Training Information Guidelines

You want to apply to become a celebrant with Humanists UK? That is great news! Before you get started on your application form, read through the following information which tells you everything you need to know about training with us and becoming a celebrant.

If you are an existing Humanist Ceremonies celebrant looking to train in a second or third ceremony type, please apply here.

If you are considering training as a wedding celebrant in Northern Ireland, please also read this additional information before applying.

Why we do what we do

Humanists UK is the UK's principal charity representing people who hold no religious belief. For over a century, Humanists UK has provided ceremonies for people who are not religious but who wish to mark significant events in their lives. Humanist Ceremonies is Humanists UK's organised network of trained and accredited celebrants in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Humanist Society Scotland is our sister charity in Scotland.

There are now many individuals and organisations offering training to become a celebrant to conduct non-religious ceremonies, but a humanist ceremony is more than just an event with no religion. Humanist ceremonies reflect humanist principles, namely the value we place on humanity and reason, on our rights and responsibilities, on our individuality, on our personal histories and on our connections with others. In short, humanist ceremonies celebrate human lives in all their particularity and variety.

This is why many people will choose to train as a celebrant with Humanists UK - because it reflects their own humanist values and beliefs, and because they want to be part of something bigger. All of our celebrants are humanists, meaning they are non-religious and look to science, reason, empathy and compassion in order to live an ethical and meaningful life. If you are not sure whether you are a humanist, you will want to explore this before applying to our training; this quiz is a helpful resource.

Our charitable goal is to reach more people with more humanist ceremonies to support non-religious people to live happier, more confident and more ethical lives. Our celebrants help us to achieve this goal.

What to expect from being a humanist celebrant

The celebrant's role is rewarding and demanding. You are immensely privileged to be invited into people's lives, trusted with their stories and emotions and asked to lead a ceremony that enables their friends and family to mourn, or to celebrate, in ways they

find moving and appropriate. Sometimes, this will require you to take good care of yourself and seek emotional support if you need it, especially for funeral celebrants.

At the same time as it being a privilege, our celebrants carry a great responsibility. The ceremony you are being asked to conduct is very important and you must get it right, which is why celebrants in our network agree to a Code of Conduct and Standards of Practice when they join us, and why we have an annual reaccreditation process to ensure our celebrants work to the highest standard.

People come to train as celebrants with very different expectations of the amount of work they hope to do. Some have aspirations of doing many ceremonies each year; some do it alongside other full- or part-time work or as part of a portfolio of roles; and many do it to supplement their pension during retirement, or even as a hobby because they find it meaningful. You will be able to charge a fee for each ceremony you do, which you will set for yourself.

Your potential income will be variable depending on where you live, what type of ceremonies you do, and how successful you are at attracting work. Please note that most funerals take place on weekdays, which means that people who work full- or part-time may struggle to build relationships with funeral directors, who value personal connections and reliability.

It is important to go in knowing that there is no guarantee of work after you train. For many celebrants, it can take a while to get established, and requires ongoing efforts to promote yourself and secure work. The area in which you live, the presence of other celebrants in your locality, the state of the economy, national trends, your own marketing skills, and a certain amount of luck will determine how successful you are able to be as a celebrant.

For wedding and naming ceremonies, being able to successfully market yourself, build relationships with wedding venues and having a strong social media presence are all important for getting work. For funerals, you will need to build long-term relationships with local funeral directors, which can be hard work

If you hope to be a busy celebrant, it is worth doing market research for your area before committing to training - are there other humanist and independent celebrants working close to you? Do you have marketing and networking skills that you will be able to use to build up your business? Who are your ideal clients? There are lots of celebrants out there, and you will need to be able to find your niche. Humanists UK will support you with marketing and promotion nationally and regionally, but you will need to be able to put in significant time into building your business if you want to do many ceremonies. You'll be given some pointers during your initial training, and there is support and inspiration for practicing celebrants, but you should note that marketing your celebrancy services is primarily the responsibility of each self-employed celebrant.

Whilst everyone in our network approaches their celebrant work differently, all of them find conducting ceremonies to be deeply rewarding.

The Humanist Ceremonies network

Trainees who pass their training course go on to become part of the Humanist Ceremonies network. Our celebrants are self-employed, but you are not alone - you have people locally, regionally and nationally who can offer support, share advice and ceremonies, and offer companionship.

Once you have completed your training, you will pay a monthly accreditation fee to be part of the Humanist Ceremonies network. In return for your fee Humanists UK operates a service-level agreement, represented by our Commitment to Celebrants, and the following benefits:

- Membership of Humanists UK, and access to regular updates on our campaigning work
- Professional indemnity and public liability insurance
- A DBS/AccessNI check to give couples and families you work with additional peace of mind
- Marketing assets, including branded business cards, leaflets and presentation folders for the scripts you write
- Representation of Humanist Ceremonies with national stakeholders (such as NAFD/SAIF) and with other industry associations or trade bodies
- Marketing support for Humanist Ceremonies, including print and digital advertising, and social media activity, all to promote humanist ceremonies, and the Humanist Ceremonies network of celebrants Continuous professional development sessions and other training/development opportunities to help you continue to upskill after training
- A Celebrant Network Support Coordinator on the ground to help you build relationships with other local celebrants and provide you with support
- Ceremonies Helpdesk with staff available each working day to support you
- A profile page on our celebrant directory, a dedicated celebrant email address and a website to promote your work
- IT support for your Humanist Ceremonies profile page/website
- Campaigning for changes in the law and policies which benefit our non-religious communities, and Humanist Ceremonies (such as the current campaign for legal humanist weddings in England and Wales)

You will also be able to attend our in-person annual celebrant conference, which is a joyful and educational weekend of learning, connecting and often a good dance, too.

As a celebrant in our network, you will be self-employed but your accreditation with Humanists UK commits you to certain standards and practices, as well as guaranteeing

you the support outlined above. You will be asked to agree and adhere to our Celebrant Code of Conduct and Standards of Practice, which are focussed on:

1. Upholding and exemplifying humanist principles and values in your work, treating all individuals with integrity, respect, courtesy and dignity, and observing high standards of professionalism
2. Conducting only non-religious ceremonies for which you are accredited exclusively in the name of Humanists UK's Humanist Ceremonies network Maintaining and promoting the good reputation of the Humanist Ceremonies network
3. Being fully and actively aware of your responsibilities to clients and intermediaries.

If you are from outside the UK, you are welcome to apply to train with us but, once you have completed the course, will not need to pay monthly accreditation fee as you will not be eligible for many of the benefits.

What to expect from your training with us

Recruitment, applications and interviews

Applications are assessed according to applicants' suitability for work as a celebrant in the Humanist Ceremonies network, their life and work experience. Applicants will need to show a clear commitment to humanist values and principles and must be members of Humanists UK. Applicants can express their preferences for course dates, but should be prepared to accept offers of courses that were not their first choice. We strive to offer a training place to all successful applicants as soon as possible.

If your application is accepted, a video conference interview will be arranged. If you pass this successfully, you will be added to our training course waiting list and offered a place on a training course at the earliest opportunity.

Course fees and bursaries

Course fees are paid in installments. There is a non-refundable deposit of £550 required at least four weeks prior to Induction. The remaining balance is made in one lump sum or three instalments. These will be required before the start of each stage of training, and before receiving probationary accreditation

For those facing financial difficulties, we have a bursary programme available. You can apply for a bursary at the same time as applying for one of our courses.

Please ensure that you are available for all stages of the course you select. Once a ceremonies training course has started, a trainee may ask for a deferral to a later course only in unforeseeable and exceptional circumstances.

Trainees have the right to withdraw from courses at any time. If they do withdraw but wish to continue the training at a later date, they will be expected to start at the beginning of the training and they will need to pay the full fee. The non-refundable deposit from the original training will be kept.

Training

Our wedding and funeral celebrant training takes part in three stages, with intervals of about four weeks between each stage. Stage 1 (induction) involves a full day and is taught online. Stage 2 (General Skills) and Stage 3 (Technical skills) each take two consecutive days and involve an overnight stay. Our naming ceremonies training is two stages; stage 1 online and stage 2 residential with an overnight stay.

Your overnight accommodation and catering are booked by the Humanists UK training team and are included in your training course fee. For funeral celebrant trainees, one day of stage 3 will be spent in a crematorium near the training venue.

You will be provided with information about each stage well in advance, and training manuals for each stage which you will need to refer to throughout.

You will be required to complete written assignments before the course starts and after each stage (assignments are generally due two weeks after each stage). These assignments will require you to set aside a good amount of time to complete, and you should take this into consideration before accepting a place on a course.

You will also be assigned a mentor, who is an existing and experienced celebrant in the ceremony type you are training in. They will support you throughout your training to become the best celebrant you can be. You will be encouraged to observe as many ceremonies as possible during your training, facilitated by your mentor or other celebrants local to you. You can also watch recordings.

At each stage your work and progress will be assessed according to the Humanist Ceremonies competencies framework. Trainees are continually assessed by our skilled team of trainers, and are expected to demonstrate the skills and personal qualities necessary for being a celebrant, as outlined in our competency framework.

Not everyone who is accepted for training is found to be suitable, and successful completion of each stage of training is necessary before the trainee can progress to the next stage. We make every effort to support trainees to pass the training, but in the eventuality that someone drops out, the course fees they have paid are non-refundable.

Accreditation

If you successfully pass your training, you will become a probationary accredited celebrant of Humanists UK. This means that you will be able to take on ceremonies work, set up your Humanists UK web pages and email account, have access to the Humanist Ceremonies online forum, receive regular updates and newsletters, and have your name

and contact details included on the website search engine for celebrants. You can have Humanists UK business cards and Humanists UK folders in which to present your scripts, and you will also be covered by Humanist UK's public liability and professional indemnity insurance.

In order to gain full accreditation as a Humanists UK celebrant, you must then be observed taking a ceremony by another experienced celebrant within six months (for new funerals celebrants) or within twelve months (for new weddings and naming ceremony celebrants).

All celebrants accredited by Humanists Ceremonies are required to sign the celebrant code of conduct, which includes an undertaking to conduct only non-religious ceremonies for which you are accredited, exclusively in the name of the Humanist Ceremonies network of Humanists UK. The code of conduct governs your performance of ceremonies, and in the event of breach, your accreditation may be withdrawn.

Training for a second or third ceremony type

You can apply for another ceremony type once you've been accredited and are ready to add another string to your bow. Celebrants who go on to train in a second or third ceremony type only need to attend Stages 2 and 3 of wedding and funeral training (naming ceremony trainees always need to attend both stages). Fees are adjusted accordingly.

Training for celebrants who are already trained by another provider

Celebrants who are already practising and who wish to join the Humanist Ceremonies network will be offered a tailored training package if they have been accepted for Training.

Course schedule and fees

Course dates and fees are available here. Your application will be acknowledged within two days. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within this time, please call the office on 020 7324 3060 to check that we have received it.

The completed application form will be reviewed and if you are a suitable applicant you will be offered an interview by video call.

Leilia Dore
Celebrant Network Manager
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