



GUIDELINE

Guideline for the Appointment of a Principal

Introduction

Mercy Partners is a pontifical Public Juridic Person (PJP) enacted by the Holy See in November 2008. Mercy Partners, the PJP, is governed by its Canonical Statute which has been approved by the Holy See. Mercy Partners Limited, the civil entity, is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Constitution.

Mercy Partners is the canonical sponsor and civil owner of a number of education ministries located in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. The educational ministries are also companies limited by guarantee, with Mercy Partners being the sole Member of each of the companies.

Context

The Constitutions of each of the educational ministries set out the Reserved Powers of the Member and include the power of the Member to approve the appointment or dismissal of the principal of the ministry in accordance with contractual, industrial and legal due process and in consultation with the Directors of the ministry Company.

Whilst the ministry Board is the employer, the principal is the chief executive officer who complies with and ensures that the ministry's Executive Leadership Team implements the Board's strategic direction and policy. The principal is responsible for the ministry's leadership and management, the ongoing formation of the ministry as a community of faith, the good order and quality of performance of the ministry, and the educational, pastoral and spiritual welfare of the ministry's students and staff.

Appointing the right person as principal is critical for the ongoing success of Mercy Partners educational ministries. Rigorous recruitment and selection processes are essential if ministries are to attract and be led by principals of the highest personal and professional calibre. Moreover, such processes are to be ethical, procedurally fair and effective.

It is the role of Mercy Partners to establish Guidelines for the Appointment of a Principal. It is the role of the ministry Board to implement the process and protocols for the appointment of the principal in consultation with Mercy Partners and aligned to this Guideline.

This Guideline is intended to support Board Directors and all people involved in the principal appointment processes to achieve these outcomes.

Key Selection Criteria

The role requires that the principal be a baptised member of the Catholic faith and committed to Gospel values. Other essential criteria for the principal position should include:

- active membership in a Catholic Eucharistic community;
- demonstrated capacity to lead in alignment with the school's mission and vision as a Catholic faith community;
- recognised and current qualifications in Education and Theology/Spirituality, preferably at a Master's or Doctoral level;
- proven leadership experience, preferably within a Catholic education ministry;
- ability to serve as both a leader and a role model for the community's values and aspirations;
- capacity to lead in the formation of both staff and students.

The new principal should be held in high esteem by peers and have the energy and capacity to encourage and inspire all members of the ministry community.

Other criteria will be specific to the needs of the ministry at the time, and will be underscored by a well-defined position description that outlines specific duties associated with:

- faith development and religious education
- educational leadership
- pastoral care and child safety
- staff management and holistic formation
- administration and financial management
- strategic planning
- legal compliance.

Essential to and underpinning the selection criteria is the core specification that the principal is the Catholic faith leader who is responsible for the maintenance and development of the Catholic education ethos within the ministry community.

Role of Mercy Partners in Selection and Appointment Processes

When the principal's term is expiring or the principal resigns, the Chair of the ministry Board is to immediately inform the Chair of the Mercy Partners Board.

A selection procedure is to be prepared by the ministry Board and provided to the Chair of Mercy Partners Board for feedback and endorsement. The procedure should include information about personnel to be involved in the process, the Selection Panel Chair, and the timeframes for the recruitment/selection processes.

Mercy Partners requires that it have a representative on the recruitment and selection panel(s). In most instances, the Mercy Partners representative will be the ministry's Liaison Person.

In the recruitment process, the Chair of Mercy Partners is to receive the names of proposed short-listed candidates, with their respective CVs, and be invited to comment. This is to occur prior to short-listed candidates being advised.

Once the Selection Panel has conducted interviews and determined the preferred candidate for appointment, the Chair of the ministry Board is to advise Mercy Partners Board, through the Chair, and seek endorsement of the candidate before an offer of appointment is made. Once endorsement is received, the Chair of the ministry Board can proceed with an offer.

Once an offer is accepted and the appointment process has been completed, a notification protocol will be agreed by the Chair of the ministry Board and the Chair of Mercy Partners to ensure all key stakeholders are notified of the appointment of the new principal.

Role of Recruitment and Selection Panels/Personnel

Duties to be fulfilled by the ministry's recruitment and selection panels/personnel include:

- Advertising the position;
- The preparation of an application package that includes an overview of the ministry, a position description, selection criteria, details of the recruitment process and timeline, and the application information to be submitted by candidates;
- Receipt of applications, inclusive of candidates' responses to the selection criteria and their referees (a minimum of 3);
- Review/probity check of candidates' supporting documents, inclusive of academic qualifications, employment history, teacher registration and working with children certification;

- Reference checks of preferred candidates. This ought to be conducted prior to shortlisting and include at least one person who can attest to the candidate's faith background and commitment, and, unless otherwise requested, a reference from the candidate's current employer/line manager;
- Interview schedules;
- Interview Panel protocols;
- Appointment recommendation to the ministry Board.

Prior to the initial step of advertising the position, it is suggested that there be a range of structured consultations with members of the ministry community to identify their hopes for the ministry in the ensuing years and the particular qualities they would hope to see in the next principal. The feedback ought to be communicated to the Selection Panel and inform their discernment.

If the ministry engages an external recruitment officer or agency, there ought to be a clear brief of the scope of duties. Emphasis ought to be given to the importance of the ministry's Catholic identity and culture and the expectation that the successful candidate will need to further the mission and objectives of Catholic education and uphold the ministry's tradition, ethos and philosophy.

It is essential that personnel involved in each and all of the processes outlined above are free from any conflict of interest in exercising their responsibilities, also, that they uphold the highest standards of confidentiality with regard to candidacy issues and Panel/Board decisions and recommendations.

Principal Induction and Formation

Once appointed, the incoming principal will participate in a program of initial formation and induction into the Mercy Partners governance arrangements and the traditions of the ministry's founding charism. This will include opportunities and links with other Mercy Partners' principals in Australia. The programs should start prior to the commencement of the position being taken up formally by the incoming principal.

Handover and induction at the school level is a responsibility of the ministry Board and will need to be cognisant of the incoming principal's experience, skills and transition needs.

The principal will have ongoing personal and professional formation pertaining to Mercy Partners and the ministry's founding charism.

Appendix

Included in the Appendix is a summary and checklist of the key principal selection and appointment actions and the personnel responsible for the completion of each of the actions.

Appendix 1

Summary and checklist of key steps in the principal selection and appointment process and the personnel responsible for the completion of each of the actions.

It should be noted that the Chair of Mercy Partners Board may delegate one or more of their assigned responsibilities to an authorised representative appointed by the Chair of the Mercy Partners Board.

Action	Responsible Person	Status (tick once action is completed)
Current Principal resigns or retires, the Chair of the ministry Board to notify the Chair of Mercy Partners Board immediately.	Chair of the ministry Board	<input type="radio"/>
Selection procedure, including proposed selection panel Chair and members, is to be prepared by the ministry Board and provided to Chair of Mercy Partners Board.	Chair of the ministry Board	<input type="radio"/>
Chair of Mercy Partners Board to notify the Chair of the ministry Board of the Mercy Partners representative/s for the selection and appointment process.	Chair of Mercy Partners Board	<input type="radio"/>
Chair of Mercy Partners Board to be provided with information about short listed candidates by the Selection Panel Chair. Short listed candidates to be advised only AFTER Mercy Partners endorsement confirmed.	Selection Panel Chair	
The Chair of the Selection Panel to make a recommendation to the ministry Board of the preferred candidate.	Selection Panel Chair	<input type="radio"/>
Chair of ministry Board to seek endorsement by Mercy Partners Board of the preferred candidate through the Chair of Mercy Partners. No offer is to be made to the preferred candidate until Mercy Partners endorsement is received.	Chair of ministry Board	<input type="radio"/>
Chair of Mercy Partners Board to advise the Chair of the ministry Board of the endorsement or otherwise of the preferred candidate.	Chair of Mercy Partners Board	<input type="radio"/>
At the completion of the appointment process, the ministry Board Chair and the Mercy Partners Board Chair to agree on a Notification Protocol to key stakeholders.	Chair of ministry Board and Chair of Mercy Partners Board	<input type="radio"/>
The incoming principal to participate in a Mercy Partners formation and induction program.	Principal and Mercy Partners Formation Directorate	<input type="radio"/>

Version Control					
Version #	Overview of updates	Author	Approved By	Date Approved	Next Review Due
1	Creation of Guideline	Education Collaboration Committee	MP Board	13 November 2024	13 November 2027