THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Ministry Council

Periodic External Review Report

Rochester Diocesan Licensed Lay Ministry Training Course

January – February 2016

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

CCCU	Canterbury Christ Church University
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
LLM	Licensed Lay Ministry
Moodle	Virtual learning environment
PER	Periodic External Review
PMG	Programme Management Group
RLS	Rochester Learning Space, virtual learning environment
SEITE	South-East Institute of Theological Education

LIST OF REVIEWERS

Revd Dr Jane de Gay Reader in English Literature, Leeds Trinity University, and Associate Priest, St Martin's Potternewton, Leeds. Senior Reviewer.

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THE PERIODIC EXTERNAL REVIEW FRAMEWORK

On behalf of the sponsoring churches, review teams are asked to assess the fitness for purpose of the training institution for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry and to make recommendations for the enhancement of the life and work of the institution.

Within the structures of the Church of England, this report has been prepared for the House of Bishops acting through the Ministry Council.

In coming to their judgements, reviewers are asked to use the following outcomes with regard to the overall outcome and individual criteria:

Confidence

Overall outcome: a number of recommendations, none of which question the generally high standards found in the review.

Criteria level: aspects of an institution's life which show good or best practice.

Confidence with qualifications

Overall outcome: A number of recommendations, including one or more of substance that questions the generally acceptable standards found in the review and which can be rectified or substantially addressed by the institution in the coming 12 months.

Criteria level: aspects of an institution's life which show either (a) at least satisfactory practice but with some parts which are not satisfactory or (b) some unsatisfactory practice but where the institution has the capacity to address the issues within 12 months.

No confidence

Overall outcome: A number of recommendations, including one or more of substance which raise significant questions about the standards found in the review and the capacity of the institution to rectify or substantially address these in the coming 12 months.

Criteria level: aspects of an institution's life which show either (a) generally not satisfactory practice or (b) some unsatisfactory practice where it is not evident that the institution can rectify the issues within the coming 12 months.

THE REPORT OF THE PERIODIC EXTERNAL REVIEW OF ROCHESTER DIOCESAN LICENSED LAY MINISTRY TRAINING

January – February 2016

SUMMARY

Introduction

Licensed Lay Ministry formation and training in the diocese of Rochester takes place as part of the wider Foundation in Christian Ministry Programme. Accordingly, the programme is under the oversight of the Diocesan Director of Formation and Ministry. Its core staff are: the Programme Director, Senior Tutor and Administrator, all of whom work on the programme part-time.

Foundation in Christian Ministry is a two-stage programme that aims to offer a broad-based, accessible course in academic and practical theology, preparing and supporting people in a range of ministry activities. It is designed for those who wish to critique and further their understanding of the Christian faith and discipleship in the context of calling, as well as those who intend to offer themselves for Licensed Lay Ministry. The former group follow the 'Certificate in Ministry' pathway, exiting at the end of Stage One of the programme (18 months – five terms of training) with the equivalent of a Certificate in Higher Education. Students wishing to candidate for Licensed Lay Ministry undergo a selection process towards the end of year one and go on to take Stage Two, attaining an award equivalent to a Foundation Degree, after a total of 3-4 years' study. Recommendations for licensing are made to the Bishop or senior diocesan staff in the third year of the programme: successful candidates are licensed as Lay Ministers within the Diocese of Rochester and admitted as Readers in the Church of England.

The programme has been running in its current form since September 2012 and its first successful candidates were licensed in 2015. It supersedes a Certificate in Higher Education in Ministerial Theology for the training of Readers and other commissioned and authorized lay leaders (Evangelists and Pastoral Assistants) that had been validated by Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) from 2006. (That programme in turn had built on a successful collaborative partnership between the University and the Diocese that had existed from 1998, primarily for the training of curates.) When the Certificate in Higher Education in Ministerial Theology came up for revalidation, a decision was made to move to a Foundation degree equivalent. This was influenced by a national trend in the church and a shift of emphasis from classroom-based learning to an integrated

programme that allows for work-based learning. At the same time, changes in funding affected the viability of a continuing partnership with CCCU and, as Common Awards were not far enough advanced to be adopted, the decision was taken to run Foundation in Christian Ministry as a non-validated programme.

This programme is distinctive and pioneering, aiming to equip students for a varied ministry with an emphasis on leadership roles. With strong support from the Bishop of Rochester, the programme responds to current trends within the diocese for the development of lay leadership, driven by a recognition that the church is called to meet the needs of a growing population and the rise of new communities, despite an expected decline in numbers projected over the coming ten years. The Rochester programme has the potential to offer a model to the wider church if trends are reflected elsewhere.

The Review took place primarily over two weekend teaching sessions. Reviewers attended a day-school on Saturday 16th January 2016 at Christ Church, Orpington, one of the main teaching venues for the programme, and also the Friday evening and Saturday of a residential weekend on 5th-6th February 2016 at Aylesford Priory, the usual venue for such residentials. One reviewer also sampled a weekday evening teaching session on Wednesday 3rd February, again at Christ Church, Orpington. This enabled us to see the three principal modes of face-to-face teaching used on the course. We conducted interviews with staff members, tutors, students, graduates, supporting and placement incumbents, the Bishop, and those involved in Quality Assurance, as well as having the opportunity to learn more about the student experience through informal conversations. We were also supplied with a comprehensive set of documentation for the course. These included: an Overview and Rationale for Foundation in Christian Ministry (November 2015); the Programme Handbook for 2015-16, a full set of module descriptors, marking and assessment policies, Self-Evaluation Reports, External Examiner reports, minutes of management meetings, diocesan policy documents, application and selection forms for candidates, student participation data, staff CVs and working arrangements, and worship guidelines.

At the time of the review, there were 42 students on the Foundation in Christian Ministry Programme (24 of these started in 2015; 16 in 2014; 13 in 2013, of whom 9 were continuing to LLM training; and 4 in 2012).

Additionally, since 2014, the programme has offered a transfer pathway, whereby existing Readers, Pastoral Assistants and Evangelists participate in the programme with a personalized selection of modules in order to qualify as Licensed Lay Ministers: 24 such students started in 2014 and 3 in 2015.

Summary of outcomes

Our overall conclusion is that Rochester Diocesan Training is fit for purpose for preparing candidates for Licensed Lay Ministry.

We found much good practice in this course, including its integration into diocesan structures for ministerial development, the high quality of its teaching and learning opportunities, the remarkable sense of community amongst a dispersed group of students, and its effective administration and management. Our recommendations are generally concerned with enhancing provision or with making good practice more formal and visible, and so our overall outcome is one of Confidence.

CRITERIA	OUTCOME
A. Aims, objectives and evaluation of the institution	Confidence
B Relationships with other institutions	Confidence
C Curriculum for formation and education	Confidence
D Community and corporate life	Confidence
E Worship and training in public worship	Confidence
F Ministerial, personal and spiritual formation	Confidence
G Teaching and learning: content, method and resources	Confidence
H Practical and pastoral theology	Confidence
I Teaching staff	Confidence
J All staff	Confidence
K Students	Confidence
L Governance, management, constitution and organisation	Confidence
M Business planning and risk management	Confidence
N Financial policies and cost-effectiveness	Confidence
O Reserves policy and statutory liabilities	Confidence
P Accommodation	Confidence
Overall Outcome	**Confidence**

General observations

The Report is written in relation to the Criteria set out in the *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Formation* Handbook October 2014. The paragraphs follow the Criteria which are printed in *italic* type. The reviewers' comments are in normal type and the recommendations in **bold**.

Rochester Diocesan LLM formation has the dual benefits of being led by a small, cohesive group of core staff while also drawing on a wide range of resources within the diocese and across professional networks. It is also aligned with diocesan mission strategies. In order to ensure sustainability, however, we encourage staff to consolidate some the good practice by making policies and strategies more formal and visible. Also, whilst we support the course team's decision to run the programme without external validation at present, we encourage them to remain alert to the external environment and recommend that they keep the question of validation under review.

Strengths

- The programme is fully integrated into diocesan ministerial development structures, enabling it to draw on a wide range of resources, funding and expertise

- The programme has full episcopal support

- Its responsiveness to the needs of the local area, including diocesan mission priorities

- The programme draws on a wide range of academic, professional and ministerial networks

- Its strong focus on mission and evangelism

- Efficiency of administration

- Excellent teaching accommodation

- The strong sense of community among staff and students

Areas for attention

- The programme could be bolder in serving its aim of equipping students for work outside the confines of the church. Teaching sessions could therefore place more emphasis on creative forms of evangelism, encounter and exchange that take place beyond the church community. Practical opportunities could be created for students to engage with

people of other faiths, for example in visits to synagogues or mosques, and to engage with secular organizations, for example through the opportunity to experience chaplaincy ministry.

- There is room for improvement in communications, as several of our recommendations relate to making policies and procedures clearer and more transparent. The need for further development of the Rochester Learning Space (virtual learning environment) is an important facet of this.

- Whilst there was ample evidence of excellent pastoral and academic care for students, this could be placed on a firmer footing with the addition of more formal mentoring arrangements.

FULL REPORT

SECTION ONE: AIMS AND KEY RELATIONS

A   Aims and objectives

Reviewers will consider whether the institution's aims are appropriate, clearly articulated and understood.

A.i   Its aims, objectives and policies should be appropriate to the preparation of students for ordained/lay public ministry within the breadth of the traditions of the sponsoring church(es).

1.   The aims, objectives and policies for the Rochester Diocesan LLM formation are set out clearly in the Foundation for Christian Ministry Programme Handbook 2015-16 and also in the document 'Foundation in Christian Ministry: Overview and Rationale' (November 2015). The Diocesan Formation and Ministry Team have also provided a sound rationale for its approach in the document 'Why Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM)?' (October 2015).

2.   The latter document demonstrates most clearly that the rationale for the programme is based on a thorough analysis of the recent evolution of lay ministry in the Church of England. It argues that ministry is organic and that this is not fully reflected in the current labels of Reader, Pastoral Assistant and Evangelist, and so it is more important to train people for lay leadership that can be adapted to a variety of contexts. In an interview with the Bishop of Rochester, we learned that this would have practical implications in a diocese where there is population growth and where new communities are developing in locations where there are no established churches and lack of clergy to serve their needs.

3.   The programme rationale therefore recognizes the increased emphasis on mission and evangelism within the Church of England, as well as the pastoral needs of the diocese: the stated programme outcomes therefore include an emphasis on connecting academic theology with pastoral and missiological practice, and deepening an understanding of models of mission. As will be demonstrated later, the module content could be more adventurous in terms of drawing on examples from beyond the context of churches and church communities (see F.iii below).

4. The programme aims also include a strong focus on discerning vocation, seeking spiritual direction, and theological reflection as tools that will help students develop as ministers. This is particularly important as Stage One of the course (Certificate in Christian Ministry), is designed to help students discern their vocation and learn more about their discipleship, recognising that some will decide not to train for leadership roles or, alternatively, may go on to explore calling to ordained ministry. So, whilst the primary aim of the programme is to equip students for lay public ministry, the documents recognise that some students starting the programme may move on to ordination training.

5. The emphasis in Stage Two is on developing effective leadership, working collaboratively with others, contributing to strategic development in a parish/ministry setting, and reflecting theologically on these. Again, this is consistent with the diocese's aims of growing a strong lay leadership to minister to a growing and changing population. It is also consistent with the need of the wider Church of England to grow ministers who are deployable and adaptable to changing situations: for this reason, students who successfully complete the course are licensed as LLMs in the Diocese of Rochester and Readers in the Church of England.

A.ii   They should be consistent with the current published policy statements of the sponsoring church(es).

6. As has been demonstrated, the aims, objectives and policies of this programme are consistent with the published policies of the Diocese of Rochester ('Why Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM)?' The learning outcomes for successful completion of the LLM course are also consistent with the published guidelines for Readers at the stage of licensing, as set out in 'Selection and Formation Guidelines for Readers' (Church of England, Ministry Council, May 2014).

7. The External Examiner's report for 2015 affirms that 'The curriculum and aims of the modules reflect the aims of the training and formation of lay ministers both at Diocesan and National level.'

A.iii   The institution should show that it has built on earlier learning, including through action in response to previous PER, curriculum approval and follow-up reports; other external bodies' evaluation; and self-evaluations.

8. There has been no previous PER.

9. The 'Overview and Rational' document demonstrates that the current programme, which ran for the first time in 2012, is the result of many years of discussion and development, including consultation with clergy, Bishops and Bishop's officers, the Diocesan Advisory Council for Ministry and Training, Wardens of Readers, Pastoral Assistants and Evangelists and the Diocesan Vocations Team. It also drew on feedback on the previous programme given by CCCU staff and the then External Examiner, as well as a review of training for lay ministers in the diocese conducted in 2009.

10. From the minutes of the Board of Reference (who are responsible for the strategic development of the programme) and the Programme Management Group (responsible for operational decisions), it is clear that the programme team take the process of reviewing and improving seriously. However, while there is implicit evidence of responsiveness to feedback, changes tend to be made on an ad hoc basis and are reported to the Programme Management Group after the fact. We **recommend** that there is a more formal and transparent mechanism for the proposal and approval of changes to the programme (see C.ii. below).

11. We have seen Self-Evaluation Reports for 2012-13 and 2013-14, which demonstrate a commitment to test the programme against published criteria, to assemble evidence, and to respond to comments. However, both of these are incomplete in places and the 2013-14 has remained in draft form due to a change in the Internal Quality Nominee. The Annual Self-Evaluation document for 2014-15 represents a vast improvement in the quality of reporting and analysis, with clearer identification of areas for attention, action to be taken, and performance indicators. A new Internal Quality Nominee has recently been appointed, and although he has not yet seen through a complete cycle, this is a positive move. We **encourage** the course team to model subsequent reports on the one for 2014-15, and to build on its recommendations.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion A, Aims, Objectives and Achievements of the Institution.**

B   Relationships with other institutions

Reviewers will look at how well the institution engages with partners:

B.i   There should be evidence of the institution's commitment to partnership with the other providers of theological education in the region.

12. The Foundation for Ministry team has close links with the South-East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE), with several core members of staff, key associates, and tutors having either trained or taught there. The Director for Formation and Ministry at Rochester is also on the Council of SEITE. It is possible that closer connections will be forged when the two organizations move into shared accommodation at Malling Abbey (see P.i.).

13. The programme also draws on the expertise of an External Quality Advisor, who is director of ministerial development in a nearby diocese.

B.ii   The institution should draw fully on the resources of universities in teaching, quality assessment, staff development and the promotion of research.

14. This criterion is less relevant due to the non-validated nature of the programme. Nonetheless, it continues to benefit from its long associations with Christ Church Canterbury University, who had validated the previous programme for the training of Readers and other commissioned and authorized lay leaders: the Certificate in Higher Education in Ministerial Theology. Staff members from CCCU provided advice on the current version of the programme at its earliest stages, as did the then external examiner, who was based at the University of Chester. The current programme therefore benefits from those earlier associations, but the situation will need to be kept under review as time goes by and this earlier input loses its currency.

15. We were pleased with the willingness of staff members to engage in debate about the benefits and drawbacks of running a non-validated programme, and also their openness to considering the pros and cons of adopting Common Awards. The benefits of the current system are that it enables the diocese to offer a programme that is highly responsive to the needs of the diocese and the student body. Although some Year 3 students we interviewed expressed some disappointment at not being able to attain accreditation for their studies, other students in the group said that accreditation was not their main interest and that a university-validated course might deter able candidates with leadership qualities but without an academic background. We are satisfied that the current position suits the purposes of the programme, its students and key stakeholders, but we recommend that the course team keeps the situation under review.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that course leaders keep under review the question of seeking validation of the programme from an external body, including the possibility of adopting Common Awards.

16.   The staff CVs demonstrate that individual staff members have undertaken recent university study for professional development purposes: for example, the Programme Director attained an MTh in Applied Theology from the University of Wales in 2014.

B.iii   It should engage effectively with local churches, other faith communities and secular organisations so as to enhance formation for public ministry.

17.   The programme has an effective network with local churches, who provide placement opportunities for students. This placement is church-based and we encourage the team to consider ways in which students may be given the opportunity to engage with other faith communities, for example through visits to synagogues or mosques, or through the opportunity to experience chaplaincy ministry.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion B, Relationships with other institutions.**

SECTION TWO: CURRICULUM FOR FORMATION AND EDUCATION

C   Curriculum for formation and education

Reviewers will consider the curriculum's design and content.

C.i   There should be a theological, formational and educational rationale for the institution's approach to mission and to formation for ministry and discipleship.

18.   As the analysis in A.i. (above) demonstrates, the programme has a clear theological rationale for its approach to mission and this is responsive to the local and national contexts.

19.   There is also a clear formational rationale, presented in the 'Overview and Rationale' document and explained to students in the course Handbook. To enter the programme, students need to have the support of their incumbent, to have attended the introductory one-day vocational course 'It's Your Calling' and to have met with a Vocational Advisor. Students are enabled to develop their vocational understanding in Stage One: the learning outcomes include developing as reflective practitioners and demonstrating a maturing faith and awareness of their own spiritual formation and that of others. These skills are assessed through a series of tasks, including a year-long portfolio based on a theological reflection module. On successful completion of Stage Two, they should be able to speak with confidence about their vocation and understand how its expression contributes to church life.

20.   The educational rationale, which is explained in the 'Overview and Rationale' document, was to design the programme at the level of a Foundation degree, in order to reflect a national shift towards integrated training which allows reflection on work-based learning and reflection on theological models. The more practical emphasis of the Foundation degree was also considered to be more suitable for students with non-tradition educational backgrounds. This view is endorsed in the course Handbook, which also affirms the variety of learning styles that students and tutors will adopt.

C.ii   The institution should offer, and periodically review, a set of programmes that will enable candidates to be prepared for their ministries and/or meet their learning needs.

21. The programme structure has a clear and coherent structure, which is set out very effectively in the Handbook. Year One of the programme comprises four modules which provide the essential foundations for ministerial training, and which are taken by students on all pathways. Mission and Ministry (which introduces students to concepts within missiology and encourages them to reflect on their own contexts in the light of these); Bible and Belief (which includes explorations of the continuing relevance of the Bible to the church today); Worship and Spirituality (which covers different traditions within the church and reflection on personal styles); and Ministry in Context 1: Reflective Practice (which involves the compilation of a portfolio and reflective journal, enabling students to apply their learning to their practice).

22. Year Two includes two modules which are taken by all students: God's Word in the World (which uses a historical study of the evolution of creeds as a basis for reflection on wider issues of ethics) and Opening God's Word (which includes work on exegesis and hermeneutics, as well as reflections on how the Bible is used in liturgy, worship, teaching and preaching). Students on the LLM pathway also take Pastoral Ministry and Christian Discipleship and Ministry in Context 2: Christian Leadership, both of which focus appropriately on skills and theories needed for practical leadership.

23. For the final stage of the course, candidates for Licensed Lay Ministry take four specialist modules, choosing from options such as bereavement ministry, healing and wholeness, lay chaplaincy, and working with children/young people. These may be taken across the third and fourth years of the programme, and they give students the opportunity to benefit from the expertise of guest tutors, while also exploring particular aspects of ministry that have relevance for their own practice.

24. In our meetings with former students and current third-year students, some concern was expressed about the intensity of work in the first year and a half of the programme. However, as the above outline suggests, the programme has a coherent pattern and would be better to deal with student workload by reviewing the assessment burden: we will return to this under 'Teaching and Learning' (see G.ii). Students also expressed concerns about the timing of licensing, which can take place before students have finished all the modules and therefore causes confusion. However, in terms of the programme rationale, the core courses provide candidates with a sound basis for licensing and it is appropriate for them

to be continuing with specialist modules in a spirit of continuing professional development and life-long learning.

25. We saw evidence that staff were constantly reviewing and improving the programme. The annual Board of Reference considers reports from the Programme Director, the External Examiner, and the Internal Quality Nominee, and is also attended by the External Quality Advisor. The minutes show that reflective processes are effective and that changes are being made.

26. The Programme Management Group (PMG), which meets once a term, provides an opportunity for members to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning opportunities, and it includes reports from the Programme Director, module tutors, student representatives and placement incumbents. The minutes show that staff have reflected on the programme and made changes, though we note that these are reported after the fact. Not all tutors are able to attend these meetings, however, and so the reporting cycle was more evident for some modules than others.

27. From our interviews with tutors, we learned that they have the opportunity to review their performance with the Programme Director as part of the moderation process (see J.iii.), and to put changes in place. Such changes are therefore made in camera, and reported to the PMG. We also have seen module questionnaires and the tutor module evaluation forms that are compiled in response to these and in preparation for meetings with the Programme Director. However, from our conversations with tutors, not all tutors on team-taught modules are aware of these evaluation forms, and students we interviewed were not sure how or whether their feedback had used to review and improve courses.

28. We therefore recommend that the course team puts in place more formal mechanisms for reviewing and improving provision. This could be achieved for example by tabling written reports on the modules (including results of the questionnaires and tutors' responses) at PMG and the use of pro-formas for requesting modifications to modules, which would then be considered by the PMG.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that more formal and transparent mechanisms are put in place for the proposal and approval of changes to the programme and individual modules.

C.iii   *The academic and formational assessment methods should enable the institution to advise church leaders on the suitability of candidates for their ministry.*

29.   The programme has a clear assessment strategy, including summative assessment for each module. Suitable emphasis is also placed on the importance of formative assessment. In our interview the Bishop of Rochester confirmed that he had confidence in the programme's effectiveness in assessing the suitability of candidates.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion C, Curriculum for formation and education.**

SECTION THREE: MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

D   Community and Corporate Life

Reviewers will consider the institution's quality of common life. Is it a good place in which to live, work and study? How is community built across local training contexts and in 'dispersed' mode?

D.i   The institution should offer a clear statement of how it understands corporate life, reflected in its training for ministry and the working relationships between members.

30.   Students on the course are part of a healthy community, with a strong emphasis on corporate life, despite the dispersed nature of the course. Reviewers saw evidence for this including: the quality of hospitality offered by students to one another during evening lecture sessions; significant events in student lives being marked by fellow students; use of the online discussion forum; an engaged and happy buzz in social times and at shared meals; open and engaged interactions amongst students and between staff and students.

31.   This culture of mutual care and support is clearly embedded in the course, and is modelled by staff and tutors, who were available to the students and clearly knew them well. The presence of Learning Advisors, and their focus on the wellbeing of students is particularly important. Reviewers heard of the important role played in academic and pastoral support by the Course Director. A tutor told us that he is contacted by students who need support with their academic work, and he welcomed this, seeing it as part of his role.

32.   The online Learning Space contains large quantities of appropriate and helpful information for students, and is clearly well used. It is not as easy to navigate as it could be, and student forums, although used, do not appear to be a focus of community conversation in the way they might be for a dispersed community. There are plans for it to be redesigned in the near future, and we **encourage** this.

33.   There was no overt reference to the importance of students being part of a community life in documentation, nor to the expectations of the working relationships between students and we **encourage** course staff to consider how this might be included in the handbook.

D.ii   There should be a clear statement of its understanding of issues of gender, ethnic grouping and disability and other matters of natural justice; its training, governance and community life should reflect this.

34.   There is a clear statement on support for students with extra learning needs, and evidence was provided by staff that this is put into practice on a case by case basis, although it is clear that there is an emphasis on maintaining academic standards.

35.   There is no statement available on the understanding of issues of gender or ethnicity, although statistics are kept on student demographics these would appear to be well balanced. We **recommend** that these written statements are included in the course Handbook and on the Learning Space.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that written statements on the understanding of issues of gender or ethnicity are included in the course handbook and on the Learning Space.

D.iii   Does the institution have clear and well-managed policies for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults?

36.   The Diocese has robust policies and procedures, which are detailed on the Diocesan website. Students who go forward to a Licensed Ministry are expected to have a current DBS check, and the handbook directs students to Diocesan policies on safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is not taught as part of the curriculum, as the Diocese wants all students to complete the standard Diocesan Safeguarding course. All Licensed Lay Ministers are required to attend two Safeguarding courses, and then to update this training a regular basis.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion D, Community and corporate life.**

E   Worship and training in public worship

Reviewers will look at whether the arrangements for common worship and the policies underlying them are satisfactory.

E.i   The institution's policy and practice in corporate worship should reflect the tradition and liturgical inheritance of the wider church.

37. There is significant evidence that the course equips students to minister in a broad range of traditions within the Church of England. Worship observed by reviewers reflected different theological and liturgical perspectives, including BCP Morning Prayer, structured Common Worship liturgies and freer expressions of prayer and worship. The CVs and teaching input of tutors showed that they are rooted in different spiritualities and traditions and an example was given of a situation in which one tutor expressed a particular interpretative stance on biblical teaching which caused upset to some students. This was quickly picked up and appropriately dealt with by course staff in a way that respected both positions.

38. There is however no formal statement on how issues of conscience will be dealt with and we **recommend** that this is written and made available to students.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that a formal statement on how issues of conscience will be dealt with is written and made available to students in the course Handbook and on the Rochester Learning Space.

E.ii There should be a policy on, and provision for, a balance of worship, including authorised and innovative forms, which recognises and equips candidates to work within the variety of practice within the sponsoring church.

39. In the first year of the course students are taught a module that covers worship and spirituality, which includes input on a range of Anglican spiritualities, and gives students the opportunity to lead an act of worship (see also E.iii below). A further optional course on Designing and Leading Worship is offered in the third or fourth year, which builds on this foundation and equips candidates to work within the range of liturgical practices of the church.

40. There are clear guidelines for those preparing worship. A statement laying out the approach taken by the course to the balance of worship that will be offered is available, but is part of a longer document *"Additional information for 'Foundation in Christian Ministry - Overview and Rationale"* and is not easily available. We **recommend** that this be made more easily available.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that that the course statement on the balance of worship be made more easily available, in the course Handbook and on the Rochester Learning Space.

E.iii   Ministerial candidates should be effectively trained to plan, prepare and conduct public worship as appropriate for their ministry (lay or ordained), and they should receive critical and constructive comment from staff and peers.

41.   Students are given effective training in leading worship (see Eii above).

42.   There are appropriate written guidelines for those preparing and leading worship. Students leading worship at evening sessions are given verbal feedback by Learning Advisors shortly afterwards. Reviewers have seen more detailed written feedback from a member of staff to students leading worship at a weekend away. This was appropriate, critical and constructive. Some students commented that greater emphasis should be put on feedback to acts of worship that they have led, partly on the course, but more significantly when leading and preaching in their home churches. We **encourage** course staff to consider ways that the range and depth of feedback, including in their home churches, could be increased.

E.iv The liturgical space should be adequate for its purpose.

43.   The liturgical spaces at both locations where the course was observed were suitable for their use.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion E, Worship and training in public worship.**

F   Ministerial, personal and spiritual formation

Reviewers will consider how well the institution helps learners in their ministerial, personal and spiritual formation and self-awareness, and in their understanding of the specific lay or ordained ministry to which they are called .

F.i   The institution should enable candidates to be immersed in the traditions of their own church denomination and to gain an empathetic understanding of church and faith traditions other than their own.

44. The course reflects the traditions of the Church of England in its content and culture (See also E.i and E.ii above). Students were observed to have come from a wide range of church traditions and backgrounds and there was no evidence of any tension between them, with healthy discussion from the perspective of these different traditions taking place in teaching sessions. There was less evidence of students having the opportunity to engage with other faith traditions, and we **recommend** that the course team gives consideration as to how this might be achieved, for example through visits to synagogues or mosques.

Recommendation 6

We also recommend that the course team gives students practical opportunities to engage with other faith communities, for example through visits to synagogues or mosques.

F.ii   It should offer corporate and individual guidance for learners, including encouragement to seek confidential spiritual counsel and to maintain a regular private prayer life.

45. Modules on *Worship and Spirituality* and *Pastoral Ministry and Christian Discipleship* are taught in the first two years of the course. These place emphasis on the personal spirituality and prayer life of students. Students are strongly encouraged to have a Spiritual Director, although this is not compulsory, and anecdotal evidence suggests that many do take up this suggestion. Further modules building on this foundation are offered in the third and fourth years, including *Spirituality Explored* and *Establishing and leading Fresh Expressions* (see also F.iii)

F.iii   Its common life and the guidance offered should enable students to grow in Christian discipleship, in readiness to share their faith, and as theologically reflective practitioners, with a view to exercising a public role in ministry and engaging with the world.

46. When students are together for evening and weekend sessions, prayer and worship has a central place, and the informal evidence from conversations with students is that they have a strong sense of vocation and of growing discipleship.

47. Reviewers were aware that the evening and weekend sessions were very full and that there was limited time for personal prayer, silence or reflection. This may emphasise activist rather than reflective models of

discipleship and learning, and we **encourage** staff to consider ways to include more space of this sort in these programmes.

48. The course places significant emphasis on connecting the personal faith and skills development of students. All modules include both theoretical and experiential elements and students are consistently encouraged to reflect theologically on their own settings and experiences.

49. Teaching sessions and informal interactions between staff and students showed that spirituality and faith are at the centre of the course culture.

50. The course emphasises the personal spirituality and discipleship of students, and encourages them to develop as reflective practitioners. Given the aim of the course to develop missional leaders within the Diocese[1], there is limited input and emphasis on practical mission. The content of modules on mission and ministry, and the evidence during teaching sessions seen by reviewers points to an emphasis on 'church-focused' mission. We note that there is a module on lay chaplaincy, but this is optional and therefore only taken by a small selection of the students. We **recommend** that course staff review the place given within the modules to a fuller understanding and range of mission, including more creative forms of evangelism, engagement and encounter that take place beyond the church community. We also **recommend** that the course team creates practical opportunities for all students to engage with secular organizations, for example by observing sector chaplaincies, and to engage with other faith communities, for example through visits to synagogues or mosques.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that course staff review the place given to a fuller understanding and range of mission, including more creative forms of evangelism that take place beyond the church community, both in the subject content of taught courses and in further practical opportunities for experience of engagement with secular organizations, for example by observing sector chaplaincies.

F.iv *The teaching and ministerial staff should model an appropriate pattern of*

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[1] 'LLM training is designed to support the growth and development of the church in the 21st century: to equip lay leaders to be people of mission, both in fulfilling ministry tasks within the church, and by taking an active role as Christians in society.' *Taken from 'Why Licensed Lay Ministry?'*

spirituality, continued learning and reflection on practice.

51.	Staff were consistently seen to model a rooted spiritual life and to be open to feedback, discussion and comment. In teaching sessions staff interacted with students in ways that were consistently engaged and responsive. Teaching placed great emphasis on the importance of a relationship with God and students were encouraged to reflect on their own experiences.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion F, Ministerial, personal and spiritual formation.**

SECTION FOUR: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

G   Teaching and learning: content, method and resources

Reviewers will consider the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning activities, methods and resources.

G.i   The units of teaching and learning should be well structured, with clear and appropriate aims.

52.   As has been demonstrated above (C.ii.), the overall programme is well structured, providing students with the opportunity to engage with an appropriate range of topics in a clear and logical order. We have been provided with a full set of module descriptors which demonstrate that each module has a clear set of objectives and learning outcomes. The indicative content for each modules gives evidence of careful thought and the descriptors propose a set of teaching and learning activities that are varied, often imaginative, and appropriate to the topic. Each module descriptor also has a detailed, relevant and up-to-date indicative bibliography.

53.   From our observation of teaching sessions and from module information available on the Rochester Learning Space, we are satisfied that the delivery of the modules lives up to the aims and intentions of the module descriptors.

G.ii   There should be a proper balance between the academic, formational and practical aspects of training.

54.   The module descriptors demonstrate a commitment to integrating theology and practice. For example, each of the core modules aims to introduce key theories and debates and also to stimulate debate, discussion and reflection. For example, *Mission and Ministry* introduces students to concepts within missiology and then encourages them to reflect on their own contexts in the light of these; *Bible and Belief* covers topics such as doctrine, literary style and narrative structures but also explores ways in which the Bible continues to inform the Church of England and inspire personal spirituality. *Ministry in Context 1: Reflective Practice,* which spans the whole year, plays a key role in embedding practices of theological reflection.

55.   The third- and fourth-year modules, which focus on particular specialist ministries and are taught by tutors with experience and expertise in these areas, place particular emphasis on applying theological insights to the practicalities of ministry.

56.   In our interviews with third-year students and learners who have recently completed the course, some participants expressed a perception that the assessment was biased towards academic topics and that this might exclude some candidates who were very able leaders and ministers. We also noted that students are not assessed on their preaching or other activities within the parish, although there is some opportunity for them to provide documentary evidence of practice and reflect on their experiences in modules such as *Pastoral Ministry and Christian Discipleship.* We therefore encourage the team to consider diversifying methods of assessment.

57.   In the same interviews, some concern was expressed about the intensity of workload in the first eighteen months of the programme, during which students take a module each term as well as a year-long reflective module. We note from the module descriptors that the norm for a Level 4 module tends to be the equivalent of 4,000 words of assessment and for a Level 5 module, the norm is the equivalent of 5,000 words. This is relatively high for the sector and it would be possible to reduce the expected word-counts and still test students' achievements of the learning outcomes. Shorter word-limits could also enable students to produce more focused work.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the course team reviews the word-counts for assignments, with a view to reducing the total amount that students are expected to write and emphasizing quality over quantity.

G.iii   Learning programmes should be varied in format and method, with use of student experience, courses, seminars, tutorials, one-to-one, groups, placements and private study.

58.   The quality of face-to-face teaching we observed was high and we saw many good examples of engaging, interesting and relevant teaching sessions. The sessions gave evidence of the use of a variety of different learning and teaching methods: some sessions were taught by two tutors, giving students experience of different teaching styles within one session.

These included short presentations from tutors; lectures supported by power-point presentations that also included space for discussion and interaction; group work; workshopping of essay ideas; and student presentations. Effective use is made of private study: one class we observed included small-group discussions during which students shared their findings on a bible-study exercise that had been posted on the Rochester Learning Space. At all the sessions we observed, students were encouraged to draw on examples from their own experience and there was a great willingness to do so and a great openness to sharing and valuing one another's experience and points of view.

59. From our interviews with placement incumbents it is clear that the placement is an effective method of learning too. Although all placements are observational rather than practical, students are given the opportunity to observe a different church from their home church, often in a very different community or from a different tradition; they also have the opportunity to reflect on their experience with their placement incumbent.

G.iv   *There should be an appropriate learning environment, with adequate resources including library and information and communications technology.*

60. The two main sites used for training students on the LLM course are Christ Church Orpington (Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings) and Aylesford Priory (weekend Residentials). These are discussed further under Accommodation (see P.i.), but we noted that the teaching spaces were fit for purpose: comfortable, well-lit and airy. The space at Christ Church offered great flexibility, with the opportunity to change room sizes and arrange furniture to suit the relevant sessions, as well as offering a range of different rooms for small group work, if needed. At Aylesford Priory, a number of rooms were available to the course, again enabling flexibility of accommodation and provision for breakout groups. The equipment available was of a high standard, including clear projection equipment and large high-quality screens. We note from the minutes of the Programme Management Group that course leaders have made sure that there is Wifi access in all teaching spaces. In our interviews, the students expressed great satisfaction with the teaching venues.

61. Reviewers are also aware of plans to move the main teaching sessions on the programme to Malling Abbey. This will be a shared facility with SEITE and will allow for dedicated teaching space and improved library facilities.

62.   The specialist modules are taught in a variety of venues, chosen by tutors and students for mutual convenience. This means that students can observe specialist ministries first-hand in situ.

63.   The course makes use of book-boxes and students find these useful although there is a lot of pressure on this resource. Students have access to the diocesan library, although this is geographically difficult for many students to use it regularly. However, students generally felt that the course was well resourced and most managed by buying or borrowing texts. One of the tutors on a specialist module commended the willingness of the Programme Director to purchase a small selection of specialist books for the module, and this was appreciated by students.

64.   The Rochester Learning Space is well used by students and they noted that some tutors were very good at putting supporting material on this. From our use of the RLS, it is clear that some tutors make extensive use of Moodle while others while others do not, and we recommend that the team put some work into developing this resource to disseminate good practice by ensuring that all modules attain a minimum standard of provision. This could include developing access to online resources including massive open online courses (Moocs). Some work could also be done to ensure that the site is easier to navigate, for example by having an area where all key information is provided. (See also D.i. and Recommendations 3, 4, and 5.)

65.   Students expressed some frustration about some technical problems that can arise: we note that the diocese is about to conduct a review of IT provision and we hope that some of the technical issues may be addressed by this.

Recommendation 9

We recommend the enhancement of the Rochester Learning Space as a resource for students, making it simpler to navigate, presenting key course information more clearly, and providing access to a wider range of external resources.

G.v   Staff should provide students with constructive formal and informal feedback assessment, against published assessment criteria, in terms of both academic progress and preparation for beginning public ministry.

66.   From minutes of the Programme Management Group and from discussions with the Senior Tutor, we were pleased to note that the programme team have put a great deal of effort into improving the quality of marking and feedback over the past year. Clear assessment criteria have been drawn up for both Level 4 and Level 5, and a staff development exercise has been undertaken aiming to ensure that the large and disparate group of tutors have shared understanding and expectations. Although not all tutors have engaged with the exercise, it did have an impact on raising the quality of marking and feedback: we were given the opportunity to sample batches of student work, in a variety of modules, over three years and it is clear that the quality of feedback has improved.

67.   However, in our discussion with students, it appears that some students feel unsure about what is expected of them and sometimes feel unclear about how their marks have been derived or how they could improve their performance. Due to the large network of tutors, many of whom only teach on one module, it was often difficult for students to speak to a tutor after their work had been marked. Students were also unclear as to where to go to discuss their progress: some were advised to see their local incumbents, others to see the Programme Director, others to speak to the Learning Advisors. The latter is an important role, and they do excellent work especially with students from non-traditional educational backgrounds, but there is a perception among students that they are only available for students with specific needs or difficulties. We therefore recommend that more formal arrangements are put in place for mentoring students, so that each student has a designated personal tutor who is available to discuss their progress. This would be particularly important at crucial points in the course, such as when students are offering themselves for LLM towards the end of the first year. This would also provide a support network for students who were not selected but were nonetheless wishing to remain on the course to complete the Certificate in Christian Ministry (see also K.i.).

Recommendation 10

We recommend that formal arrangements are put in place for the mentoring of students, to ensure that every student receives regular invitations to review their progress with a designated individual.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion G, Teaching and learning, content, method and resources.**

H   Practical and pastoral theology

H.i   The institution's learning structures and formational activity should integrate theory and practice and enable students to grow as theologically reflective practitioners in the context of the developing and diverse society in which they will minister.

68.   We saw much evidence of the integration of theory and practice within the programme. As described above (C.i.), the modules are designed to introduce theological concepts and also to encourage students to reflect on this in relation to their own experience and context. We saw this in the sessions we observed. For example, in a session of *Bible and Belief,* students had to find biblical examples of a particular theme, such as land, and apply it to their own context: they demonstrated skills in biblical study and a great readiness to interpret the passages for their own contexts. The module *Ministry in Context 1: Reflective Practice,* which runs throughout the first year is particularly designed to embed skills in theological reflection in relation to formation and praxis.

69.   Tutors come to the course with a range of practical expertise: most tutors are also in active ministry and are selected for their expertise in practical contexts as well as their skills as educators. In our meeting with two tutors, they spoke of their 'holistic' approach to learning and teaching, by which students' ministerial experience is affirmed.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion H, Practical and pastoral theology.**

SECTION FIVE: STAFF AND STUDENTS

Reviewers will consider the recruitment, expertise, resourcing, appraisal and development of staff.

I   Teaching Staff

I.i   The gender, lay/ordained and denominational balance of ministerial and teaching staff should model appropriate patterns of learning and of ministry and comply with denominational guidelines.

70.   The Rochester LLM has a very strong team of around 40 tutors and learning advisers, most of whom are volunteers. Their CVs demonstrate that they come from a wide range of backgrounds and experience which enables the taught modules to be offered at the appropriate levels, both in terms of academic achievement and of preparation for public ministry. Throughout the review we were particularly impressed by the breadth and depth of the expertise and knowledge as well as the teaching skills of the staff. This was evidenced by our own observations of the taught sessions and by feedback from the students. The programme also calls upon a number of visiting speakers to be involved in the delivery of certain sessions within the various modules.

71.   The mix of teaching staff involved in delivering the Rochester LLM programme meets the denominational guidelines in terms of gender, lay/ordained and denominational representation.

> **The review team has Confidence in regard to Criterion I, teaching staff.**

J   All staff

J.i   Staff recruitment and selection procedures should be transparent, fair and consonant with the policies of the relevant partner bodies.

72.   As reported in section I the Foundation in Christian Ministry programme calls upon the services of a large number of voluntary tutors, learning advisers and guest speakers. Whilst there is no overt policy for the recruitment of these, the Director of Formation and Ministry, who has oversight of this programme, also has responsibility for all other aspects of ministerial development across the diocese and through these and other contacts is able to identify individuals with skills and areas of expertise which they can bring to the programme.

73. There is also an opportunity for those with an interest in becoming involved in working with the programme and who feel they have something to offer to raise this as part of their bi-annual ministerial development review.

74. From our meetings with tutors and with the previous Director of Ministry and Training it is clear that a number of those tutoring on the current programme were also involved in working on the previous Reader training course (the Certificate in Higher Education in Ministerial Theology). This is important in ensuring continuity.

J.ii   Job descriptions, terms of service and reporting lines should be clear at the time of appointment and reviewed at regular intervals.

75. Module tutors each have a role description which includes information about the key responsibilities of the role, terms and conditions, including such things as expenses and their reporting line to the Programme Director. Further information about reporting lines and where the programme sits is included in the Diocesan structures chart with which we were provided.

76. Similarly, Learning Advisers have a working agreement which covers relevant information about their role and responsibilities, including their reporting line to the Programme Director via the Senior Learning Adviser.

77. The documentation provided also indicates that these roles are reviewed on an annual basis.

78. The Programme Director, Senior Tutor and Administrator also all have role descriptions which include, as appropriate, details of their responsibilities in relation to the programme.

J.iii   There should be an effective programme for the continuing professional development of staff, including annual appraisals for all staff.

79. Continuing Professional Development for those involved with the programme is provided through the Diocesan learning and development events relevant to their primary role. In addition to this we are aware from the Programme Director's report to the Board of Reference that various in-house learning events have been provided for tutors including: principles of adult learning; inclusive learning; and assessment and marking. There is an indication in this report that the take-up of these events may not have been as good as hoped for. The role descriptions described above do not

include a statement of expectations about ongoing continuous professional development or attendance at learning events relevant to the tutors' and/or learning advisers' roles and so we would **suggest** that when these are next reviewed a statement relating to this be included.

80. From our discussions with the staff we met we are aware that at the end of each module and once the assignment marking has been completed, the Programme Director meets with the module tutors to review the module, discuss the feedback and agree any revisions. This also provides an opportunity to review the performance of the tutors and provide feedback on this. This review serves the purpose of an annual appraisal for tutors and also provides an opportunity for tutors to indicate whether they wish to continue in this capacity. (We were given an example of a situation where one of the tutors faced with some negative feedback about his/her marking following the introduction of the new marking system had decided to step down.)

81. The Programme Director and the Administrator also have their annual 'personal review process' interviews with the Director of Formation and Ministry, which include a review of their work on the LLM programme.

J.iv   Staff should be sufficient in number and expertise, and resourced to fulfil their role adequately for the institution's and students' needs.

82. As previously described in Section I, we have no concerns about the number and expertise of the staff involved in the delivery of the programme and from the minutes of the Programme Management Group it is clear that new tutors and learning advisers are recruited at regular intervals to fulfil the changing needs of the programme and its students.

83. The Programme Administrator also provides support to a number of other different areas under the jurisdiction of the Director of Ministry and Formation. She estimates that her responsibilities with the LLM programme comprise 50% of her workload. She describes her overall workload as 'busy albeit manageable' and she is able to review this with her manager during her annual personal review.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion J, All staff.**

K   Students

Reviewers will examine procedures for student admission, welfare and support, appraisal and discipline.

K.i   Policies on students' admission, welfare, complaints, discipline, assessment, reporting to sponsoring churches and arrangements for first appointments should be publicly available; and there should be evidence that they are applied.

84.   In the first instance the Diocese of Rochester's website provides useful information about admission to the Foundation for Christian Ministry Programme, including details of the programme and the introductory day 'It's Your Calling' which all potential candidates must attend prior to submitting an application.

85.   It is clear from all the documentation with which we were provided, including information in the Programme Handbook that the first stage of the programme, leading to the Certificate in Christian Ministry is open to anyone who has the support of their incumbent and who has attended 'It's Your Calling'.

86.   During the residential weekend in February the year one students have a presentation from the Diocesan Director of Formation and Ministry entitled 'Discerning the Future' which clearly explains the selection process for those who wish to apply to continue to Stage Two of the programme leading to Licensed Lay Ministry status. Reviewers did not see this presentation but have received a copy of the slides used, which provide a clear description of the process. The process appears very robust and involves all the relevant stakeholders.

87.   We did meet with some recently licensed LLMs, the first to complete the new programme, who reported that they felt the process had been somewhat confusing and that they would have liked the timescales to be more clearly defined. However they accepted that some of this was down to the newness of the programme and it is clear that these issues have now been resolved for the next cohorts of students. There was some concern expressed amongst some of the former and current groups of students with whom we met, about support structures for any students who wished to continue to Stage Two but who were not recommended, especially as they would have to attend a further two modules alongside those who had been selected in order to achieve Certificate level. This

was not a concern shared by the programme tutors with whom we met or the training incumbents, one of whom was also a selector, as it was felt that the decision not to proceed was usually reached by mutual agreement. This is a further example of a situation where having a personal mentor as discussed above could prove helpful (see G.iv. and Recommendation 9).

88. In 2014 existing Readers, Pastoral Assistants and Evangelists were invited to consider undertaking a transfer pathway to enable them to be licensed as Licensed Lay Ministers. The transfer pathway, which involves studying *Ministry in Context 2: Congregational Studies and Leadership* and up to four of the optional stage two modules, is open to those 'with an appropriate level of initial training' and the programme is individually tailored to take account of previous training and experience as well as new areas of interest. 24 transfer students started their programmes in September 2014, and 3 started in September 2015, and have been studying alongside existing LLM students. The Diocesan website does not make any mention of this development and we would **suggest** that those responsible for managing the programme make representation to the Diocese to address this.

89. Details of other policies relating to complaints, discipline, assessment etc are all described in the Programme Handbook and the students with whom we met were clear about where to find this information should they need it.

K.ii   The institution's decision-making structure should enable students to take an appropriate part in its governance.

90. Each year group of students appoints a student representative to attend the Programme Management Group (PMG) on their behalf. Our meeting with the group of former students included one member who had fulfilled this role. Prior to the PMG meetings, which happen three times a year, she and the other student representatives would email others in their year for any issues which they wished to raise at the meetings. This was in addition to issues which would emerge during personal interactions during teaching sessions etc. It is clear from the minutes of the PMG meetings that the student representatives were listened to and their feedback and comments recorded. In some cases it was clear where any action on issues they raised was being recommended as this was either minuted at that meeting or picked up under 'matters arising' at the following meeting. However some students commented that whilst they felt they were invited

to give feedback they were never sure which, if any was being acted upon. We would therefore **recommend** that those involved in managing the programme consider ways in which the feedback loop could be improved to enable students to be aware of what has happened to feedback and suggestions they have provided (see C. ii and Recommendation 2).

The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion K, Students.

SECTION SIX: GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

L   Organisation and governance

Reviewers will examine the effectiveness of the institution's governance structures and processes, recognising that these will be proportionate to the scale of the institution and will not apply identically to, say, a college and a diocesan course.

L.i   The institution should have clear financial, administrative and management structures and an up-to-date governing document, and the governing body should be constituted in line with it.

91.   The documentation provided to reviewers clearly shows the diocesan financial, administrative and management structures and the place of the Foundation for Christian Ministry Programme within these. The programme itself has a governing document contained within the paper 'Foundation in Christian Ministry: An overview and rationale' which contains a description of the role and membership of the Programme Management Group and its reporting line via the annual Board of Reference meeting through to Bishop's Council. From the minutes of the Programme Management Group and the Board of Reference it is clear that it is constituted, meets and conducts business in line with this governing document.

92.   The paper 'Foundation in Christian Ministry: An overview and rationale' is dated November 2015 and may have been written as part of the preparation for this review. However it is a very clear and concise document, containing useful information which is not readily found elsewhere. We would therefore **suggest** that this document (appropriately edited and modified), be made more available to students, tutors, training incumbents, and other interested parties.

L.ii   There should be evidence that the governing body recognises and discharges its role and legal duties in respect of stewardship of the assets; setting and safeguarding the vision, values, reputation and effectiveness of the institution; operational and staff oversight and support.

93.   The strategic business of the programme is dealt with by the annual Board of Reference which receives the Programme Director's annual report and the reports of the External Examiner as well as scrutinising standards and making any recommendations for changes to the overall programme.

94. The Programme Management Group, which meets three times a year, is primarily concerned with the operational business of the programme: as its minutes show, it deals with feedback and evaluation on the various modules, standards of work, student issues, suggestions for improvements etc.

L.iii   It should have the mix of skills and experience appropriate to its role; there should be a clear understanding of the respective roles of trustees and staff, with job descriptions for key officers and induction for new trustees; and ongoing training needs should be met.

95. The membership of the Board of Reference reflects its strategic role and includes diocesan representation at an appropriate level, with the diocese having the overall 'trustee' role in respect of this programme.

96. The Programme Management Group has a wide and open membership which changes over time as it includes a range of stakeholders including: supporting incumbents; volunteer tutors; learning advisers and student representatives as well as paid staff. This membership is relevant to the business it conducts.

L.iv   There should be evidence of a structured contribution made by all community members - teaching staff, ancillary staff, the student body and individuals - so that they play an effective role in decision-making.

97. As outlined above, the Programme Management Group meetings are open to a wide range of people with an interest in the running of the programme and it is clear from the structure of the minutes that the various groups who are represented, tutors, students, incumbents etc., all have an opportunity to contribute and that their comments are minuted along with any suggested actions as a result of these. Strategic decisions about the programme handled by the Board of Reference, taking on board feedback and comments from the various groups represented at PMG, and referred as necessary to Bishop's Council.

L.v   The institution's audited annual reports should be produced in good time and filed with the Charity Commission/Companies House as appropriate.

98. This criterion is not relevant to the programme.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion L Organisation and governance.**

M   Business planning and risk management

Reviewers will look at evidence for the existence and implementation of the institution's strategic policies. Subject to considerations of scale, as at section L:

M.i   There should be a regularly-updated long-term strategy document agreed by the trustees and, in line with it, a business plan covering 3-5 years which identifies short and medium term aims and objectives and identifies how the institution intends to meet them.

99.   Conversations with the Bishop and the Director of Formation and Ministry and reports from Bishop's Council show that the course emerged from a clear Diocesan strategy and remains embedded in Diocesan planning for the medium and long term. The inclusion of the Director of Formation and Ministry in the Senior Staff Team gives confidence that the course continues to be a key part of this top level planning.

100.   The Board of Reference oversees the aims and objectives of the course and does so effectively.

M. ii   Annual budgets should be prepared in line with the business plan.

101.   The course is entirely integrated into the Diocesan financial structure and within this the Director of Formation and Ministry is the budget holder. The Diocesan budget setting process has recently been reviewed to focus resources on priority areas. The annual budget is set by the Diocesan Finance Committee and overseen by the Director of Formation and Ministry. We **encourage** the Board of Reference to consider an annual budget and accounts at their annual meeting to ensure that Diocesan money is being appropriately spent, and to check that resources are targeted in line with the aims and objectives of the course.

M.iii   There should be an effective risk assessment, review and management process, which should include physical (e.g. health & safety and fire), financial, business and reputational risks.

102.   The course currently meets on property that belongs to and is run by external organisations. The Course assumes that their venues are responsible for Health and Safety and risk assessments and expects the venue owners to meet relevant standards.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion M, Business planning and risk management.**

N   Financial policies

Reviewers will consider the effectiveness of day-to-day operating processes:

N.i   The institution should have policies to control and manage investments, expenditure and borrowing, and the annual report and accounts should contain an appropriate reserves policy.

103.   This criterion is not relevant to the programme.

N.ii   Management accounts showing performance against budget should be produced at least quarterly and reviewed regularly by the trustees.

104.   As above in M.ii, we **encourage** the Course to include the management accounts on the agenda of annual the Board of Reference meeting, to ensure that the resources allocated by the Diocese are appropriate to the needs of the course.

N.iii   The institution should consider its sources of income and have strategies to identify and raise the funds it needs.

105.   This criterion is not relevant to the programme.

N.iv   The institution should have adequate financial controls aimed at minimising waste and loss, and should be appropriately advised on tax-efficiency.

106.   This criterion is not relevant to the programme.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion N, Financial policies.**

O   Statutory and operating policies

O.i   Proper books of account should be kept, with computerised data regularly backed up and stored offsite.

O.ii   Bank mandates should be up to date, with appropriate authority levels.

107.   Neither of these requirements is relevant to the programme.

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion O, Statutory and operating policies.**

P **Accommodation**

P.i *The i) public, ii) teaching and iii) provided private living accommodation should be fit for purpose and suited to students' needs, with an ongoing maintenance programme and forward planning for future needs.*

108.   The two main sites used for training students on the LLM course are Christ Church Orpington (Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings) and Aylesford Priory (weekend Residentials).

109.   Reviewers were able to have experience of both of these. The venue at Orpington is fairly central and accessible by students from across the diocese. There is one large hall which is divided by purpose built, folding screens into two teaching rooms. The spaces are light and airy with enough room for the students to work in either a 'formal' classroom setting or to break into smaller groups. Furniture for the sessions has to be moved into and out of the rooms but the storage room for this is immediately opposite the teaching rooms and everyone helps with the set-up and removal of this. There is a large foyer area with tea and coffee making facilities and there is also a kitchen which students can use. The centre is attached to the Church and is also hired out to other users, for example on the Saturday when we visited there was a children's party in in the afternoon which meant that if some students wanted to stay and meet together to do some planning they had to move into the foyer area but this was a minor inconvenience. There is also space downstairs in a games room in the basement area which the course can make use of if needed.

110.   The February residential weekend is held at Aylesford Priory. Here the course has use of teaching space within the conference centre and bedrooms in the old and new wings with meals taken in the refectory. The teaching spaces were warm and well lit with enough room for the whole group, first and second years, to meet together when required e.g. for worship which also took place here. There are also a number of small breakout/meeting rooms and there is a social area/bar housed within the conference centre and tea and coffee making facilities were available in all the rooms or very close by.

111.   The bedrooms are basic but comfortable. Most are not en-suite but have wash basins with toilets and shower rooms nearby and tea and coffee making facilities are provided in communal lounge areas. The whole of the Priory site including the chapels and grounds are available to the students, should they have time to make use of them.

112. Reviewers are aware that in years three and four the optional modules are taught in a variety of different venues, usually provided by either the tutor or one of the students taking the module. We did not have first-hand experience of any of these but we heard no adverse comments made about them. In previous years some teaching had taken place at the Diocesan Office, Rochester, and some modules continue to be taught there.

113. Reviewers are also aware of plans to move the main teaching sessions on the programme to Malling Abbey. This will be a shared facility with SEITE and will allow for dedicated teaching space and improved library facilities (See G.iv).

P.ii   There should be adequate provision for the needs of disabled students.

114. The centre at Christ Church, Orpington is easily accessible for wheelchair users and those with mobility issues: there are two dedicated parking spaces, accessible toilets and a lift to and from the basement area.

115. At Aylesford, there were a number of accessible routes around the site, avoiding steps, and accessible toilets were also available. At the weekend we attended, one of the students was, temporarily, using a wheelchair following an accident and had been allocated a ground floor bedroom.

116. There is a hearing loop installed and Christ Church Centre at Orpington and the programme also has a portable hearing loop which can be used at other venues as needed

> **The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion P, Accommodation.**

CONCLUSION

> **Overall outcome: The review team has Confidence in Rochester Diocesan Licensed Lay Ministry Training for preparing candidates for licensed lay ministry.**

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

We recommend that course leaders keep under review the question of seeking validation of the programme from an external body, including the possibility of adopting Common Awards. (B.ii)

Recommendation 2

We recommend that more formal and transparent mechanisms are put in place for the proposal and approval of changes to the programme and individual modules. (C.ii)

Recommendation 3

We recommend that written statements on the understanding of issues of gender or ethnicity are included in the course Handbook and on the Rochester Learning Space. (D.ii)

Recommendation 4

We recommend that a formal statement on how issues of conscience will be dealt with is written and made available to students in the course Handbook and on the Rochester Learning Space. (E.i)

Recommendation 5

We recommend that that the course statement on the balance of worship be made more easily available, in the course Handbook and on the Rochester Learning Space. (E.ii)

Recommendation 6

We also recommend that the course team gives students practical opportunities to engage with other faith communities, for example through visits to synagogues or mosques.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that course staff review the place given to a fuller understanding and range of mission, including more creative forms of evangelism that take place beyond the church community, both in the subject content of taught courses and in further practical opportunities for

experience of engagement with secular organizations, for example by observing sector chaplaincies. (F.iii)

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the course team reviews the word-counts for assignments, with a view to reducing the total amount that students are expected to write and emphasizing quality over quantity. (G.ii)

Recommendation 9

We recommend the enhancement of the Rochester Learning Space as a resource for students, making it simpler to navigate, presenting key course information more clearly, and providing access to a wider range of external resources. (G.iv)

Recommendation 10

We recommend that formal arrangements are put in place for the mentoring of students, to ensure that every student receives regular invitations to review their progress with a designated individual. (G.v)