



COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS

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1. PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

This framework defines the progressive professional competence expected of persons awarded one of ACRP's four professional designations. It provides a common governance basis for designation awarding, competency assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), professional development, progression, quality assurance and retention.

The framework preserves the four-designation progression currently used by ACRP while supporting the underlying qualification pathway across NQF Levels 2–10. The professional designation itself is not an NQF qualification and is not assigned an NQF level. NQF levels in this framework refer to the level of an underlying SAQA-registered qualification or part-qualification, or to the level of learning against which equivalent competence may be evaluated through an approved RPL process.

A higher academic qualification does not automatically confer a higher professional designation. Awarding requires an integrated judgement of relevant learning, demonstrated ministry competence, appropriate experience, ethical standing and any prescribed ACRP competency assessment.

2. DEFINITION OF COMPETENCE

For purposes of ACRP, competence means the demonstrated ability to integrate relevant knowledge, skills, experience, values and ethical principles and apply them appropriately and effectively in Christian ministry/pastoral counselling practice.

Competence therefore requires more than theoretical knowledge.

A competent practitioner must be able to:

- demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding;
- apply knowledge in practical ministry situations;
- perform relevant professional functions;
- exercise appropriate professional judgement;
- communicate effectively;
- act ethically;
- work within the limits of competence and Scope of Practice;
- recognise when referral is necessary;
- accept professional responsibility and accountability;
- reflect on professional practice;
- respond appropriately to changing ministry contexts; and
- maintain and develop professional competence.

3. SAQA ALIGNMENT PRINCIPLES

- Professional designations recognise professional status and demonstrated expertise within a defined occupational or professional field; they remain distinct from qualifications registered on the NQF.
- Each designation must have transparent awarding criteria, including relevant underlying qualifications or part-qualification requirements, experiential learning or experience, competency assessment and an RPL

route where applicable.

- The four designations form a clear professional progression pathway, with increasing autonomy, complexity, responsibility, leadership, specialist depth and contribution to the profession.
- RPL provides an alternative route to recognition of demonstrated competence; it does not lower the competency standard of the designation.
- Retention requires adherence to ACRP's Code of Ethics, continuing professional development (CPD), payment of prescribed fees and continuing good standing.
- ACRP must protect the public through ethical standards, complaints and disciplinary mechanisms, appropriate scope boundaries, accurate designation records and quality-assured assessment.
- Transformation, access, articulation and lifelong learning should be supported without compromising professional standards.

4. FOUR-DESIGNATION PROFESSIONAL PATHWAY

Designation	Underlying Qualification	Competency level	Primary professional character	Typical autonomy
Religious Practitioner	NQF L2-4 (non-ministry qualification)	Foundational	Foundational ministry practice and supervised/defined responsibility	Works within defined ministry authority and accountability
Advanced Religious Practitioner	NQF L2-4 (ministry / counselling qualification)	Applied	Competent operational ministry/pastoral caring practice and leadership	Independent judgement in routine and moderately complex ministry
Religious Professional	NQF L5-8 (ministry / counselling qualification)	Advanced	Advanced professional ministry/pastoral counselling, strategic leadership and integration	High professional autonomy; leads programmes, teams and systems
Religious Specialist	NQF L9-10 (ministry / counselling qualification)	Specialist	Specialist mastery, advanced scholarship, strategic leadership and profession-building	Expert autonomy within a defined field; sector-level contribution

4.1 Progression

Progression is not based solely on the accumulation of years of experience. The applicant must demonstrate the higher level of competence required for the designation.

4.2 Qualifications

- ACRP accepts existing, previously registered (legacy/historical), or newly developed SAQA registered or SAQA evaluated ministry/theology/counselling or relevant qualifications on the NQF as required for each designation.
- A foreign qualification as a qualification obtained from a nationally recognised institution outside South Africa. For professional designation purposes, it is only accepted if SAQA has evaluated it and issued a valid certificate confirming its equivalence on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

5. CORE COMPETENCY DOMAINS

The domains are interrelated and should not be interpreted as isolated areas of competence.

Domain	Framework meaning
A. Christian Ministry and Theological Integration	Applies Christian faith, Scripture, theology and ministry understanding appropriately to context and role.
B. Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Care	Nurtures spiritual formation, mutual care, human dignity, meaning, resilience and appropriate pastoral support.
C. Communication, Preaching and Faith Formation	Communicates the Christian message responsibly; facilitates learning, discipleship and contextual faith formation.
D. Leadership, Governance and Administration	Exercises accountable Christian leadership; contributes to governance, administration, stewardship, planning and organisational sustainability.
E. Mission and Community Engagement	Facilitates Christian witness and appropriate responses to spiritual, social and community needs.
F. Ethics, Safeguarding and Professional Conduct	Practises within competence, respects confidentiality and boundaries, applies ethical judgement and protects vulnerable persons.
G. Interdisciplinary Awareness and Referral	Recognises needs beyond ministry competence and collaborates/refers appropriately to other professionals and services.
H. Research, Reflective Practice and Knowledge Development	Uses evidence and reflection to improve practice; at advanced levels contributes to research, innovation and professional knowledge.
I. Education, Mentoring and Supervision	Develops others progressively through facilitation, mentoring, training, supervision and professional leadership.
J. Professional Accountability and CPD	Maintains professional currency, records, accountability, CPD and compliance with ACRP requirements.

6. DESIGNATION-SPECIFIC COMPETENCY STANDARDS

6.1 Religious Practitioner

Element	Standard
Underlying qualification	NQF L2–4 (non-ministry qualification)
Professional description	Entry-level professional designation recognising foundational competence for responsible Christian ministry practice. It provides a professional access point for persons serving in congregations, ministries and faith communities who can demonstrate basic ministry competence and accountable practice. In the area of <i>pastoral care</i>, this is the most basic level of care where members of a faith community are supported to take care of one another. This usually takes place within an informal network of care communities (e.g. friendships, small prayer groups, telephone conversations and responsive care during times of crises).

Knowledge and Understanding

- Foundational biblical and Christian ministry knowledge appropriate to role.
- Basic understanding of spiritual formation, fellowship, Christian lifestyle and congregational life.
- Foundational principles of compassionate listening, pastoral support, confidentiality, boundaries and referral.
- Basic awareness of community needs, diversity, safeguarding and applicable ethical responsibilities.
- Basic organisational, communication and ministry-administration principles.

Applied Ministry Skills / Competencies

- Accompany and support ministry work that encourages spiritual formation.
 - Nurture fellowship, mutual care and supportive relationships in a faith community.
 - Provide basic Christian guidance, encouragement, life-skills support and pastoral presence.
 - Communicate Christian teaching appropriately within defined ministry responsibilities.
 - Assist with basic ministry organisation and administration.
 - Recognise distress, risk or need outside own competence and refer appropriately.
 - Participate in community-facing ministry and service activities.
- In terms of **pastoral care**:
- Basic ministry care and comforting within informal networks of communities (friendships, small prayer groups, phone conversations etc.).
 - Generic guidance and counselling skills such as compassionate, active and responsive listening and conversational techniques to offer support, care, guidance, life-skills facilitation and empowerment in a safe confidential environment are required.

Autonomy, Judgement and Accountability

- Works mainly within defined responsibilities, ministry authority and appropriate oversight.
- Uses established procedures and ministry resources to address familiar situations.
- Seeks guidance when situations are unfamiliar, complex, high-risk or outside competence.

- Accepts responsibility for own conduct, confidentiality, boundaries and accurate representation of professional status.

Awarding Evidence (Workplace/Practical Experience/Experiential Learning/Assessment)

- Relevant SAQA-registered **non**-ministry/theology qualification at NQF L2–4, as accepted by ACRP; or an approved RPL route.
- Confirmed relevant ministry experience, with supervised practical exposure where the field requires it:
 - Persons with a non-ministry NQF L 4 qualification (e.g. Senior Certificate) – at least one (1) year of confirmed ministry experience on standards set by the professional body.
 - Persons without such a qualification – at least two (2) years of confirmed ministry experience on standards set by the professional body.

For people who will *focus on pastoral care*:

- Persons with an NQF L 4 (Senior Certificate) – at least three (3) years of proven ministry on standards set the professional body.
- Persons without such qualification – at least five (5) years of proven ministry on standards set by the professional body.
- Application evidence and third-party confirmation of experience.
- Competency verification through portfolio, assessment, observation or other ACRP-approved methods.

Application of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Practicing pastors or ministry leaders with no theology or ministry qualification, who also do not meet the requirement of a non-ministry NQF Level 2 or 4 qualification, but who have at least two (2) years of confirmed ministry experience as recognised by the professional body, may apply for this designation.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for this entry-level designation is limited and is assessed based on third-party verification of professional ministry involvement, years of relevant experience, and evidence of formal, non-formal, or informal learning. Individuals are typically registered at Practitioner level to provide them with recognition under the Code of Ethics and a Scope of Practice while they pursue RPL assessment for a higher designation.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Requirements

At least 20 CPD points should be earned per annum, of which 3 must be Ethics-related points.

Progression Indicator

Progression is demonstrated by movement from supported foundational practice toward broader knowledge, more independent judgement, operational leadership and the ability to develop others.

Progression Pathway

Religious Practitioner → Advanced Religious Practitioner → Religious Professional → Religious Specialist

6.2 Advanced Religious Practitioner

Element	Standard
Underlying qualification	NQF L2–4 (ministry / theology / counselling qualification)
Professional description	Practitioners at this advanced level share the gospel within a specific context, build caring relationships within the faith community, and address members' spiritual, emotional, and practical needs. They provide Christian leadership, develop emerging leaders, oversee ministry operations and administrative and accountability processes, equip members for gospel ministry, support vulnerable individuals, and promote justice, fairness, and ethical values in society. In pastoral care, they support members to care for one another while also playing a significant role in providing care directly. This care is typically delivered through informal networks such as friendships, small prayer groups, telephone conversations, and responsive support during times of crisis.

Knowledge and Understanding

- Integrated knowledge of Scripture, theology, ministry practice and contextual Christian leadership.
- Knowledge of caring relationships, pastoral support, group dynamics, intercultural ministry and ethical decision-making.
- Working knowledge of ministry administration, governance, accountability and resource stewardship.
- Understanding of contextual mission, community engagement and social responsibility.
- Awareness of relevant interdisciplinary knowledge and referral systems.

Applied Ministry Skills / Competencies

- Share and interpret the Christian message appropriately for specific contexts and audiences.
- Build caring relationships in the faith community and respond responsibly to spiritual and practical needs.
- Apply Christian leadership and assist in developing ministry leaders and volunteers.
- Arrange and oversee day-to-day ministry operations, administration and accountability processes.
- Facilitate small groups, ministry teams, faith formation and community initiatives.
- Apply appropriate ministry models and problem-solving methods to routine and moderately complex situations.
- Support people in need, advocate responsibly for fairness and dignity, and coordinate referral where necessary.

In terms of **pastoral care**:

- More advanced level of ministry care provided when members of a faith community are supported to take care of each other, but where the practitioner also plays a key role in providing care.
- Caring within an informal network of care communities (e.g. friendships, small prayer groups, telephone conversations and spontaneous reactions to crises).
- Generic guidance and care skills on a basic level such as compassionate, active, and responsive listening and conversational techniques to offer support, care, guidance, life-skills facilitation and empowerment in a safe confidential environment are required. In addition, the ability to nurture some basic skills in others is expected.

Autonomy, Judgement and Accountability

- Exercises independent judgement in routine and moderately complex ministry matters.
- Plans, implements and reviews ministry activities and takes responsibility for quality within own area.
- Interprets information from different sources and selects appropriate ministry responses.
- Guides less-experienced workers within authorised structures and knows when specialist advice is required.

Awarding Evidence (Workplace/Practical Experience/Experiential Learning/Assessment)

- Relevant SAQA-registered ministry/theology/counselling qualification at NQF L2–4, as accepted by ACRP; or demonstrated equivalent competence through approved RPL.
- Relevant ministry experience demonstrating responsibility beyond foundational practice, with supervised practical exposure where the field requires it:
 - Persons with a **ministry/theology/counselling** NQF L 2-4 qualification – at least two (2) years of confirmed ministry experience on standards set by the professional body.

For people who will *focus on pastoral care*:

- Persons with a basic Ministry qualification on NQF L 4 in the field of **Christian Pastoral Caregiving** – Ten (10) hours practical pastoral work and five (5) hours of supervision.
- Application and /or Portfolio evidence and third-party confirmation of experience.
- Competency verification through portfolio, assessment, observation or other ACRP-approved methods.

Application of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Applicants with no formal ministry qualification, with at least six (6) years of proven ministry experience, and meeting certain criteria set by the professional body may apply on the prescribed form for RPL into this designation.

RPL applications are to be done by completing the relevant RPL application forms of the professional body and submitting such other information as required by the professional body (specified on the RPL forms and/or additionally requested). The latter includes the submission of a Portfolio of Evidence of prescribed assignments that will be evaluated by a suitably qualified RPL Assessor.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Requirements

At least 20 CPD points should be earned per annum, of which 3 must be Ethics-related points.

Progression Indicator

Progression requires evidence of advanced conceptual knowledge, strategic rather than merely operational leadership, integration of complex ministry contexts, and professional-level accountability.

Progression Pathway

Religious Practitioner → **Advanced Religious Practitioner** → Religious Professional → Religious Specialist

6.3 Religious Professional

Element	Standard
Underlying qualification	NQF L5–8 (ministry / theology / counselling qualification)
Professional description	General ministry competencies include leading ministry activities that support spiritual formation, programme development, mutual care, and Christian discipleship within a faith community. Practitioners provide strategic leadership and professional judgement, promote the well-being and sustainability of the faith community, and apply theology responsibly in complex contexts to address the spiritual, social, and physical needs of society. In pastoral care and counselling, practitioners provide Christian pastoral and spiritual counselling using holistic, ethical, and culturally sensitive approaches. They integrate theological, psychological, and social perspectives to support individuals, families, and communities; address spiritual and life challenges; and collaborate with other professionals when needed. Their work promotes healing, well-being, and human dignity, responds to issues such as illness, trauma, grief, addiction, and mental health concerns, and extends across community, healthcare, educational, and workplace settings. They also demonstrate understanding of professional ethics, human rights, and basic research principles.

Knowledge and Understanding

- Advanced, integrated knowledge of theology, ministry, leadership and relevant human and social contexts.
- Critical understanding of theories, methods and models used in ministry and practical theology.
- Knowledge of governance, organisational sustainability, risk, ethics, human rights and professional accountability.
- Advanced awareness of pastoral care, mental-health and social concerns for recognition and referral, without assuming statutory clinical authority.
- Research literacy and evidence-informed reflective practice.

Applied Ministry Skills / Competencies

In addition to the competencies of the Advanced Religious Practitioner, the **Religious Professional** should have at least the following competencies as well:

- Conduct advanced ministry functions that facilitate spiritual formation, mutual care and Christian living.
- Provide strategic and missional leadership directed toward the vocation, well-being and sustainability of a faith community.
- Analyse complex ministry situations and develop contextually appropriate programmes, policies and interventions.
- Lead teams, develop leaders, manage change and strengthen governance and accountability systems.
- Integrate theological, ethical, cultural and interdisciplinary perspectives in professional judgement.
- Develop education, training, mentoring and professional-development initiatives.
- Use research and evaluation to improve ministry practice and organisational effectiveness.
- Represent ministry responsibly in multidisciplinary, community and sector forums.

In terms of pastoral care and counselling:

- Differentiate between the different perspectives of Ministry/Pastoral Counselling,
- Understand the dynamics of HIV and AIDS and the impact of the epidemic on humans' spiritual needs.
- Apply the interplay between different models of spiritual counselling on healing and helping and the human quest for dignity and meaning within the context of human suffering and within different cultural settings.
- Apply the principle of inter-culturalism in Ministry and Pastoral Counselling.
- Recognise mental disorders in order to deal with the principle of sound reference within a team approach.
- Identify addiction and substance dependency and its impact on identity and human behaviour.
- Provide Ministry/Pastoral Counselling to the sick within community, home, hospital and other clinical settings.
- Practise family and marriage caregiving with emphasis on prevention care.
- Understand the spiritual needs of children and young people within different developmental stages (child and youth counselling) and educational settings.
- Acknowledge human rights and ministry ethics concerning the human quest for meaning and dignity.

Autonomy, Judgement and Accountability

- Exercises high professional autonomy and accountability in complex and unpredictable ministry environments.
- Critically evaluates evidence, competing perspectives, ethical implications and contextual factors.
- Takes responsibility for programme quality, organisational systems, professional standards and development of others.
- Recognises limits of competence and establishes appropriate consultation, safeguarding and referral arrangements.

Awarding Evidence (Workplace/Practical Experience/Experiential Learning/Assessment)

- Relevant SAQA-registered ministry/theology/counselling qualification at NQF L5–8, as accepted by ACRP; or equivalent competence demonstrated through an approved RPL route.
- Substantial relevant ministry experience with evidence of professional responsibility and leadership with supervised practical exposure where the field requires it:
 - Persons with an NQF L 5, 6, 7 or 8 ministry/theology qualification - at least two (2) years ministry experience after study (or at least four (4) years of proven ministry experience during the study period).

For people who will focus on pastoral care and counselling:

- Persons with a ministry/theology NQF L 5-8 qualification in the field of **Christian Pastoral Counselling** - at least fifteen (15) hours of practical pastoral work per month with ten (10) hours of supervision, but the practical work can be up to seventy-five (75) hours of practical pastoral work during a minimum of twelve (12) months and thirty (30) hours of supervision.
- Application evidence and third-party confirmation of experience.
- Portfolio of evidence demonstrating integrated professional competence, ethical practice and impact.
- Competency verification through portfolio, assessment, observation or other ACRP-approved methods.

Application of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Applicants with no formal ministry qualification, with at least ten (10 years of proven ministry experience, and meeting certain criteria set by the professional body may apply on the prescribed form for RPL into this designation.

RPL applications are to be done by completing the relevant RPL application forms of the professional body and submitting such other information as required by the professional body (specified on the RPL forms and/or additionally requested). The latter includes the submission of a Portfolio of Evidence of prescribed assignments that will be evaluated by a suitably qualified RPL Assessor.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Requirements

At least 20 CPD points should be earned per annum, of which 3 must be Ethics-related points. An ACRP Council may set additional focus-specific CPD requirements to ensure professional growth and competence.

Progression Indicator

Progression to Specialist requires demonstrable mastery in a defined field, advanced research or scholarship, expert consultation capability, supervision/mentoring competence and a sustained contribution beyond the practitioner's own organisation.

Progression Pathway

Religious Practitioner → Advanced Religious Practitioner → **Religious Professional** → Religious Specialist

6.4 Religious Specialist

Element	Standard
Underlying qualification	NQF L9–10 (ministry / theology / counselling qualification)
Professional description	This designation refers to a ministry practitioner with specialised Master's- or Doctoral-level knowledge and skills relevant to ministry. General ministry competencies include leading and mentoring spiritual formation, fostering fellowship and mutual care, supporting holistic well-being through life skills and Christian values, and providing visionary leadership that strengthens the faith community, encourages faithful vocation, and advances a missional focus that shares the gospel while serving the spiritual, social, and practical needs of the wider community. In pastoral counselling, practitioners demonstrate advanced expertise in supporting people facing complex challenges such as chronic and terminal illness, addiction, family issues, trauma, suffering, poverty, and well-being concerns. They integrate theological, ethical, psychological, and social perspectives to assess spiritual needs, promote resilience and hope, and respond effectively across diverse cultural and community contexts. They are also skilled in academic research and scholarship, using advanced research methods, critical analysis, and theological reflection to contribute to the discipline. In addition, they supervise and mentor other practitioners and can design, manage, and conduct research that advances the field.

Knowledge and Understanding

- Systematic and specialised knowledge at the forefront of a defined field of ministry or practical theology.
- Advanced understanding of research methodology, knowledge creation, theory development and evidence-informed ministry practice.
- Deep integration of theology with relevant philosophical, cultural, social, organisational and interdisciplinary knowledge.
- Advanced understanding of ethics, human rights, safeguarding, professional boundaries and sector-level accountability.
- Expert knowledge of leadership, supervision, professional formation and quality development.

Applied Ministry Skills / Competencies

In addition to the competencies of the Religious Professional, the **Religious Specialist** should have at least the following competencies as well:

- Lead and mentor faith communities and ministry professionals in advanced spiritual formation, care, leadership and mission.
- Provide expert consultation and professional opinion within a defined ministry specialisation.
- Develop, evaluate and improve advanced ministry models, programmes, curricula, policies, standards and systems.
- Conduct, lead, supervise and disseminate advanced research and scholarly or practice-based knowledge development.
- Lead multidisciplinary, institutional or sector initiatives and build strategic partnerships.
- Contribute to professional standards, ethics, CPD, competency frameworks and quality assurance.

- Publish, teach, present or otherwise disseminate specialist knowledge and thought leadership.

Specialisation **pastoral care and counselling**:

- Understand the basics of psychiatric ailments and mental disorders within the diagnostic framework of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V) in order to create insight and pastoral sensitivity.
- Make a ministry/pastoral diagnosis/assessment regarding the impact of spiritual needs on human health.
- Provide advanced Ministry/Christian Pastoral Counselling to those suffering from chronic illness, terminal illness, addiction and substance dependency within a clinical context.
- Develop or apply marriage and family enrichment programs within different cultures.
- Differentiate the theoretical, philosophical and theological implications of the human quest for meaning in suffering and life.
- Apply the theoretical basis for community care and the predicament of poverty within the dynamics of civil society.
- Explain the interplay between human rights, pastoral/theological ethics, the moral dimensions in life and religious thinking and their impact on medical ethics.
- Do advanced research in an academic and scientific environment to communicate and liaise with peer researchers within the field of spiritual caregiving, practical theology and other theological disciplines and wider.
- Provide advanced supervision and mentoring to lower designation levels within competence and authorised structures.

Autonomy, Judgement and Accountability

- Exercises expert autonomy in a defined specialisation and accepts accountability for high-level recommendations and professional outputs.
- Makes defensible judgements in novel, complex and contested situations using advanced evidence, theory, ethics and contextual discernment.
- Creates or substantially advances knowledge and practice rather than merely applying established approaches.
- Provides leadership whose influence may extend across institutions, denominations, professional networks or the wider sector.

Awarding Evidence (Workplace/Practical Experience/Experiential Learning/Assessment)

- Relevant SAQA-registered ministry/theology/counselling qualification at NQF L9 or 10, as accepted by ACRP. Related qualifications may be considered where demonstrably ministry-relevant and supported by appropriate ministry competence.
- Extensive relevant experience showing specialist practice, leadership, or profession-building contribution:
 - Persons with an NQF L9 or 10 ministry/theology qualification - at least two (2) years ministry experience after study (or at least four (4) years of proven ministry experience during the study period).

For people who will *focus on pastoral care and counselling*:

- Persons with a ministry/theology NQF L9-10 qualification with specialisation in **Christian Pastoral Counselling** - at least hundred and sixty (160) hours of practical pastoral work during a minimum of eighteen (18) months with fifty (50) hours of supervision, but the practical work can be up to two

hundred (200) hours of practical pastoral work during a minimum of twenty-four (24) months and seventy-five (75) hours of supervision.

- Application evidence and third-party confirmation of experience.
- Advanced portfolio of evidence, including specialist outputs such as research, publications, programme development, supervision, policy/standards work or equivalent professional contribution.
- Competency verification through portfolio, assessment, observation or other ACRP-approved methods. An RPL route must demonstrate equivalent specialist learning and competence.

Application of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Applicants with no formal ministry qualification, but with at least six (6) years of proven ministry experience and meeting certain criteria set by the professional body may apply on the prescribed form for RPL into this designation.

Applicants with no formal ministry qualification, but with a ministry relevant non-ministry (such as psychology, social work) Master's degree or higher qualification, with at least six (6) years of proven ministry experience, and meeting certain criteria set by the professional body may apply on the prescribed form for RPL into this designation.

RPL applications are to be done by completing the relevant RPL application forms of the professional body and submitting evidence of adequate and relevant prior learning that was obtained through the successful completion of a thesis, which in the opinion of the Professional Body, represents learning expected on a specialist level. The application includes the submission of a Portfolio of Evidence of prescribed assignments that will be evaluated by a suitably qualified RPL Assessor.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Requirements

At least 20 CPD points should be earned per annum, of which 3 must be Ethics-related points. An ACRP Council may set additional focus-specific CPD requirements to ensure professional growth and competence.

Progression Indicator

As the highest current designation, continuing development is expressed through deepening specialist mastery, research, ethical leadership, supervision, innovation and sustained contribution to the profession and public good.

Progression Pathway

Religious Practitioner → Advanced Religious Practitioner → Religious Professional → **Religious Specialist**

7. COMPETENCY PROGRESSION MATRIX

Dimension	Religious Practitioner	Advanced Religious Practitioner	Religious Professional	Religious Specialist
Underlying Qualification	NQF L2-4 (non-ministry qualification)	NQF L2-4 (ministry / counselling qualification)	NQF L5-8 (ministry / counselling qualification)	NQF L9-10 (ministry / counselling qualification)
Knowledge	Foundational and practical	Integrated and operational	Advanced, critical and integrated	Specialised, frontier and knowledge-creating
Complexity	Familiar ministry situations	Routine to moderately complex	Complex and unpredictable	Novel, specialist and contested
Autonomy	Defined authority/oversight	Independent operational judgement	High professional autonomy	Expert specialist autonomy
Leadership	Supports ministry activities	Leads teams/operations	Strategic leadership and systems	Sector/institutional thought leadership
Development of others	Peer support	Guidance	Training, mentoring, professional development	Advanced supervision, expert mentoring
Research	Uses basic information	Uses evidence and reflection	Research literacy, evaluation and applied inquiry	Advanced research, scholarship and innovation
Professional contribution	Local practice	Organisational practice	Organisational/sector contribution	Profession-building and standards contribution

8. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

All registered designated affiliates are required to obtain a minimum of twenty (20) CPD points per annum, or alternatively forty (40) CPD points over a two-year cycle.

The accumulation of CPD points commences the year of a designated affiliate's registration, re-registration or return to practice after an absence.

In addition to the general requirement, all designated affiliates are expected to obtain a minimum of three (3) CPD points annually in activities specifically related to ethics, human rights, applicable legislation, professional conduct, and/or scope of practice. If more than three (3) ethics-related CPD points are earned, only three (3) points will be counted towards the ethics requirement. Any additional ethics-related CPD points earned beyond this limit will be credited towards the general annual CPD requirement of twenty (20) points.

Affiliates of ACRP have to keep a record (PoE) of the CPD activities they fulfil and submit the record of their CPD points earned together with their annual reregistration as to the relevant ACRP Council. They are encouraged to use the Council specific feedback forms available from the Councils.

9. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

ACRP provides an accessible, evidence-based RPL pathway for experienced ministry practitioners whose competence was acquired through non-formal, informal or alternative formal learning:

- RPL applicants should submit a structured portfolio of evidence (as specified in the RPL application form) rather than rely on years of service alone.
- Evidence may include verified ministry history, sermons/teaching, programme development, leadership outputs, training records, research, publications, references, counselling or mentoring logs and observed practice.
- Assessments are conducted by appropriately competent assessors.
- Where competence is only partially demonstrated, ACRP may require additional information or recommend further training.
- All RPL decisions are documented, quality assured and capable of audit.

10. RETAINING THE PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION

Designation retention confirms continuing professional currency and good standing. Unless ACRP approves differentiated requirements, the existing benchmark of 20 CPD points per 12-month period continues to apply across the four designations.

- Adhere to the ACRP Code of Ethics and all applicable professional policies.
- Complete and record the prescribed CPD requirement within the relevant cycle.
- Pay prescribed annual designation/affiliation fees.
- Maintain accurate professional information and practise only within demonstrated competence and lawful authority.
- Comply with complaints, disciplinary, safeguarding and professional-accountability requirements.

11. GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The ACRP Board retains governance oversight of the designation framework and material changes to designation titles, awarding criteria and progression requirements.
- Relevant Councils may develop council-specific competency frameworks and scopes of practice aligned with this generic framework. They may add field-specific requirements without changing the registered designation pathway except through the appropriate ACRP and SAQA processes.
- Designation records, awarding decisions, RPL evidence, CPD and disciplinary status are maintained in accordance with ACRP policy and applicable SAQA/NQF reporting requirements.
- The framework will be reviewed whenever SAQA policy, relevant legislation, registered qualifications or the professional practice context changes materially.

This Framework was drafted and refined with the assistance of AI tools. All content was reviewed, edited and approved by the author to ensure compliance with applicable laws and the company's standards.