During the candidacy phase

- The presbytery is to maintain regular communications and consultations with the candidate, including establishing renewed covenant agreements and goals leading toward “full preparation ... to serve the church as ministers of the Word and Sacrament” (G-2.0604).
- In order for a candidate (or an inquirer) to take the standard ordination examinations in Biblical Exegesis, Theological Competence, Church Polity, and Worship and Sacraments, she or he must have the presbytery’s approval. This approval is intended to be more than just a certification that the person is in good standing with the presbytery. It is the presbytery’s statement that it believes the person has reached the point in academic training and supervised practice of ministry where it is appropriate to seek the concurrence of other presbyteries that the person is ready to begin service as a minister of the Word and Sacrament. The exams, then, are best considered capstone experiences rather than milestones to be passed at any point along the way.

If a candidate has a learning disability, is it necessary that he or she attempt and fail the standard written ordination examinations before “alternate means” are considered?

A presbytery may “by a three-fourths vote [approve] some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations” whenever it “judges that there are good and sufficient reasons” to do so (G-2.0610). There is no “right” to such “alternate means” since the presbytery also needs to consider whether or not accommodations such as those requested would negatively impact “a candidate's fitness and readiness for a call to ministry requiring ordination” (see G-2.0604). But there is also no requirement that candidates must first fail the standard exams either. For more information, see the “Alternative Assessment of Competency” materials referenced in the “Resource” section of this Advisory Handbook.