



Becoming a Humanist Celebrant

Members of the Humanist Society of Scotland who become celebrants often describe it as the most rewarding work they have ever done.

Applicants follow our standard selection and interview process and, if successful are offered a place on the next funerals training course. This is a three day course, with Days 1 & 2 being residential, and for which there is a charge.

Support will always be available to both trainees and celebrants and if, during the initial funerals course, there emerges a lack of 'fit' between a trainee and the society's expectations then this will be explored sensitively.

On completion of the course and successful submission of a sample script trainees are matched to an experienced celebrant who will help them to gain experience and prepare for review/assessment.

Upon becoming registered celebrants are then free to accept funeral work on the society's behalf.

Future training opportunities are available, mainly to do namings and weddings. Prospective celebrants should understand these opportunities are only available to experienced celebrants.

FUNERAL CELEBRANT TRAINING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What kind of ceremonies does the HSS offer?

Humanist ceremonies are non-religious, but not anti-religious and they address universal human themes, rather than any particular dogma. We conduct wedding, baby naming and funeral ceremonies, though the latter comprise by far the largest number and for this reason we initially train all Celebrants to conduct funerals. Some then go on to train for naming and wedding ceremonies.

How do I apply to become a Humanist Funeral Celebrant?

The Humanist Society of Scotland (HSS) maintains a Register of trained Celebrants to conduct non-religious ceremonies and admission to this Register is normally following a period of training and review. Celebrants must also be members of the Society and membership is open to anyone who shares a humanist life stance, as explained in our website (www.humanism-scotland.org.uk).

There is a selection procedure and in order to apply, you should complete the application form provided and submit it with your CV, giving details of your current and previous employment. You may then be called for an interview and if successful at that stage, will be offered a place on a training course (or on a waiting list).

What does the training involve?

If you are successful at the interview stage, we would suggest that you make contact with an experienced Celebrant before the course in order to observe a humanist ceremony (if you have not already done so). Please see the web site (www.humanism-scotland.org.uk) for the contact details of your nearest Celebrants.

The training course is run over 3 days and is very participative and practical, aimed at developing the skills and competencies required to become a funeral celebrant. These include the skills needed to conduct family visits and to write and deliver funeral ceremonies.

If you successfully complete the training course, a 'shadowing' arrangement will then be set up to enable you to work alongside an experienced Celebrant. This mentoring period usually takes a few months (on a flexible, part time basis) and you would need to be available to attend occasional family visits and funerals during this time. On successful completion of a final review, you would then join the Register of Celebrants and start to conduct ceremonies yourself.

What skills do Funeral Celebrants require?

As well as having humanist beliefs, anyone seeking to do this work should also have the ability to establish a rapport with people, to listen effectively, to empathise with others, to write well and to speak confidently in public.

IT skills are also essential and in particular, the ability to use word processing software, the internet and email.

Further details are available in the separate handout on 'Responsibilities and Requirements'

Although conducting funerals can be emotionally draining at times, most Celebrants find the work interesting and very rewarding.

Do I need a car?

Most visits to arrange a funeral will take place in the home of the family and a car is very useful for this purpose, as well as for getting to the funeral itself on the day. Those in city centre areas might (with some difficulty) be able to manage on public transport or be able to use another form of transport.

Is the work full time?

It would be unwise to regard working as a Celebrant as a source of full time income, as the amount of work required to prepare ceremonies can be considerable. There are however a few full time Celebrants who do earn a living from this work and whilst they would regularly conduct three or four ceremonies per week, the majority do a lot less than this. A reasonable level of availability is important though and the work may particularly suit those who are not in regular employment, retired, part time or able to work flexi-time.

Family visits can be arranged for evenings or sometimes weekends, but funerals are usually between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday or 9am to 12pm on Saturdays.

Is a fee paid to the Celebrant?

Registered Celebrants are normally paid a fee for conducting a ceremony (£130 for a funeral at present), plus travel expenses. Celebrants are required to pay 10% commission on fees to the HSS in order to provide funds for leaflets, publicity and meetings etc. Please note that the Inland Revenue treats ceremony fees (less commission and legitimate expenses) as earned income, which may be taxable.

How can I find out more?

If you would like to know more:

- ◆ Go onto our website (www.humanism-scotland.org.uk).
- ◆ Obtain a copy of the booklet 'Funerals Without God' (available from the website along with a number of other publications of interest)
- ◆ Go along to a local meeting and talk to one of our Celebrants (details on the website)
- ◆ Arrange to attend a ceremony with one of our Celebrants
- ◆ Contact the Training Officer, Brian Hawkins, brian.hawkins@humanism-scotland.org.uk