervision with the aim to help the pastor identify the risk and take preventative actions to avoid harm. If there was a blatant disregard for or no acknowledgment of the present risks, the Supervisor may choose after discussion with the supervisee to communicate their concerns to the organisational contact for that pastor which may be a local church contact and/or a contact at QB Services for their further follow up on those issues of concern. The motivation of any reporting is concern for the wellbeing of those involved.

Can we use group supervision?

Group supervision does have some advantages and some disadvantages. One of the key disadvantages is that a Pastor will not have to the opportunity to share specifically about their own ministry challenges as regularly. Given that the current requirement is minimalistic at only 4 supervision sessions per year, this would severely limit the opportunity for a Pastor to bring matters of concern that impact them personally.

In addition to this fact, group supervision generally requires a higher skill set for both supervisors and supervisees than individual supervisory practice. Therefore, group supervision will not be accepted for at least the first 4 years of Supervisory practice for QB Pastors while the Supervisory program is being established. It may be considered appropriate and included in options for pastors in the future. Group supervision may be appropriate for Chaplains in certain situations and should be negotiated accordingly.

How can Church Leadership and others feed into the Supervision Process?

There is no formal route by which local church or denominational leaders such as Regional Ministers can feed into the supervision process. However, it is always possible for them to speak to the pastor themselves and suggest that issues of concern might be profitably considered in supervision. It is hoped that ministers will be alert to the views of lay people and other colleagues about their ministry and bring such comments to supervision to reflect on them as part of responsible practice.

Will supervisors be available in regional areas?

There are Supervisors spread right around Australia and it will be a case of demand driving supply. QB Services is not planning on developing its own team of QB Supervisors but will be sourcing them from the ranks of Professional Supervisors already operational in various communities. In time, it is likely that Professional Supervisors will set up practice around the regions as they service ministers and clergy from several denominations.

The availability of Zoom and other video conference platforms also provides a wonderful way to connect with a supervisor who may be distant or remote.

How does supervision relate to performance reviews or the re-call process for pastors?

There is no direct relationship between supervision and a pastor's internal performance review or between supervision and the process of re-calling pastors.

Supervisors do not answer to or work for church leadership and so there is no process of feed back to them on their supervisory work with a pastor. Matters discussed within supervision are confidential to the supervisory relationship and cannot be shared unless approval is given by the pastor being supervised.

Neither is there any formal mechanism for church leaders to pass information back to supervisors from individual performance reviews. Ministers are however encouraged and able to bring to supervision

matters that have been raised in performance reviews to reflect on these and process them in a safe environment. This would be encouraged.

It is hoped that with regular reflection during supervision on the pastor's relationships and effectiveness in their appointment that this will lead to fewer surprises in any review and re-call processes they are involved with.

Who is responsible for the oversight of supervision for pastors?

Because of the autonomy of the local Baptist church, the local church is responsible for the wellbeing of their pastors and their congregations. The leadership of local Baptist churches are ultimately responsible for ensuring they are fulfilling their obligations to all concerned in these matters.

With respect to the function of pastors and specifically professional supervision, local church leaders must balance their understanding of the teaching of Scripture, with policy matters relating to their own church polity, denominational expectations and standards, government expectations as well as congregational and community expectations. When it comes to professional supervision, there are many stakeholders involved.

Local Baptist churches who are members of Baptist Union of Queensland recognise that they are a part of something larger than just themselves and that their decisions impact a wider network. An outworking of this is that sometimes, local churches curtail their autonomy and independence in light of shared beliefs, practices and operational matters that are delegated to QB to manage on their behalf. The responsibility becomes a shared responsibility. The Registration of Pastors is one of these things and overseeing pastor's wellbeing, their ongoing continuing professional development and the professional standards that govern their ministries are all part of this.

It is recognised that professional supervision as a means of helping to care for pastors personally and in ministry can be more effectively managed by QB Services on behalf of churches rather than expecting every church to manage it for themselves. QB has therefore developed a policy that it invites local churches adopt. This will allow QB Services to manage Profession Supervision of registered Pastoral Leaders under the existing Personal Ministry Develop Plan and Registration procedures.

If churches choose to manage their supervision policies themselves, they will be able to develop their own policies and procedures in accordance with minimum standards agreed to by the QB Assembly. They will be required to have their policies approved by QB and will need to report annually on the compliance of their pastors to their policy to ensure that Registration requirements are met.

Questions About who should Receive Supervision

If I am not registered as a QB pastor, but work as a ministry worker in a local church, do I need to be in supervision?

The current understanding of the intentions of the Royal Commission would be that anyone employed that is working in a ministry or "pastoral" capacity in a local church should be receiving pastoral supervision. It is reasonable that some form of supervision be considered for anyone who might be employed in a ministry role for more than 1 day per week.

At this point, QB does not have any means of accrediting ministry workers and so is not able to offer to oversee their Professional Supervision. QB is working on a proposal to provide accreditation for ministry workers in local churches and so there may be a time in the future where QB could provide oversight of these ministry workers. Until this time, oversight of the Professional Supervision of ministry workers is the responsibility of the local church.

If I am registered as a QB pastor and work part-time, do I need to be in supervision?

Yes, part time Pastoral staff should receive Professional Supervision.

Our QB guidelines state that to be considered for Registration as QB Minister, a person must be in an ongoing ministry position of at least 0.6 FTE. To continue to be registered, a QB Minister must continue to have a call to a current Ministry context.

All registered QB Ministers will be required to have professional supervision at least 4 times per year as well as accessing another additional Support person (mentor, counsellor, coach, spiritual director) at least 4 times per year to maintain their registration.

Part time ministers can apply to Ministerial Services for a relaxation of the number of times they need to access the additional Support person, but will still be required to receive 4 Professional Supervision sessions per year. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but QB's recommendation is that all registered ministers access at least 8 hours of support per year regardless of whether they are part time.

I'm a retired pastor working part time for a church - should I still attend supervision?

Retired pastor who fulfill one of the following criteria

- a. You are employed in a paid ministry role of more than 0.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE), and / or
- b. You have a formal pastoral ministry that includes the provision of pastoral advice, support, counselling or assistance in times of need.

will be required to receive Professional Supervision 4 times a year. While retired pastors do not need to satisfy the other requirements of registration (e.g. have a Personal Ministry Development Plan or an additional support person), it is expected that they participate in supervision for their own wellbeing and the benefit of the church in which they are ministering.

I'm taking some extended leave - should I still attend supervision?

Pastors are expected to receive at least 1 hour of supervision per quarter. Any minister on an extended period of leave (of at least 3 months) may by negotiation with their supervisor, miss their scheduled supervision sessions during that leave period.

If leave is greater than 3 months, a pastor may miss 1 supervision session. If leave is greater than 6 months, a pastor may miss 2 supervision sessions, etc.

Extended leave may include long service leave, parental leave, sick leave, etc.

For a pastor taking Sabbatical Leave, Professional Supervision will provide a helpful place for the work of reflection during that period of leave and it is recommended that Pastors on Sabbatical Leave continue to attend scheduled Professional Supervision.

I am a Registered Minister on Special Services serving in an appointment outside the QB movement – should I be in supervision?

Special Services is granted to Registered Ministers who are deemed to still be ministering in a pastoral capacity. Ministers on Special Services are required to fulfill all the requirements of a Registered Minister and therefore Professional Supervision and access to an additional support person will be requirements for ongoing QB registration.

I am a chaplain - should I be in supervision?

We have many chaplains in the QB movement including in the defence forces, schools, hospitals, nursing homes and prisons. These are ministry positions which provide care for individuals often in times of trauma and high stress and definitely would benefit from receiving supervision.

Chaplains who hold registration as Registered Ministers are required to undertake supervision as part of their registration – that is, at least 4 sessions per year. For other chaplains, supervision requirements will be set by their managing organisations.

I am a church planter– should I be in supervision?

Church planters if they hold registration as a QB Minister are required to undertake supervision as part of their registration – that is, at least 4 sessions per year. For other church planters requirements should be negotiated with the Director of Church Planting Services. It is recognised that church planters do not have the financial backing of an established church and in these cases, a church planter may be required to fund this support themselves or seek the support of a larger partner church.

Acknowledgement is given for some of the material above that is sourced from FAQs about Supervision as developed by the Methodist Church <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/supervision/faqs-about-supervision/>