

M17 Solemnization

Summary of Learning Points

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M17 Solemnization

General

1. The following marriages must be solemnized in the presence of a registrar and registered by them:
 - a. a civil marriage in the district register office or on approved premises.
 - b. a marriage according to religious rites (other than the Church of England/Church in Wales, Jews or Quakers) in a registered building if
 - i. no authorised person has been appointed for the building or
 - ii. an authorised person has been appointed but the presence of the registrar has been specifically requested by completion of the application on the reverse of the notice form or
 - iii. neither the authorised person for the building nor an authorised person for any other registered building in the same registration district is available to attend and register the marriage; or
 - iv the Registrar General has directed that a registrar is present at marriages registered in a building where an authorised person has been appointed
 - c. all marriages (other than Church of England/Church in Wales ceremonies) at the residence of a house-bound or detained person (see M10).
 - d. all marriages solemnized on the authority of a Registrar General's licence for marriage (see M11).

A registrar cannot register any marriage outside the registration district for which he is appointed.

2. There is no legal restriction on the time at which a marriage may be solemnized but, in respect of marriages identified at paragraph 1 a and b , the time of the marriage must have the prior agreement of the superintendent registrar of the district in which the marriage is to take place (the date and time being arranged at the notice giving stage).
3. A registrar must attend at, and register, a marriage on a Sunday, on Christmas Day, on Good Friday or on a Bank or other Public Holiday, if required to do so.
4. The registrar must take his own register in his waterproof bag, his Handbook, a pen, some registration ink, and a book of marriage certificate forms to the marriage. A registrar or his deputy must not use a register belonging to another registrar.

5. When he meets the parties at the appointed time and place, the registrar must ask to see the superintendent registrar's certificates or other documentary authority for the marriage, unless he already has them.
6. The registrar must not allow the marriage to proceed unless he is satisfied that the superintendent registrar's certificates, or other marriage authority have been issued. If the certificates are to be issued from another district the registrar may wish to confirm before the day of the ceremony that they have been issued, in case the couple forget to bring them on the day.
7. Unless the marriage is by Registrar General's licence two certificates will always be necessary for the marriage to proceed. One of these will always be a superintendent registrar's certificate. The other certificate will always be either a superintendent registrar's certificate or,
 - (a) When one of the parties gave notice of marriage in Scotland, a Scottish registrar's certificate of no impediment must be produced by that party, (see Example 1).
 - (b) When one of the parties to a marriage is an officer, seaman or marine serving on one of HM Ships at sea who has given notice of marriage to the Commanding Officer of their ship, this party must produce to the registrar a certificate in the prescribed form issued by the Commanding Officer (see Example 2).
 - (c). When one of the parties to a marriage has given notice under the provision of the Marriage of British Subjects (Facilities) Acts 1915 and 1916, a certificate of publication of banns or a certificate of notice of marriage issued in accordance with the law of the country of residence of the party resident outside England and Wales must be produced by that party. It is not necessary for this certificate to make reference to the fact that it has been issued under the provisions of the Marriage of British Subjects (Facilities) Acts 1915 and 1916. It is advisable for superintendent registrars to ask to see the certificate issued outside England or Wales before the day of the marriage (where possible) in case a translation is required.
8. A certificate of publication of banns in a church of the Church of England, a certificate of proclamation of banns in Scotland in a church of the Church of Scotland, or a certificate of publication of banns on board one of HM Ships is not an authority for a marriage outside the Church of England and cannot in any circumstances be accepted for marriage in the presence of a registrar, authorised person, secretary for marriages or registering officer.
9. The registrar must carefully examine each superintendent registrar's certificate before he proceeds with the marriage. He must ensure that all parts of the forms have been completed and he must verify each particular (see below). If the particulars in a certificate do not correspond with the particulars to be recorded in the marriage entry, the difference should be recorded on the back of the certificate, together with a brief explanation of the cause of the discrepancy. Some discrepancies may require a marriage to be postponed (see M17.12).

10. The registrar is empowered by statute to ask of the parties the particulars required to be registered in the marriage entry. If, during the questioning, or at any time during or after the marriage ceremony, a registrar has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a marriage will be or is a sham marriage, the officer concerned must report his suspicions without delay to the Home Office. The fact that a registration officer has decided to report his suspicions to the Home Office will not prevent the marriage proceeding as planned (see M3).

11. Registrars should be vigilant regarding the detection of intentional fraud. They should conduct their enquiries discreetly so as not to cause unnecessary offence or to suggest a wrongful intention where none is apparent. The registrar should distinguish between wrong statements made in simple ignorance or lack of care, and those that are deliberately intended to deceive. Whenever there is any doubt as to the course to take in such cases, the registrar may refer to the General Register Office for advice.

12. When conducting the pre-marriage interview, the registrar should pay particular attention to the following points:

a. The marriage can only take place in the place specified in the notices of marriage and certificates of the superintendent registrar(s). If the name or address of the venue shown on the superintendent registrar's certificates differs from the name or address in which the marriage is about to take place, the marriage must be stopped and the matter referred to the superintendent registrar.

Superintendent registrars should note that there are two circumstances in which the marriage may proceed even if the name differs as above :

(i) if the name of an approved premises has changed in the local authority register of approved premises since the superintendent registrars certificates were issued, the validity of these certificates is not affected and the name shown on those certificates should be entered in the marriage register entry provided the holder of the approval is in agreement.

(ii) if the change is covered by transitional Scheme provisions. (such as a county merger of districts which abolish one or more registration districts) provided notice was given prior to the date of the scheme change.

b. If the prescribed interval of 28 clear days has not elapsed between the day on which the notice was entered <Redacted> and the day of the marriage, the ceremony must be postponed, unless the Registrar General has agreed to reduce the 28 day waiting period (see M16).

c. The registrar should check that the superintendent registrar's certificates are valid at the date of the marriage. The certificates expire after 12 months from the date of entry of the notice except where one notice was given in Scotland (see M12), where the notice was given by a housebound or detained person (see M10) and where the marriage is by Registrar General's Licence or under Section 39A of the Marriage Act (see M16)

d. If the certificate has not been signed by the superintendent registrar who issued it, the registrar may allow the marriage to proceed but must ensure that the certificate is signed as soon as possible by the appropriate person.

e. The registrar must question each party directly, not by reading over the certificate and then simply asking if it is correct, to determine their full and accurate name(s) and surname. If there is any discrepancy between the name and surname now given and those appearing on the superintendent registrar's certificate, the registrar must question that party further. A major discrepancy in either the name or surname should not prevent the marriage from proceeding if it can be satisfactorily explained. In cases of doubt the marriage should proceed.

f. The registrar must establish the condition of each party. The specific question to be put to each party is 'Have you been through any form of marriage or civil partnership before, in this or any other country?' If there is any discrepancy between the condition given in the reply and that shown on the superintendent registrar's certificate the registrar must question that party further. If the identity of the party is not affected by the discrepancy and evidence in accordance with M8 is produced to confirm that the party is free to marry, the ceremony may proceed. [Where the evidence produced relates to a divorce, annulment, or nullity obtained outside of the British Islands \(the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man\) a fee is payable for consideration of the documentation \(see M8.12 – M8.16.\)](#) Where the evidence produced relates to a divorce or final order of dissolution obtained outside the British Islands or the countries listed at M8.20, the General Register Office should be contacted for advice. There may also be occasions where the couple has been through a blessing or commemorative ceremony shortly before the civil ceremony which is not capable of recognition. Such ceremonies will not alter the marital condition of the couple. See also paragraph 34.

g. If the information was not collected when the notices were given, the registrar should ask the parties for the names and occupations of their fathers. Parties would usually be expected to provide the names of their father or adoptive father. However, there may be occasions where a party wishes to show the name and occupation of a step-father instead. If, despite the difficulties that might arise in future concerning their identity, he or she wishes to have the name and occupation of a step-father inserted in the marriage register, it should be noted on the superintendent registrar's certificate, providing the step-father is, or has been married to their natural (or adoptive) mother. Where a woman was authorised by a Court to be the sole adopter, the name and surname of that woman may, at the request of the party, be entered. If the party shows any reluctance to give particulars, the registrar need not press his enquiries.

h. Where the couple were required to produce a photograph (as detailed in M5:18-19) the photograph template should be attached to superintendent registrar's certificate. The registrar should compare the likeness in the photograph with the person being interviewed. If the registrar has any serious

concerns that the photograph does not relate to the person that they are interviewing then they should refer the matter to the superintendent registrar, who may decide to contact GRO for further guidance. Unless the identity of a person is in doubt the marriage should be allowed to proceed. The absence of the photograph template at the ceremony would not prevent the marriage from proceeding providing everything else is in order, however GR should be advised when this occurs.

13. If the registrar discovers the existence of a legal impediment to any marriage that he is attending he must not allow the marriage to proceed. If it appears to the registrar that one party may be under duress and may not wish to proceed with the marriage of his/her own free will or is incapable of validly consenting to be married, the registrar should follow the instructions given to superintendent registrars in paragraph 26 below.

If any false statement of particulars in relation to either party is discovered before the contracting words are spoken, the registrar should not allow the marriage to proceed until the facts are established. The appropriate action in accordance with the preceding paragraphs should then be taken. Where the registrar suspects that there has been wilful mis-statement or an attempt to deceive, the circumstances should be reported to the Registrar General as a possible offence under the Perjury Act.

At a district register office or on approved premises

14. A marriage must be celebrated with open doors (ie not closed so as to prevent persons from entering), in the presence of the parties, the superintendent registrar of the district, a registrar appointed to register marriage in that district and two credible witnesses who must in all cases be provided by the parties to the marriage.

Responsible person for approved premises

15. All approved premises must have a responsible person who is qualified to ensure compliance with the conditions of the approval. The name, address and qualification of this responsible person are notified to the local authority and should be passed on to the superintendent registrar. This person, or a similarly qualified deputy, should be available on the premises for one hour before and throughout the ceremony. Before attending a marriage on approved premises the superintendent registrar must be aware of the following:

- a. The exact name of the premises as shown in the local authority register of approved premises, and which room(s) in the premises has been approved for marriages;
- b. the name, address and qualification of the responsible person deputy who will be present;
- c. the national and any local requirements which apply before premises can be considered suitable; and

- d. the national and any further conditions attached to the approval for the premises where the marriage is to take place and
- e. the date of expiry of the grant of approval

16. If the superintendent registrar finds that any of the conditions attached to the approval are not being adhered to, he/she should liaise with the responsible person, or deputy, to secure compliance. A full report should be made of the circumstances to the Proper Officer as soon as possible. Any change in the use or structure of the premises which might affect their suitability should also be reported.

17. The local authority has the power to revoke an approval if the requirements are no longer observed or if there is a failure to comply with any of the conditions.

18. Any breach of marriage law must be reported immediately to the General Register Office. The Registrar General, in these circumstances, has the power to direct a local authority to revoke an approval.

Marriage ceremonies

19. The superintendent registrar must ensure that the certificates for marriage are valid at the date of the marriage and he must see that they have been produced to the registrar before he allows the marriage to proceed. Should any impediment be alleged or any false statement of particulars relating to either party be discovered before the declaratory and contracting words have been pronounced by the parties, the superintendent registrar should refuse to proceed further until the facts have been established and he is satisfied that no such impediment exists.

20. A superintendent registrar should always insist upon the seemly behaviour of the parties and witnesses as befits the solemnity and importance of the occasion. He may allow enhancements of the ceremony and is entitled to receive any requests for these from the couple in advance of the day of the ceremony (but may at their discretion include any request made on the day). Any requests should be considered in line with the following guidelines:-

(a) Civil marriage ceremonies must not be religious in nature: whilst any inclusion (reading, music etc) that contains an incidental reference to a god or deity would be acceptable, the reading or piece of music in which such a reference is contained must be essentially non-religious in context. No civil marriage ceremony should include extracts from an authorised religious marriage service or readings from sacred religious texts, hymns or other religious chants, involve any religious rituals or any form of worship. For this purpose any material used by way of introduction to the ceremony or by way of conclusion to it is included in these provisions.

(b) The Registrar General would consider that in this context the inclusion of readings such as the love poem "How Do I Love Thee" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning ("Sonnets from the Portuguese") would be acceptable. Whilst the word "God" appears, it is an essentially non-religious context (a love poem). "Howard's End" by E M Forster would also fit this

category. Popular songs such as “Angels” by Robbie Williams and “I Say A Little Prayer” by Aretha Franklin would be acceptable. There are also some popular pieces of music such as Wagner’s “The Wedding March” from Lohengrin (more popularly referred to as “Here Comes the Bride”) which was written for an opera and would be acceptable, as would be Mendelssohn’s “Wedding March”.

(c) Our guidance on readings from “The Prophet” by Khalil Gibran (a philosophical / spiritual work but perhaps not specifically a religious one) would be that these would be acceptable depending on the particular reading chosen. We would consider the extract on ‘marriage’ to be acceptable. Similarly, the music for Schubert’s “Ave Maria” was not originally written for the Latin prayer “Hail Mary”, and we would consider the music alone to be acceptable.

(d) There are, however, some readings or music which should not be included. These include any readings from “sacred religious texts”, so any extract from the Bible or Koran, for example, must not be used. This would therefore prohibit extracts from the “Song of Songs”, or St Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (“Love is patient, love is kind. etc). Similarly, wording such as “to have and to hold, in sickness and in health” should not be used since this is taken from the Church of England Book of Common Prayer. Any hymns should also not be included, either the words or the music. Lastly, superintendent registrars should to the best of their knowledge avoid the inclusion of any ritual or symbol which may have any religious connotation. Examples of this may be the inclusion in the ceremony of any physical symbolism such as the presence of a canopy for a later religious ceremony, or any reference to a “hand fasting” ceremony (an ancient pagan ritual). This does not include the exchange of rings, which is a commonly-recognised and acceptable feature of civil as well as religious weddings. However, a religious symbol worn by the couple or guests which is not intended to be explicitly used as a part of the ceremony itself would be acceptable: for example, it would be acceptable for the couple or their guests to wear a crucifix necklace if they wished, or for a clergyman to attend as a guest or witness wearing a religious collar.

21 The Registrar General appreciates that registration officers will not be expert in all world religions: the above guidance should be followed to the best of their knowledge, and whilst the final decision on content of the ceremony may be theirs they are welcome to contact GRO to discuss any particular request. The superintendent registrar is entitled to receive any requests for these from the couple in advance of the day of the ceremony (but may at their discretion include any request made on the day).

22. The full importance of the declaratory and contracting words, and the penalty for any false declaration, should be clearly explained to the parties whenever they appear to be either ignorant or careless in that respect.

23. If, or at any time during or after the marriage ceremony, a superintendent registrar has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a marriage will be or is a sham marriage, the officer concerned must report his suspicions without delay to the Home Office. The fact that a registration officer has decided to report his suspicions to the Home Office will not prevent the marriage from proceeding as planned (see M3).

Mental Capacity

24. Where, at the time notice was taken, the registration officer attesting the notice had concerns with either party's mental capacity to marry, these concerns must be raised with the superintendent registrar. If the registration officer has any concerns at any stage, each party should be interviewed separately and alone at the pre marriage questioning, to confirm the particulars of the marriage to be recorded (see M5.5).

If, as a result of the questioning and observation of the party, the registrar believes that the party is unable to understand the nature of marriage and the duties and responsibilities attached to marriage (see M5.10), those concerns should be brought to the attention of the superintendent registrar who should decide whether the marriage should proceed.

The Registrar General and local authority must be informed of every instance of this kind where the marriage is stopped. Where the couple are seen together (there having been no concerns with each party's mental capacity to marry at the time notice was taken), the registrar should remember that each party should be able to understand the nature of the contract of marriage and be mentally capable of understanding the duties and responsibilities that are normally attached to marriage (see M5.10).

In case of concerns that become apparent at any time between the giving of the notice of intention to marry and the pre marriage questioning (there may be concerns raised by the family or social services for example), the superintendent registrar should be made aware and the couple interviewed separately (see M5.13) before deciding whether the marriage should proceed. If the marriage does not proceed, the Registrar General and the local authority must be informed.

25. If a superintendent registrar is of the opinion that either of the parties to a marriage does not understand the nature of the marriage contract due to mental disorder or the influence of drugs or alcohol, to such an extent that he or she is incapable of appreciating the nature of the contract, it is the superintendent registrar's duty to stop the proceedings.

26. It is essential that a valid marriage is a voluntary act of both parties. If a superintendent registrar considers that either party is not entering into the marriage of his or her own free will – a "forced marriage", it is his duty to defer or stop the proceedings until he is satisfied by personal questioning of the party concerned that it is his/her wish to proceed with the marriage. The signs a registration officer may take into account might include:

- (i) either party may show signs of emotional distress
- (ii) either party may show signs of physical harm or assault
- (iii) one party may be doing all the talking or showing reluctance to let the other party be spoken to alone
- (iv) the parties are unable to converse in the same language
- (v) an allegation of a forced marriage may have been made by third party

A registration officer who suspects that the party entering into the marriage is doing so against his or her will should enquire whether he or she wishes to proceed and offer to contact **<Recadted>** to see whether any support may be available if they do not wish to do so. In such cases it may be necessary to insist on interviewing the party alone and to obtain a written and signed confirmation that he/she is entering into marriage voluntarily. The Registrar General should be informed of every case of this kind where the marriage has had to be deferred or stopped.

Marriage ceremony

27. Superintendent registrars are asked to address the following words to the parties immediately before the declaratory words are spoken:

“The place in which you are now met has been duly sanctioned according to the law for the celebration of marriages”.

“Before you are joined in matrimony I have to remind you of the solemn and binding character of the vows you are about to make”.

“Marriage in this country means the union of two people, voluntarily entered into for life, to the exclusion of all others”.

These passages may be omitted or amended at the parties’ request providing that any amendments or additions are secular.

28. Each of the parties must, during some part of the ceremony, in the presence of the superintendent registrar, the registrar and the witnesses, declare as follows (choosing one of the declarations given below):

“I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I, AB, may not be joined in matrimony to CD.”

or

“I declare that I know of no legal reason why I, AB, may not be joined in marriage to CD.”

or

by replying “I am” to the question “Are you AB free lawfully to marry CD?”

Each of the parties must also say to the other (choosing one of the statements given below):

“I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, AB, do take thee, CD, to be my lawful wedded wife (or husband).”

or

I AB take you CD to be my wedded wife (or husband)

or

I AB take thee CD to be my wedded wife (or husband)

The registrar attending the marriage should establish in advance of the ceremony which version of the declaratory and contracting words are to be said. The exact form must always be used; they must not be changed in any way.

29. In any place in which the Welsh language is commonly used the following authorised Welsh translation of the declaration and form of contracting words may be used:

Translation to the Solemn Declaration

I do solemnly declare that I know not
of any lawful impediment why I, AB
may not be joined in matrimony to CD.

Yr wyf fi yn ddifrifol yn hysbysu
na wn i am un rhwystr cyfreithlon,
fel na ellir fy uno i, AB, mewn
priodas â CD.

or

I declare that I know of no legal
reason why I AB may not be
joined in marriage to CD.

neu

Yr wyf yn hysbysu na wn i am
unrhyw reswm cyfreithlon fel
na ellir fy uno i AB mewn
priodas â CD.

or

by replying “I am” to the question
“Are you AB free lawfully to
marry CD?”

neu

trwy ymateb “Ydwyf” i’r
cwestiwn “Ydych chi AB
yn rhydd, yn gyfreithlon, i
briodi CD?”

Translation of the Contracting Words

I call upon these persons

Yr wyf fi yn galw ar y

here present to witness that
I, AB do take thee, CD, to
be my lawful wedded wife
(or husband).

or

"I AB take you (thee) CD to
CD,
be my wedded wife (or husband)."

personau hyn sydd yma'n
bresennol i dystiolaethu fy
mod i, AB yn dy gymryd di,
CD, yn wraig briod gyfreithlon
(neu yn ŵr priod cyfreithlon) i mi.

neu

Yr wfi fi, AB, yn dy gymryd di,
yn wraig briod (neu yn ŵr priod) i
mi.

30. Except in the case of persons who speak the Welsh language, if either of the parties to the marriage is unable to speak or understand English, the parties should use an interpreter. This need not be a qualified or approved translator but the parties to the marriage should not act as the interpreter for each other during the marriage ceremony. The declaratory and contracting words should be repeated by the parties in their own tongue and must also be repeated by them to the best of their ability in English. This procedure should ensure that the parties understand the full meaning of the marriage ceremony. The interpreter should sign the marriage register as one of the witnesses.

31. In the case of people who are deaf or unable to speak they should bring an interpreter with them who understands the language of the deaf; otherwise the words of declaration and contract should be written out and signed by the parties in token of their assent.

32 The superintendent registrar should himself recite the declaration and the form of contracting words, so that the parties may repeat them; and he should insist upon the parties doing this in a serious and proper manner, and as clearly and distinctly as possible. Whilst some couples may wish to have a musical ceremony if they and the Superintendent Registrar agree the content, these declarations must be spoken rather than sung.

33 Until the declaratory and contracting words have been spoken by the parties no entry, or any part of it, may be made in the marriage registers; but when those words have been pronounced by both parties they at once become legally married, and the marriage must then be registered by the registrar in the presence of the parties, the superintendent registrar, and the witnesses.

34. Marriages on approved premises may be preceded or followed by a celebration, commemoration or blessing of the parties' choice, providing that it is not a religious marriage ceremony and is separate from the civil ceremony. Provision for a religious marriage ceremony following a civil ceremony is made in section 46(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 and explained at M2.17-19. A civil ceremony commences with

the registrar's questioning of the parties and concludes with the departure of the registration officers.

- There is no reason why a blessing or other commemorative event may not take place on the same day and at the same venue, either before or after the civil ceremony. To avoid any confusion over marital status it is best practice that any blessing or other commemorative event follows the civil marriage ceremony.
- Each case should be considered on its own merits giving particular regard to ensuring that the proceedings of any other blessing or other commemorative event are not interlinked in any way with the civil marriage ceremony (i.e. are not seen to be part of the same proceedings).
- To achieve this there must be a clear break between the civil ceremony and any other blessing or commemorative event.
- To avoid any confusion, the couple and guests must understand that the additional blessing or commemorative event is not the formal marriage ceremony and does not have any legal standing. Therefore, if taking place before a civil ceremony, the couple and guests must clearly understand that they are not legally married at that point.

35. Where additional ceremonies are perceived as religious, the local authority may wish to consider the nature and frequency of such events and whether this has any impact on the approval of such premises as a venue for marriage (see approved premises guidance). Registration officers who are aware of these practices should report the matter to the Proper Officer.

In a registered building

36. A marriage in a registered building must be solemnized with open doors (i.e. doors not closed so as to prevent persons from entering that part of the building in which the marriage is solemnized). The contracting parties, two witnesses and a registrar of marriages or an authorised person appointed for the registered building or for some other registered building in the same registration district should be present.

37. If a registrar is required to attend a marriage in a building for which an authorised person has been appointed he must record it in his own register and not in the registers belonging to the building; nor may an authorised person make an entry in a register used by a registrar.

38. In every case where a marriage in a registered building is to be solemnized by a minister in the presence of a registrar the superintendent registrar's certificates for the marriage should be handed to the minister for inspection; but they must be immediately returned to the registrar, who must on no account allow them to be retained either by the minister or by the parties.

39. The marriage may be solemnized according to any religious form or ceremony (other than the rites of the Church of England or the Church in Wales) which the parties and the minister (if any) may see fit to use.

40. For the marriage of a same sex couple the registrar should ascertain the religious rites to be used. These will either be according to the denomination of the registered building, or according to the rites and ceremonies of another denomination where the relevant governing authority has given their consent to the marriage of same sex couples. If the registrar has any doubts that the relevant governing body has given their consent, he should contact GRO for further advice.

41. The presence of a minister is not essential to the contracting of a valid marriage in a registered building. The Registrar General is, however, advised that the marriage must be solemnized according to some rite or ceremony and that the statutory words of declaration and contract must be spoken by the parties in some part of that ceremony in the presence of a registrar and two witnesses. A marriage at which there are to be no rites or ceremonies beyond the exchange of the statutory words of declaration and contract will not have been arranged with the knowledge of any registration officer (see M4.3(c)&(d)) but an emergency may occasionally arise where, for example, due to accident or sudden illness, the minister who has arranged to be present at the marriage is unavoidably prevented from attending. In these circumstances, if it is not possible to arrange for the attendance of some other minister and the parties wish to proceed with the marriage although there is no other person available to conduct the pre-arranged religious ceremony, the registrar may allow the marriage to proceed in such form (other than the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England or the Church in Wales) as the parties request, provided the words prescribed by statute are included.

42. Each of the parties must, during some part of the ceremony, in the presence of the registrar and the witnesses, make one of the declaratory and one of the contracting statements required by law and set out at paragraph 28.

43. In any place where the Welsh language is commonly used, the authorised Welsh translation of the declaration and form of contracting words, as set out in paragraph 29 above may be used if the parties wish.

44. A registrar who does not understand Welsh should not insist on the repetition of the words in English if he can satisfy himself by some other means (e.g. by asking the officiating minister) that the authorised words have been used.

45. The minister may, if he sees fit, recite the declaration and the form of contracting words, in order that the parties may repeat them; otherwise the registrar should recite them. The registrar in whose presence the marriage is to be solemnized should establish beforehand from the minister which version of the words of declaration and contract are to be used.

46. In a case of a marriage solemnized in a registered building of the Roman Catholic Church, the registrar should ascertain from the priest whether the marriage rite, which will incorporate the words of declaration and contract, will be followed by

the Nuptial Mass. In this case it is permissible for the registration of the marriage to follow the rite of marriage and precede the commencement of the Mass. The registrar should confirm with the priest the point where it is desired that registration shall be effected.

47. Until the declaratory and contracting words have been completely and correctly spoken by the parties no entry, or any part of it may be made in the marriage register; but when those words have been pronounced by both parties they at once become legally married, and the marriage must be registered by the registrar in the presence of the parties, the witnesses and the minister (if one was present).

48. Where a marriage is solemnized in the presence of a minister he will normally do whatever is needed to ensure that order, solemnity and decorum are maintained during the solemnization of the marriage. If the need should arise, for example if no minister is present, the registrar must, by both his own example and by admonition (if necessary) to others, do all in his power to enforce and maintain solemnity and decorum. Although a registrar may not forbid entrance to the marriage ceremony, he should ensure that all those present behave in a manner fitting to the solemnity of the occasion, including, if necessary, asking those who do not, to leave. It is especially important that the registrar's conduct and language should not give cause for complaint to the minister or any person taking part in the ceremony.

49. Any photographs of the couple supplied at the point of giving notice and used at pre-marriage questioning should be destroyed in a secure manner as soon as the marriage ceremony is complete.

<Redacted>

M17 Evaluation of Learning

When you have finished reading this Chapter you may wish to evaluate what you have learnt by answering the following questions. The answers to these questions are at the end of the Handbook.

- Q1.** A couple giving notice of intention to marry state that they would like to marry at an approved premises at midnight on New Years Eve. Explain if their request can be met.
- Q2.** List the items that a registrar must take to a marriage ceremony.
- Q3.** In what two circumstances may the marriage proceed if the venue name or address differs on the certificates from the name or address of the venue in which the marriage is about to take place?
- Q4.** On checking a superintendent registrar's certificate with the bride she states that she has moved address since giving notice. What action should be taken?
- Q5.** Who has the power to revoke an approved premises approval?
- Q6.** A couple who have booked a civil ceremony at an approved premises bring their enhanced ceremony to the superintendent registrar for approval. This includes the poem 'How do I love thee' by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and

reference to the wording 'to have and to hold, in sickness and in health' following the declaratory and contracting words. Explain if these two pieces would be acceptable within the guidance issued by the Registrar General.

- Q7.** Immediately prior to a marriage ceremony a superintendent registrar witnesses the bride arguing outside the register office with a male member of her wedding party. He appears to be pushing her in the direction of the register office door with her trying to resist. A few minutes later the bride is assembled with the wedding party inside the register office. What action if any should be taken?
- Q8.** At what point during a marriage ceremony do the parties become legally married?
- Q9.** If a registrar is to attend a registered building for which an authorised person has been appointed whose register do they use to register the marriage?
- Q10.** A British couple attend the register office to give notice of their intention to marry in their local Methodist church which is registered for marriages. They explain that the Methodist minister, who is an authorised person for that church has agreed to let them use the church, but they intend to have a Roman Catholic ceremony performed by a priest. They also wish to book a registrar to attend to register their marriage. Explain if this is possible.
- Q11.** You attend at a Methodist Church to register the marriage of a same sex couple. On arrival you find that the officiating minister is a Roman Catholic

priest and the couple require the marriage ceremony to be according to the rites and ceremonies of the Roman Catholics. What would you do?

- Q12.** A couple have given notice to marry at an approved premises late in the afternoon. However, they have requested a non-statutory ceremony to take place at the venue two hours beforehand. What advice would you give?