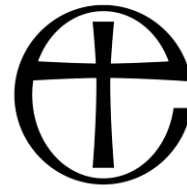


The **Methodist** Church



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Ministry Council

Inspection Report

Southern Theological
Education and Training
Scheme (STETS)

February – April 2013

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GLOSSARY

BAP	Bishops' Advisory Panel
CBT	Context Based Training
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DDO	Diocesan Director of Ordinands
FDA	Foundation Degree in Arts
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
LLG	Local Learning Group
Moodle	On-line learning platform
OLM	Ordained Local Minister
RTP	Regional Training Partnership
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SDMTS	Southern Dioceses' Ministerial Training Scheme
STETS	Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

LIST OF INSPECTORS

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Supernumerary Methodist Minister, Milton Keynes United Area, formerly
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THE INSPECTIONS FRAMEWORK

On behalf of the sponsoring churches, inspection 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, inspectors 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 inspection.

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 inspection 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 inspection 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 INSPECTION OF THE SOUTHERN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SCHEME (STETS)

February – April 2013

SUMMARY

Introduction

General Remarks

The Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS) is the second oldest non-residential ordination course in England, evolving from its predecessor SDMTS in 1997 and is soon to celebrate its 40th anniversary in serving the Churches in ministerial training and formation. The Course was last inspected in 2005 and there have been considerable staff changes as well as dramatic shifts in the external circumstances of ministerial training in England during the past eight years. The Inspectors are grateful to the staff and students who made us feel welcome during our visits and for their openness as well as the time and effort taken by many others in the region (such as DDOs, Local Tutors, former students, bishops and Chair of District) to answer our questions and engage in conversation.

STETS's student catchment area is predominantly the dioceses and other denominational jurisdictions of the south-central region of England, although its student in-take is not entirely limited to these geographical boundaries. SDMTS/STETS was a pioneer of non-residential training at its inception and continues a tradition of innovation in its pedagogical methods, using a dispersed model of delivery by Local Tutors and Training Ministers combined with a programme of residential weekends and an annual Easter/Spring School. STETS is also a pioneer in e-learning with cutting edge on-line course modules which the Inspectors believe to be a standard setter in the sector and a potential resource for the wider church.

In a wider church context which has lost its ecumenical adventurousness, STETS is arguably the most ecumenically embedded course in the country, best demonstrated by the denominational diversity of its full and part-time staff which include ordained presbyters of the Church of England, Methodist, United Reformed, the Dutch Remonstrant Church, as well as a Roman Catholic sister of the Sacred Heart Community serving as chaplain to the Course and a lay Anglican. The staff's gender balance and international make-up is also highly commendable – though we note the absence of an ordained woman in Anglican orders as directed by House of Bishops regulations, on a course in which Anglican women make up the single largest sub-group. In the current 'ecumenical winter', the Inspectors commend STETS for its ecumenical diversity, though they recognize the challenges it presents for the future due to the recent withdrawal of United Reformed candidates and the impending withdrawal of Methodist students as a result of Conference's

approval of *Fruitful Field*,¹ as STETS becomes for the foreseeable future an almost exclusively Anglican ordination course. All the Inspectors note this development with sadness.

The Scope of the Inspection

Due to its dispersed, as well as residential, mode of delivery and the sizeable geographic area to which STETS primarily relates, the Inspectors were on the road, in correspondence, and on the telephone a great deal in the course of the Inspection, quite apart from three visits to the residential components of the Course (which alone comprised eight days of on-site contact and observation).

On the educational/training side, we attended two residential weekends in February and March as well as three days of the Spring School which took place in Easter Week. Inspectors also attended Local Tutor Groups, Local Learning Groups, and the Course Review sub-committee, as well as training days for Local Tutors and Training Ministers. We interviewed a variety of present students and alumni about their learning and formational experience as well as seeking the views of representatives of the receiving churches (regional bishops, Chair of the Southampton Methodist District, Diocesan Directors of Ordinands) as to the preparedness of the candidates and ordinands they receive from STETS. We note a considerable degree of satisfaction was expressed.

On the governance/management side, the Inspectors attended the newly reconfigured Council and Board of Trustees meetings. This allows the Council to have a 'representative' nature (e.g. its membership includes the diocesan bishops of the south-central region and the Chair of the Southampton District) and the Board of Trustees to have a 'skills-based' membership. We interviewed both the outgoing (Bishop of Dorking) and incoming (Bishop of Ramsbury) chair of the Trustees. We interviewed the chair of the Management Committee, the STETS Financial Officer, and administrative staff. An Inspector attended a meeting of the Board of Studies and interviewed its chair.

In terms of STETS' relations with other bodies and institutions, we interviewed: the Principal of Sarum College, the Canon Treasurer and Precentor of Salisbury Cathedral, and the Vice-chair of the RTP. Our request for an interview with the University of Winchester did not receive a reply.

The main conclusions and observations by the Inspection Team

Summary of outcomes and our overall conclusion:

¹ The Fruitful Field Project, report to the Methodist Conference of 2012, Conference Agenda Volume 3, section 57 also accessible at www.methodistconference.org.uk/media/124057/57%20fruitful_field.pdf.

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 with qualifications
F Ministerial, personal and spiritual formation	Confidence with qualifications
G Teaching and learning: content, method and resources	Confidence
H Practical and pastoral theology	Confidence
I Teaching staff	Confidence with qualifications
J All staff	Confidence
K Students	Confidence
L Governance, management, constitution and organisation	Confidence with qualifications
M Business planning and risk management	Confidence with qualifications
N Financial policies and cost-effectiveness	No confidence
O Reserves policy and statutory liabilities	Confidence
P Accommodation	Confidence
Overall Outcome	Confidence with qualifications

The Inspection Context

The Inspection Team was acutely aware that this Inspection was taking place at a time of turbulence and transition in the entire ministerial training sector. Along with the rest of the sector STETS is faced with the challenge of transitioning to the impending suite of Common Awards validated by the University of Durham. For STETS this follows hot on the heels of a radical revision and redesign of its own curriculum – a creative process but costly in staff time and resources. As a result, STETS is facing changing its validation partner and major curriculum development for the second time in under five years. The Inspectors are impressed by the ways in which the staff are rising to these challenges and making an important

contribution to design of the Durham Common Awards modules, but note too the costliness to them in personal and professional terms.

Further, the reduction in Anglican ordinand numbers and the impending withdrawal of Methodist students as a result of *Fruitful Field* present STETS with increasing financial challenges which will invariably impact on staffing issues. It also presents STETS's multi-denominational staff with the challenge of developing into an almost exclusively Anglican Course, preparing men and women for principally the Anglican diaconate and priesthood as well as ministry in an established Church based on a parochial system, long established sector ministries, and emerging new patterns of ministry.

Strengths

- *Quality of Teaching.* The Inspectors observed a high quality of teaching in the residential components of the course: stimulating and well-delivered. We met a very engaged student body, which had, in the words of one of the Inspectors, 'no passengers'. We are confident that STETS students emerge as Christian ministers able to engage in the 'reflective practice' which is at the heart of STETS's current aim of integrated learning across the Course, both in residential and local learning contexts.
- *Course Culture.* The Inspectors note the denominational and theological diversity of the Course and how well it works. The staff set as a team for the students a model and tone of respect for Christian diversity which sets an example for the Churches.
- *Dispersed Learning, Dispersed Community and E-Learning.* The Inspectors were greatly impressed by the quality of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) developed by STETS both in its quality of content and material and the way it supports distance learning. We found it was pitched adroitly for different educational levels, experience and time available for study by the student. The student who wishes can always 'go deeper' on a topic or a theological discipline due to its versatility and system of links.

None of this would work without excellent IT support which the Course provides and many students remarked to the Inspectors how responsive the STETS staff were to queries and technical problems. They are supplying not only e-learning but the quality of technical support to make it work. This means that even when dispersed as a learning community, the quality of the VLE helps to create a good sense of being a formational community. The Inspectors note, somewhat wryly, that although none of the sponsoring churches describe facility with IT/VLE as a desired outcome from training, STETS is a pioneer in this area and perhaps it should be considered as an important element of being 'mission shaped' for the Churches in the future.

Areas for concern

- *Financial Viability.* As discussed in the Inspection Context above and more fully in Criteria M and N below, the Inspectors have serious concerns about the financial viability of STETS, due to the decrease in student numbers. We see STETS as a good Course in a cold climate – many of the difficulties are external and beyond its control but are none the less real and serious.
- *Formation as Leaders of Worship.* The Inspectors have a particular concern about student formation as leaders of worship. The lack of familiarity with core liturgical texts and their appropriate use for Anglicans needs attention. In the residential components of the Course, we felt liturgical formation and attention to the 'craft' of liturgical preparation is lacking focus and, without losing the ecumenical strength of STETS, this needs addressing with urgency especially in terms of set authorized rites.

FULL REPORT

SECTION ONE: AIMS AND KEY RELATIONS

A Aims and objectives

Inspectors 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 churches.

A.ii They should be consistent with the current published policy statements of the sponsoring churches.

1. The STETS Handbook declares that its 'overall mandate is to meet the needs of its sponsoring Churches in the changing social context in which they operate. It is committed to a programme of high quality contextual theological learning, through an integration of rigorous academic study and reflective practice in the "workplace"'.² The Inspection Team concur in considerable measure with this self-assessment as well as noting STETS's consistency with published statements of sponsoring Churches.³ But we comment again, as mentioned in the Introduction and elsewhere in this report, that STETS faces particular challenges in terms of relating to the Church bodies entrusting it with the training and formation of its future ministers. The Inspectors wish to note that whereas 'ecumenism' is often given lip-service elsewhere in the training sector and the Churches, there is a remarkable ecumenical reality to the training offered by STETS – most clearly evidenced by the notable denominational diversity of its staff. However, with the withdrawal of United Reformed and Methodist students by their sponsoring Churches, the Course faces a significant challenge in the emergence of the Church of England as its (nearly) exclusive 'customer' in terms of recasting some of its priorities and its 'centre of gravity' without losing its ecumenical edge.
2. Both Methodist and Anglican students spoke with considerable regret about the decision to withdraw Methodist students from STETS as directed by *Fruitful Field*. The Inspection Team, for its own part too, notes this development with regret.

² STETS Fd, BA & MA Programmes Handbook 2012-13, p. 6.

³ See *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Formation: A guide for inspectors and training institutions* (June 2012), Appendices B and C.

- A.iii *The institution should show that it has built on earlier learning, including through action in response to previous inspection, curriculum approval and follow-up reports; other external bodies' evaluation; and self-evaluations.*
3. The Inspectors are confident that the recommendations of the earlier Inspection Report (March 2005) and the Follow-Up Report (September 2007) have been acted on and note how dramatically and unpredictably the context for ministerial training has changed both for STETS and in the ministerial training sector more widely since 2005. We observe that the previous Inspection raised concerns about training ministers as 'the weakest link in the delivery of training' (2007 Follow-Up) and draw attention to *below, G.iv, Recommendation 5.*
4. We note the thoroughness of external examiners' reports and provision of Quality Assurance by the University of Winchester, despite some administration issues commented in *B.ii below*. Our assessment is that the Course's own self-evaluation document produced as part of the current Inspection 'rings true'. But we were more impressed by the robust and highly responsive system of self-evaluation we observed at residential weekends. Each weekend has a student common room meeting without staff which includes a report by the student representative on the Board of Studies and other issues about the Course are raised. These are communicated to the Principal and staff who then provide feed-back to the student cohort later in the weekend. Students across year groups commented to the Inspectors how quickly they felt the staff responded to course 'glitches' in the e-learning as well as more substantive issue. Each plenary session in weekends and the Easter/Spring School is chaired by a member of staff, the purpose of which is to give feed-back to colleagues on their teaching.

<p>The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion A, Aims, Objectives and Achievements of the Institution.</p>
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B Relationships with other institutions

Inspectors 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.*
5. STETS has been an active and supportive member of the South Central Regional Training Partnership (SCRTP) since its inception in 2004-5 and staff have regularly participated in its annual conferences. The Principal, in his previous role as a member of staff, has served as a member of the SCRTP steering group and now represents STETS on its board (since 2008). STETS fulfils its responsibilities and role within the RTP to an impressive degree.

6. The Inspectors note the Course's involvement in post-ordination training chiefly in terms of STETS students completing their BA post-ordination and a few undertaking the MA as part of IME 4-7, with the consent of the their training officer. STETS has adapted its own training course in supervision for the Course's training ministers, as a resource for dioceses preparing training incumbents to receive new curates and is used within the RTP. The two Methodist members of staff have likewise adapted and developed the in-house supervision course for training ministers for Circuit Superintendents. The Inspectors urge the Course to develop this aspect of their enterprise for the use of the churches in the region.
7. On the national scale, the Inspectors further note that the core academic staff, including the Principal, are actively involved in the module design for the new Durham Common Awards. Given that STETS only recently (2010) went through an extensive redesign and process of validation of its own course – and such processes are exceedingly demanding on staff time and resources – the Inspectors wish to particularly commend the STETS staff for their commitment and investment of their time and expertise to the Durham Common Awards.
8. STETS's offices are located and Course weekends take place at Sarum College in Salisbury. The Inspectors comment on the relationship with Sarum College in various places in the report. We maintain, however, that it is beyond the scope of this Inspection, and indeed would be unfair to both institutions, to make any recommendations about deepening their relationship without the benefit of conducting an equally rigorous process of assessment and inspection of Sarum College.

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

9. STETS has been in partnership with the University of Winchester since 2010 due to the withdrawal of the University of Surrey as its validating body and will soon move to validation by the University of Durham along with most of the ministerial training sector, although the relationship with the University of Winchester will continue until 2016 or 2017 to see through the last of students on the Winchester validated pathways. The Inspectors note the careful and detailed Examiners' Reports produced by the University of Winchester which give confidence in the Quality Assurance being provided but are aware of some dissatisfaction with academic administration by the University, such as unclear, or at times contradictory, instructions to its partner institutions such as STETS. A request by the Senior Inspector to the University staff person recommended as a contact received no response which illustrates some of the concerns expressed to the Inspectors.

10. STETS staff have contributed to public lecture series run by the University of Winchester and a departmental member has provided mentoring for a STETS staff member for the publication of her doctoral thesis. The staff have attended staff development days at the University when relevant.
- B.iii It should engage effectively with local churches, other faith communities and secular organisations so as to enhance formation for public ministry.*
11. The delivery of STETS would be impossible without engagement in the 'local', which in this context means the south-central region. This is seen particularly in the network of training ministers and local tutors fundamental to the delivery of the Course. The ecumenical reality of STETS has already been commented on (**see Introduction and A.i, ii above**).
12. The Course includes a themed first year weekend on rural ministry using local parishes in Hampshire. In the second year, a themed weekend takes place in Bristol on interfaith issues, tapping into networks with other faith groups developed by an ecumenically impressive range of Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Reformed clergy and laity. Placements are required on STETS across an array of secular and local government agencies, as well as charities, including schools, drug rehabilitation, and homeless persons provision. Local Learning Groups (LLG) are encouraged to have a member of another faith or someone of no faith.
13. At residential weekends, the Course allows for optional participation in the worship (both simple said Eucharistic worship and sung Evensong) of Salisbury Cathedral and one member of the academic staff is a regular member of its congregation. The previous Precentor provided some liturgy teaching for STETS. The Inspectors note the significant resource STETS has on its door step in Salisbury Cathedral and were pleased to note that discussions on how to strengthen the relationship have already started to take place with the newly appointed Canon Treasurer. The Inspectors see the cathedral as a resource to be developed for the Course in broader terms than simply as a liturgical model of a high standard, as important as that is. It also offers a model of priestly formation as the Course becomes almost exclusively Anglican in student composition in the next few years. The cathedral, with its outreach to a wider community and thousands of visitors as well as its potential as a theological, practical and spiritual resource, has a potential to contribute to a larger programme for formation of Christian ministers.

Recommendation 1

That STETS should continue its exploration of ways to draw upon Salisbury Cathedral as an Anglican formational resource.

The inspection 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

Inspectors 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.*
14. STETS has a clear and coherent philosophy of education and training for public ministry. This philosophy has been consistently applied across the learning process, and students understand the aims of the course well (**see above A.i and A.ii**). There have been significant developments since the last inspection which have brought close integration between the academic and practical aspects of training.
- 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.*
15. STETS offers six different but linked awards ranging from the Certificate of Higher Education for Christian Ministry and Mission to the MA. Students are entered for an award which takes account of the length of time their sponsoring Church has sent them on the Course, and of their prior learning.
16. The curriculum overall is coherent and well laid out. Descriptions of course modules in the Programmes Handbook are clear and have achievable aims.
17. Winchester University is the current validating partner. While STETS has valued this relationship with a local provider of Higher Education, the partnership has not been without its tensions. STETS perceives the University as slow to move and respond to concerns, and not always fully understanding of the importance of the practical ministerial aspects of the course.
18. The current curriculum is on its first full run through, and STETS staff have put a great deal of work into producing units which successfully bring together the academic and the practical, and the staff review of the programmes is on-going and effective. This iteration of STETS training will effectively continue until the 2013 intake has graduated.

19. STETS core staff have taken a significant role in the development of the Durham Common Awards , and have been particularly concerned to ensure that STETS own progress in integrated learning is acknowledged and makes an impact on the new awards. We commend the core staff for the significant role they have taken in engaging with the development of common awards, and recognise that this has had a detrimental effect on their own time for staff development and sabbatical study.
20. The MA offered by STETS has been successful in attracting candidates, although there is an expected falling off of numbers for the 2013 intake. The levels of integration between academic and practical areas of training which are a strong feature of the BA have not yet been so successful at MA level, leading some MA students to express the view that those on the BA are receiving a more appropriate ministerial training. Staff are aware of this issue, and had intended working towards a more fully integrated MA programme. The advent of the Common Awards has, however, put this development on hold, thus giving space to develop a new postgraduate award in conjunction with Durham. This seems to the Inspectors to be a sensible plan.
- C.iii The academic and formational assessment methods should enable the institution to advise church leaders on the suitability of candidates for their ministry.*
21. STETS uses a variety of appropriate assessment methods which give clear indications of students' progress in academic, practical and formational aspects of training. The Course reports appropriately to the relevant Church leaders as required.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion C, Curriculum for formation and education.

SECTION THREE: MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

D Community and corporate life

Inspectors will consider the institution's quality of common life. Is it a good place in which to live, work and study? In particular:

- 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.*
22. The Course's response in the Inspection Documents 2013 speaks of *koinonia* – of communion in diversity – and this we took to be the theological vision for the Course and for its common life. It is a community that holds together both in its dispersed mode and in its gathered mode. The Inspectors saw a theologically and tradition-diverse student body at ease with its diversity and a staff who responded to difference with ability and creativity. There were some students completing the old version of the Course who expressed that it felt like "one size fits all" but they were in the minority and we have not heard that from students undertaking the new Course. We saw respect for difference, a modelling of diversity within church traditions as well as between them, and a willingness to find learning and joy in the differences. This institution has much to be proud of in its ability to handle difference so creatively.
23. The Inspectors were all given access to the STeTSlearn website which supports the teaching and communications of the Course – but much more than that. A formational community (like a congregation) is continuously in a cycle of gathering and dispersing. However for most of the time, the STETS community is scattered over a very large area. The distance learning skills and techniques the students develop in the delivery of the Course also act as a great asset to the corporate life, continuous development and wellbeing of the formational community.
- D.ii There should be a clear statement of the institution's understanding of issues of gender, ethnic grouping and disability, and other matters of natural justice; its training, governance and community life should reflect this.*
24. The Course handbook has policies on Anti-Harassment, Disability, Equal Opportunities and a more general Equal Opportunities Policy that covers "age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief (including lack of religion or belief), sex and sexual orientation" (Handbook p.15). We found through discussion with students and staff in STETS a community of respect between students and also

between staff and students that is consonant with the Gospel and the policies.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion D, Community and corporate life.

E Worship and training in public worship

Inspectors will look at whether the arrangements for common worship and the policies underlying them are satisfactory. In particular:

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

25. The Inspectors found a range of worship styles in use on the residential occasions of the Course including Common Worship and two uses of The Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion and the Methodist worship book. The students appeared not to understand the role of the Psalms in worship and we sensed a lack of confidence in authorized set forms as 'authentic' worship and we think these points need some attention.
26. The choice of hymns and songs was more limited than we expected, in particular since there are Methodist students present and a number of able musicians, and we would encourage the staff to push the students harder when reviewing worship with them by challenging creatively their limited choices, their lack of awareness of the Liturgical Year, and their willingness to seek comfort in the familiar rather than explore more deeply.
27. One of the modules within the Course gives plenty of factual material about worship: history, personality preferences, music, and so on but little on Anglican traditions beyond mentioning that some Anglican churches use the liturgical year and some do not. The Inspectors read the feedback material from a residential occasion on 'Understanding Worship' where feedback from some students suggests it was more history than liturgy in the session on 'BCP to Common Worship'. We are aware that the historical context is important but it is not a substitute for teaching liturgy. We believe that this would be helped by a designated Liturgy teacher on the staff rather than the current situation where, when we asked students who was responsible for liturgy overall, none of them knew. We note too that despite being sited opposite Salisbury Cathedral no use, beyond optional early morning Eucharist, is made of it as a resource and we believe that should be remedied, as we say in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2

That the Course moves swiftly to identify a qualified liturgy tutor responsible for:

- a) overall supervision of worship and worship feedback in the residential components of the Course;**
- b) co-ordination of the information and advice to students on the crafting of services;**
- c) encouraging among students a confident use of set authorized forms, and the role and use of the Psalter in its liturgical context.**

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 a variety of practice within the sponsoring church.

- 28. The Inspectors saw many forms of worship during the residential occasions they attended and heard from staff members that they had moved from giving student groups a list of tasks in leading worship to give them a balanced diet in leading worship over their three years to now requiring the students to hold that balance themselves. We saw Methodist and Anglican forms led well. We saw freer forms too. We became aware that the briefing of students leading worship is minimal: at Spring School simply giving length and a title and leaving them to organise it. We came to the conclusion that while this *may* be adequate for students in their second and third years it certainly wasn't for first year students who struggled to compose worship adequately.
- 29. We have concerns about some of the modelling given by the staff in leading worship which seemed 'busy' and lacking in time and reflective pace. We were aware of how little silence there was before most services due to last minute activity by worship leaders, sometimes not being allowed access to the chapel before a service started, and would urge some teaching on preparation of the worship space early to facilitate the private prayer of others.
- 30. We heard from students a mixed response to their previous experience of leading worship since some had been Anglican Readers while others were Methodist Lay Preachers or Lay Ministers in their own churches. Some felt their previous experience had been enhanced by the Course while others felt their previous learning was undervalued. We heard however how the variety of traditions in worship are given expression - for example we attended a session explicitly called "Evangelical Worship" and have heard tell of a previous residential time where there was an "Anglo-Catholic" celebration of the Eucharist. We believe that such occasions need to be accompanied by

more than an historical introduction, but rather a proper liturgical explanation about what will happen and why it is thought important.

31. We note the few ordained Anglicans on the staff (only one full time and one part time member of staff is an Anglican priest) and the absence of an ordained Anglican woman on the staff of this Course which trains a majority of women, the majority of whom are Anglican but the recommendation on that point comes later in our report (**see below Recommendation 7**).

E.iii Ministerial candidates should be effectively trained to plan, prepare and conduct public worship and they should receive critical and constructive comment from staff and peers.

32. During the inspection period the Inspectors saw students prepare and conduct public worship and also heard them describe the planning process they had been through in order to arrive at the event. We attended many worship debrief sessions with those who had led worship and two staff members whose task it was to lead the debrief. We believe it to be an adequate system for student learning though we also felt that staff were often, apart from one observed debrief following a 1662 Book of Common Prayer Eucharist in which one tutor gave sharp and highly critical feedback, seemingly over-protective of students and failed to challenge them appropriately about: choice of music, decisions to ignore the Church's Year, political implications of what they had chosen to sing or say, and on one occasion the use of exclusive language in hymns that could easily have been adapted. We therefore urge them to be more challenging in worship reviews.

33. We have raised the issue of whether students are being sufficiently trained to prepare worship elsewhere in our report and here would simply encourage STETS staff to be bolder in their constructive critique so that students make full use of this precious opportunity to learn in a place of safety and encouragement. We were glad to see the students make good use of the voice tutor.

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

34. STETS course operates residentially on two different sites during the year and both have dedicated chapel spaces where worship is conducted but over neither does the Course have overall control. In Sarum College the liturgical space is modelled on an Oxbridge college which makes it somewhat inflexible but the staff and students make good use of it. At Dauntseys School, where the week-long residential Spring School takes place, the chapel is part of a larger hall which gives STETS the space it needs to accommodate all three year groups together in worship.

35. The Inspectors note that use is made of other, less formal spaces than the chapel, for worship during residential weekends, such as café style church in the Common Room and Refectory as well as the grounds of Sarum College and the Cathedral is good weather. We noted too the inadequate provision of liturgical equipment in the Sarum College vestry and encourage the STETS staff to remedy the situation so that at least the necessary materials for worship are available to them or at the very least a set of stoles for the seasons for the Sarum Use.

The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion E, worship and training in public worship.

F Ministerial, Personal and Spiritual Formation

Inspectors will consider how well the institution helps learners in their ministerial, personal and spiritual formation and self-awareness. In particular:

- F.i The institution should enable candidates to be immersed in the traditions of their own church and to gain an empathetic understanding of church and faith traditions other than their own.*
36. STETS currently has Methodists, Anglicans, and one Baptist and United Reformed student. The Methodists and the Anglicans come from across the breadth of both traditions and almost overwhelmingly we heard them speak of valuing the diversity of traditions available to them in their fellow students. Likewise the staff members come from a range of traditions and churches and so there is great diversity under one roof. That said, the teaching of the separate traditions and the practices of each church were not exhibited separately in each residential period, though we believe that over the course of two or three years the students will encounter worship and spirituality traditions from a wide spectrum. Immersion in one's tradition, for a student, takes place in their home parish or the one in which they are situated during training as much as it does in the residential periods. Gaining an empathetic understanding of traditions other than their own must happen in those residential periods when, in small groups, they present worship from another tradition than their own.
37. We found that whilst there was an identifiable use of Anglican forms in worship, using both Common Worship and BCP, the depth of observance, for example, of the Anglican Year was absent. We attended two residential weekends during Lent in which no Lenten material was used, the BCP Eucharist did not use the appropriate liturgical colour for either the Sarum or the traditional Western Use, the Gloria was used as were enthusiastic hymns. So we found that immersion was not as deep as it could or should have been in that instance. Likewise the use of labels such as 'evangelical' worship whilst giving a particular flavour actually blurred the boundaries of church traditions in ways

that weren't fully explained except by reference to history, nor explored in ways that would be useful to students in the future leading congregations. The Course attempts to cover liturgical matters in a series of sessions run in the first year for students, but we found the sessions we witnessed did not do enough to meet the need for the teaching of liturgy. And although there is further teaching in practical worship throughout the Course, students who enter in the second year will miss out the provision in the first year.

Recommendation 3

That more emphasis is placed on explaining the variety of church and faith traditions, how they arose and how they function now, so that students are aware of the theological, social and political implications of worship they encounter and deliver.

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

38. The Course offers corporate guidance for spiritual, personal and ministerial formation to its students through course materials and residential sessions. The subject for this year's Spring School was 'Ministry for All' with sessions appropriate to each of the three years present and worship led by students and staff to support the theme. Individual guidance is offered through a range of people with whom the student may consult including local tutor, training minister and their allocated staff consultant with whom they have scheduled interviews during their time on the Course. STETS also has the benefit of a chaplain, a Roman Catholic sister, who gives time at each residential occasion to any student wanting to discuss matters confidentially and is not part of the formal assessment process but does attend staff meetings.
39. It was from a staff member that we learned that not all students have a spiritual director or equivalent and that some are resistant to the suggestion that they find one despite the course handbook giving strong encouragement in this matter. The Inspectors found this unsatisfactory and yet recognise how difficult it is to compel a student to seek confidential spiritual counsel now or to put it in place for their future ministry. Nevertheless the Inspectors want to encourage the Course to redouble its efforts to commend to students the practice for their spiritual health both now and in the future.

Recommendation 4

That the Course redoubles its efforts to commend the practice of Spiritual Direction or its equivalent as a necessary tool for ministers.

F.iii Its common life and the guidance offered should enable students to grow in Christian discipleship with a view to exercising a public role in ministry and engaging with the world.

40. STETS students come with a wide range of experience of the world and of work and life and the Inspectors have confidence that they leave with the enhanced ability to bring all of that to their ministerial life. The Course enables students to grow in their discipleship, to begin the exercise of public ministry and to engage with the world. The rhythm of corporate prayer, study and experience, together with the input from the Training Minister and Local Tutor should enable a student to build on their prior experience and learning and we have encountered many students for whom that is the case. The ‘&Co Groups’ (which in many other training institutions would be known as ‘formation’ or ‘fellowship’ groups), of which each student is a member, seem to us to offer an excellent, informal place for a natural integration. We were impressed by the integration of the formation strand into the online modules of study and believe them to be a first class product fit for use in a variety of settings. The students we met who have completed the old form of the Course told the Inspectors that they found the integration less satisfactory, partly due to the marking and feedback being less immediate. We are glad that the course has been revised and hope that its best features can be taken on into the Durham Common Award structure.

F.iv The teaching and ministerial staff should model an appropriate pattern spirituality, continued learning and reflection on practice.

41. The Student Course Handbook gives an account of the teaching and ministerial staff's involvement in ministry, both past and present, a list of past publications and current research. We saw them model reflective practice with students. Whilst the staff undertake a pattern of worship evaluation with groups of students after every liturgy, we think they and the students would benefit from submitting themselves to such a review after worship sessions led by the staff team. Then it would become apparent that this reflective practice is not for the period of training alone but a skill to be used throughout ministerial life and experience. We noted too that the staff members are not usually present at those acts of worship dubbed "optional" in the residential programme at the Easter/Spring School and wonder what inference the students may draw from this in particular since it is principally the Eucharist that is optional each day. We encourage them to reflect further on this issue of staff attendance.

The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion F, Ministerial, personal and spiritual formation.
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SECTION FOUR: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

G Teaching and learning: content, method and resources

Inspectors 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.

42. During the period of the inspection we observed the teaching at two residential weekends and part of the Easter/Spring School. We attended a local tutorial session, and interviewed local tutors, training ministers and current and former students about their learning experience. We had a conversation with the Chair of the Board of Studies, and interviewed all core staff members.
43. Learning at STETS takes place in structured lecture and presentation sessions; in small group discussions; in local tutorials and online; in the training church or parish and through placements.
44. STETS has a clear educational and training philosophy which is consistently applied. Appropriate adult education methods are used, and there is a good range of materials and methods employed. Learning outcomes are clearly identified in the various units, and students understand the aims. Inevitably with such a diversified and dispersed Course both integration and quality control are challenges. In general STETS meets these challenges very well.
45. The formal teaching input by members of the core staff was in our observation invariably good or very good. It was well prepared and used a variety of teaching methods, including appropriate use of audio visual materials. On the weekends the core staff had clearly planned well to ensure that each knew what the others was doing, and there was a real sense of coherence. Care was taken to make all the teaching relevant to practical ministry, and this was done successfully. Student levels of interest and engagement were high, and they benefit from stimulating and engaging teaching which will be of practical value in the future.
46. The input at Spring School by core staff was again very good. However, the sessions led by outside lecturers brought in for single sessions were more patchy, although all were of a satisfactory standard. These sessions do give students exposure to a wide range of people and styles from a greater variety of traditions and roles.

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

47. At weekends and Spring School we observed a range of optional group workshops led by core staff. These generally focused on practical issues in contemporary ministry, and students clearly found them both helpful and enjoyable. Particularly helpful were sessions on the practicalities of preaching, and a seminar on the psychological pressures on ordained ministers.

48. Generally students find local tutorial sessions helpful although some reported that their local tutors were stronger on pastoral support than on academic rigour. Tutorials are a major linchpin of the course, for they enable the student to integrate the necessarily diverse elements of a dispersed style of learning. The training day for Local Tutors and Training Ministers which we observed was well planned and stimulating, as well as well attended. Local tutors are committed people who enjoy their role and take it seriously. The day looked both at group methods and at forthcoming units which students would be engaging within the following term. There was also a lecture session by a member of core staff presenting some of her recent academic research, which tutors enjoyed and said that the regular theological input was helpful.

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.

49. Tutorials take place throughout the region served by STETS, and students are allocated to them on a geographical basis. Distance travelled can be an issue for some students. One person joins tutorials from abroad via Skype. Most students reported a good experience of tutorials, with a very high appreciation of the individual tutors.

50. The online learning materials developed by STETS are of very high quality. We looked in detail at several units, and found them well constructed and easy to use. There is an excellent balance between the academic and practical learning, and the Course well fulfils its aim of ensuring that theology is firmly rooted in ministerial practice. Units provide guided reading, as well as up to date bibliographies for those who wish to read further.

51. Engagement from training ministers is patchy, and this is of concern. The training day for them was poorly attended, and Course staff reported to us that there are some training ministers who make only the most minimal contact with the Course. Others are excellent, giving thoughtful time and intentional formational support to students, and finding considerable

satisfaction from their association with STETS. The result of this is that students have an uneven experience of an essential part of the learning and formation process. As training ministers are a key part of the formational process this issue needs to be addressed together with sponsoring dioceses and churches (**see Recommendation 5 below**).

Recommendation 5

That the course addresses the issue of training ministers' selection with DDOs and other relevant authorities with a view to ensuring more consistent support and participation.

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

52. Resources for learning include the excellent Sarum College library, to which students have access at residential weekends. The library will post books to students if requested. There is the further benefit of the College bookshop which stocks books recommended on the Course, and offers a discount to STETS students. For evaluation of the online learning environment see above the Introduction and *passim* in the report.

53. STETS uses the Moodle elearning software platform for general communication with its students and among staff. Students are given access to all course materials through Moodle and can communicate with tutors and with each other through it. The system is managed by a senior STETS academic member of staff with additional administrative support. From conversations with students, the Inspectors were impressed by the confidence they showed in using the online system. Students who had little or no experience of the web spoke confidently about blogging and using twitter to communicate regularly, supporting each other over course material and creating a 'virtual collegiality'.

54. As described in G.iii, the Course material is provided online and is of a very high standard. The modules are divided into Units, each of which contains exercises and web links to additional texts and useful videos outside the module. The design of the material is such that students can work at their own pace within the overall constraints of the Module.

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

55. Clear and helpful written feedback on assignments is provided, and students reported that they are encouraged to ask tutors for further help with reflecting on work after it has been returned.
56. Some students expressed concerns about the occasional slow return of marked work, particularly year 3 students who at Easter/Spring School were still waiting for several pieces of work to be returned. We were not sure whether this was a general issue or an isolated incident.
57. The academic monitoring system which operates through the Board of Studies and the University of Winchester is appropriately robust. There is a regular system of second marking, both internally and externally which helps ensure consistency of grading.

Recommendation 6

That the core staff put in place a more robust process to ensure that marked work is returned within an agreed period.

The inspection 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.*
58. In 2010 STETS revalidated its Dip HE/BA programme with the University of Surrey as a Foundation Degree plus BA top-up route with the University of Winchester. Although the programme was well regarded by the churches and the University, STETS decided to prepare an entirely new integrated curriculum. These new programmes were first presented commencing in September 2011 and this is the pattern of integration on which the Inspectors have concentrated their attention.
 59. STETS provided as part of their Inspection Documentation an articulate and inspiring theological vision statement that shapes their approach (pp 19-21). They highlight three areas of change to the modules and their usage that they have introduced to help achieve this higher level of integration:

- a) By extending the 10-15 credit modules to 20 credits they have included and integrated the reflective praxis into each module. They established a 'Training Group' to develop joint training of the Training Ministers alongside the local Tutors to help them facilitate the whole teaching programme. The local Tutors were then brought more directly into engagement with the reflective practice dimensions of the programme. The longer, more integrated modules are designed to provide scope for the previous learning and experience of the students to be used as a resource to enrich the learning environment. The Inspectors have had the opportunity to hear at first hand from students, Local Tutors and those Training Ministers who participate fully in the training STETS offers them, how successful this approach is proving (but **see Recommendation 5**).
 - b) Each module now includes two sessions of structured reflection with a local learning group (LLG) drawn from members of the student's training church and members of the wider community. Many students have groups which include members of different denominations, non-church members and members of different faith communities. The groups are convened by the students to articulate, explore, assimilate, evaluate and develop their learning. The groups constitute an open learning environment directly related to the learning outcomes of the module and feedback from these sessions may be incorporated into their assignments. Two of the Inspectors were able to attend such groups and all Inspectors heard students speak of their experiences with their groups with enthusiasm for the formative benefits they had enjoyed from this engagement in vernacular theology.
 - c) The modules retain a spiral structure in which there is progress from one level of study to another and each of the levels represents a coherent and comprehensive integration of academic study, praxis and spiritual development continually drawing on the three aspects of God, World and Church. This is designed to ensure that theological subjects, such as the Hebrew Bible, Systematic Theology and Church History & Practice are tackled in terms of the Course's overall missiological and contextual orientation. Scripture is both a specific sub-category studied in its own right and also a particular area of focus in many modules. Students expressed deep appreciation of the creative and challenging nature of the modules and their use.
60. As well as the integrated nature of the distance learning modules supported by local Tutors and Training Ministers, there is further integration embedded in centre-based learning at Weekends and the Spring School which are all designed to combine the academic, practical and spiritual elements of the Course in a gathered formational community, worshipping and learning together. These events are further opportunity

for smaller groups (& Co Groups) to provide mutual support for one another throughout the course and to engage in preparing worship together for the wider STETS community.

61. To ensure that these carefully designed and created elements are working effectively for the individual student, there is a Staff Consultant attached to each student to help review and support the process. In addition there is a comprehensive STETS wide quality assurance and enhancement system focused on the Course Review Sub-Committee of the Board of Studies. This committee, which one of the Inspectors attended, involves core staff with representatives of students, tutors and the University of Winchester. There are regular and frequent requests for feedback – on every module, every weekend, every Spring School. Tutors and Training Ministers are consulted at all training sessions. The staff have regular opportunities and arrangements for peer review. The feedback is analysed and enhancements agreed and placed on an action list which is regularly reviewed. The quality agenda is fully embedded in the STETS community and, among many other advantages, the integrated nature of the design of the Course is achieved for each and every student. The Inspectors congratulate STETS on the level of confidence this engenders amongst students and those supporting them in their formation.
62. There is a depth to the structure of the STETS Course and learning environment that will ensure that students learn to integrate theory and practice with their own spiritual development so that they become theologically reflective practitioners, aware of the diversity of society in which they will live and minister. The mixture of tutorial groups, worship preparation groups within which they also process material from the residential sessions, Local Learning Groups, placements and training churches to which they are attached during their training all go to equip students in reflective practice within diverse contexts. In addition the residential periods include time in a rural setting and in an urban, multi-cultural setting where issues of ministry and theology are teased out. The Inspectors witnessed a number of the group events and have confidence that STETS is rightly praised for its formation of reflective practitioners.

<p>The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion H, practical and pastoral theology</p>
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SECTION FIVE: STAFF AND STUDENTS

I Teaching staff

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

63. There is a good gender balance among the core and additional staff complement with a spread of teaching experience and parochial and circuit ministry. They bring experience from the Church of England, the Methodist Church, United Reformed and the Arminian tradition of continental protestantism. Lay teaching staff are less well-represented. With the recent decision of the Methodist Church to withdraw their ministerial students from STETS, the student body will become almost exclusively Anglican. Given this development, there is need for more ordained Anglican involvement in the Course to provide more modelling of different patterns of diaconal and priestly ministry in the Anglican tradition. There are also currently no ordained Anglican women priests among the core and additional staff. As this contravenes the House of Bishops criterion for institutions training women to ordained Anglican ministry, some attention needs to be given to address this issue.

Recommendation 7

Action should be taken to:

- a) add an ordained Anglican woman onto the staff complement as soon as circumstances allow;**
- b) provide greater modelling of different patterns of diaconal and priestly ministry in the Anglican tradition through additional ordained Anglican involvement in residential components.**

<p>The inspection team has confidence with qualifications in regard to Criterion I, teaching staff.</p>
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J All Staff

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

64. Staff recruitment and selection processes are clearly stated. Present core and additional staff are consulted through the Board of Studies when drawing up the requirements for a new post. In addition, colleagues at Sarum College are consulted. The Chair of the Board of Trustees is also consulted. Academic posts are advertised nationally with comprehensive job specifications. Appropriate academic qualifications as well as an active church life are prerequisites for appointment.
- J.ii Job descriptions, terms of service and reporting lines should be clear at the time of appointment and reviewed at regular intervals.*
65. Job descriptions have been examined. They clearly set out the lines of accountability and management. They also identify clearly the role and duties of the member of staff and relationships with other members of staff. As part of the formal staff appraisal process, the job description is reviewed and modified according to need. This applies to all core and additional academic staff and administrative staff. However, the Inspectors note that one long serving member of the part-time staff does not have a job description and urge that this is rectified as soon as possible.
- J.iii There should be an effective programme for continuing professional development of staff, including annual appraisals for all staff.*
66. Staff appraisals are carried out annually for all members of academic staff. At the appraisal, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs are identified and a plan of action is implemented. All academic staff are encouraged to go on one retreat each year and attend a conference. Sabbatical leave is offered. Academic staff are also encouraged to carry out research and publish work regularly, for which research leave is a key provision of support.
67. The Principal and the two Vice-Principals have deferred sabbatical entitlement for a considerable length of time because of the demands of the revalidation of the courses, redevelopment of modules and the recent developments over Common Awards as described in the introduction and we express concern about this.
68. There has been no appraisal of the senior administrator, so that her CPD needs appear to have been overlooked. While there is regular informal appraisal of this job role and there appears to be a good understanding of CPD needs in this case, the formal process needs to be reinstated in this case.
69. The Principal has also not had a formal appraisal from the Chair of the Board of Trustees and this highlights an important gap in the appraisal

process. Given that the Board of Trustees is a relatively new body, the Inspectors find it understandable that some of its functions need further defining. However, as the executive body of STETS, the management of staff appraisals and their monitoring should be part of their remit. The Inspectors are confident that the majority of the staff appraisal process is carried out effectively. However, for completeness, the staff appraisal process should be monitored and affirmed by the Board of Trustees with the provision of feedback to the Principal. This should be a matter for urgent attention.

Recommendation 8

The process by which the Chair of the Board of Trustees manages staff appraisals should be reviewed with special attention to the provision of feedback from the Trustees to the Principal.

Recommendation 9

The Trustees should ensure that all staff appraisals are carried out annually.

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

70. The Academic Staff complement has been reduced by 1.5 FTE in recent years in part because of the current financial constraints. The core staff members cover the main disciplines for the programmes offered. They are supported by additional part-time staff and module writers and visiting lecturers who provide teaching at weekend residential sessions and the Easter/Spring School. The Chaplain provides additional pastoral support, and students are supported in their learning and formation by Local Tutors and Training Ministers. Together, it is clear that the student receives excellent support in most areas of the Course.
71. Although coverage of most theological disciplines is good, there is evidence that the treatment of liturgy and worship need greater focus. The teaching of the distinctiveness of different forms of liturgy and worship are often left to Training Ministers and so the coverage is patchy as described under **E.i above**.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion J, All Staff

K Students

72. *Inspectors will examine procedures for student admission, welfare and support, appraisal and discipline. In particular:-*
- 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.*
73. Students are selected and sponsored for training by their churches before the opportunity to train on STETS. The Course provides opportunities at residential weekends for potential students to meet staff, view facilities and engage with current students.
74. STETS students are registered for awards validated by the University of Winchester. Hence they are currently subject to the University of Winchester's discipline and complaints procedures and have access to the University's appeals procedure.
75. The STETS Course Handbook which is available as a hard copy as well as on the STETS website at <www.stets.ac.uk> provides detailed information on the course and the academic requirements. This includes University of Winchester University Academic Regulations. It also provides specific policy documents on "plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic misconduct", anti-harassment, disability equal opportunities and general equal opportunities.
76. There is also a timetable for training and a chart of the organisational structure of STETS as well as course details. STETS staff communicate directly with Training Ministers and Tutors through whom students' progress is communicated. Progress is reviewed with the STETS tutor at regular points in the course. There is also communication with the sponsoring churches at specific points in the course, when student performance is reviewed along the journey of formation.
- K.ii The institution's decision-making structure should enable students to take an appropriate part in its governance, providing that students take responsibility for their participation.*
77. The Course Handbook includes the organisational structure of STETS. In addition, there is student representation at several levels within the structure from the working groups through to the Board of Trustees. A representative from each year of study attends the Board of Studies and

reports to the student body at the Residential Weekend, where specific time is set aside on the first evening through the Common Room Meeting. These reports are actively discussed by the student body. Students therefore contribute to the decision making process and are informed of both academic and resource matters.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to criterion K, Students.

SECTION SIX: GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

L Organisation and governance

Inspectors will examine the effectiveness of the institution's governance structures and processes.

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.

78. The governance of STETS was re-structured in 2011. Up to that point, the church leaders in the region who were the Trustees delegated the oversight of STETS operations to a Board of Governors. A new body of Trustees is now the governing body with clear overall oversight responsibility. Trustees are appointed by a Council on the recommendation of the Trustees. The Council comprises the Diocesan Bishops of the seven sponsoring Dioceses and the Chair of the Southampton District of the Methodist Church. One of its members receives Trustees paperwork but, other than appointing Trustees, the Council has no governance responsibilities. The Council acts as an advisory body, representing STETS' major stakeholders and meets once a year. When the Council meets the Chair of Trustees, the Chair of the Management Committee and the Principal also attend as does the STETS Finance Officer who, as Clerk to the Trustees, attends to take minutes.
79. The Trustees are appointed from amongst 'persons with skills and experience which are relevant to the attainment of the Charitable Objects' and in recommending names to the Council the Trustees are required to take into account 'the need to achieve a balance in ecclesiology, denominational background, theological stance, gender and lay-clerical status' (Paragraph 7.3 of the STETS Trust Deed as amended). The Trustees meet three times a year and can take decisions between meetings by e-mail.
80. The activities are split into two areas which are managed by:
- (i) The Board of Studies which has responsibility for academic matters;
 - (ii) The Management Committee which has responsibility for resources.
81. The Board of Trustees is considered a 'working body' and as such it is recognised that it needs additional specialists to support the operation of STETS. There is currently expertise in finance and HR for example, and the Inspectors urge that a Trustee with charity law expertise would be an advantageous appointment.

82. The budget is set and managed by the Management Committee on behalf of the Board of Trustees. The Finance Officer is ably supported by members with expertise. The role of the Management Committee includes support to the Principal in the day to day management of STETS.
83. The structure of governance is clearly documented.
- 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 and reputation of the institution; operational and staff oversight and support.*
84. The Board of Trustees carries out functions of oversight as stated in L.i. There is clear evidence that the Management Committee with the particular support of the Finance Officer ensure that there is effective stewardship of assets. The Chair of the Management Committee plays an active role in this work. Together the Management Committee and the Board of Studies manage the quality of the work of STETS and ensure that the Board of Trustees are fully informed of the health of the institution and associated risks.
85. The Inspectors however note that there are complex networks of interests, and at times, conflicts of interest among some members of the Council and of the Board of Trustees. For example, some of the same individuals have an interest in, or responsibilities for, both Sarum College and STETS or within the RTP and another training institution. These conflicts of interest highlight a particular challenge for some of the members of the Council: How can they attend to the wellbeing of STETS while at the same time being 'customers' of STETS advocating a 'free market' in training?
- 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; induction for new trustees; and ongoing training needs should be met.*
86. As discussed in L.i above, the Board of Trustees brings together a mix of skills and experience. However it was recognised by the Trustees that further expertise in HR and charity law would be desirable and is being sought. The Council was made aware of this and the Inspectors were informed that a sub group tasked with inviting nominations to meet needs in certain skill-sets will undertake that work this coming summer.
87. The Inspectors encourage members of the Board of Trustees to continue with their intention to take more active roles in the running of STETS. However, the Inspectors hope that this may go beyond advisory roles with

the Management Committee and Board of Studies. They ought actively to sample STETS' work such as attending residential weekends, the Easter/Spring School, and local tutorial groups to deepen their understanding of the course and by first hand engagement, with the student body.

Recommendation 10

Trustees need to become more deeply informed about the core work of STETS and in particular the delivery of courses by occasional attendance at residential weekends and the Easter/Spring School.

Recommendation 11

There needs to be action on acquiring a set of Trustees with the range of expertise required; a Handbook for Trustees should be produced outlining their responsibilities.

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.

88. All core academic and additional teaching staff are able to contribute to decision making through the Board of Studies and other academic committees and staff meetings. They and ancillary staff and administrative staff are also informed of decisions of the Board of Trustees and there is a good flow of information between staff and the Board. The student body is also informed and have regular opportunities to engage in the decision making process (**see above K.ii**).

89. Other staff such as Training Ministers and Tutors are expected to attend formal meetings organised by STETS twice a year. The process appears to work well except in the case of Training Ministers, many of whom do not attend as discussed in **G.iv above**. The STETS staff and community relies on, and encourages consultation, participation and representation. There is good opportunity to communicate at all levels.

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

90. There is a very effective financial management system in place which is coordinated by the Finance Officer. Annual audited reports are produced in good time and filed with Charity Commissioners.

<p>The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion L Organisation and governance.</p>
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M Business planning and risk management

Inspectors will look at evidence for the existence and implementation of the institution's strategic policies.

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.

91. The Management Committee meets to review business matters three times a year. A strategy document, business plan, risk register and risk management document are in place. There is a good understanding of the short term financial situation and aims and objectives have been drawn up to address the issues.
92. All statements were backed up by detailed analysis and cost calculations. Breakeven student numbers are just over 100. In order to maintain current operations (even assuming some identifiable cost savings), STETS requires each cohort to be at least 35 students, or greater if the proportion of private students increases. Due to a reduction in the numbers training for ordination at STETS, there has been a gradual decline of income for a number of years. A further, and more rapid decline, in student numbers has been seen in the past year; added to this is the loss in HEFCE funding and the impending withdrawal of Methodist candidates for the ministry, and the fact that costs do not vary in direct proportion to student numbers, significant deficits are now forecast going forward. The Principal's report to the recent Council and Board of Trustees meetings highlighted this potential crisis and has set in motion discussions to address the issue.
93. There is a clear plan for income generation for the period to 2015. This is based primarily on the sale of the impressive online materials developed by staff. There is potential to grow this significantly though it is not likely to generate the sums needed – at least in the short-term. The strategy document identifies concerns that despite the initiatives taken by STETS, the medium-term viability remains outside their control. The primary source of income remains fee income from ordinands sent by sponsoring churches and dioceses and as mentioned in **L.ii above**, STETS' control in this area is limited. STETS cannot set the bulk of its fees and whilst costs have been reduced, this does not come close to creating a balanced budget for the foreseeable future, even if staff levels are cut. The Inspectors therefore urge STETS to promote itself more actively to potential customers in the region and beyond. This could involve additional meetings with DDOs and direct marketing of their approach to

training and in particular the cost-effectiveness of the distance learning model.

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

94. Detailed budgets are prepared, audited and presented annually to the Board of Trustees clearly identifying risks and the health of the institution as indicated in section M.i.

Recommendation 12

That STETS develops a more active programme to promote its work and profile with existing and potential customers in the region and beyond.

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.

95. A Risk Register and a Risk Management Policy have been produced. Governance and operational risks, financial and compliance risks have been identified. This includes statements about the physical environment and health and safety and fire risks. They are reviewed by the Board of Trustees. In addition, Sarum College which STETS uses for Residential Weekend and for staff workspaces has a comprehensive set of policies and processes for assessing and managing health and safety and fire risks. The Easter School is similarly conducted at Dauntsey's School which has its own policies on Health and Safety and Fire risks.

The inspection team has confidence with Qualifications with regard to Criterion M, Business planning and risk management.
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N Financial policies

Inspectors 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.

96. The Board of Trustees manages the reserves and income and expenditure of STETS. This is identified in the annual report and accounts. The institution does not have significant fixed assets as it does not own its own buildings. STETS operates by renting facilities from Sarum College against income earned. There is a good understanding of the state of reserves which are managed effectively.

- N.ii Management accounts showing performance against budget should be produced at least quarterly and reviewed regularly by the trustees.*
97. Performance against budget is reviewed quarterly by the Board of Trustees and more frequently by the Management Committee.
- N.iii The institution should consider its sources of income and have strategies to identify and raise the funds it needs.*
98. STETS is developing its sources of income drawing on its experience and strengths in distance learning and the use of the virtual learning environment. Most recently it has successfully marketed modules for sale in the USA and there are plans to grow this business in the UK. This strategy of diversification of operations and a move away from reliance on ordination training, has the most potential for growth. In the short-term, the major source of funds will however come from recruitment to mainstream FDA, BA and MA courses.
99. Accounts published at the end of August 2012 showed a healthy level of reserves. However, the future of STETS was brought into sharp focus when recruitment of Anglican ordinands fell sharply in September 2012. Soon after this came the decision of the Methodist Church to concentrate future training at the Queen's Foundation and Cliff College. HEFCE funds for FDA and BA students will become insignificant after the 2013-14 academic year. Hence STETS could be faced with a deficit budget in August 2014. Before that, it is likely that the Accounts to be published at the end of August 2013 will show approximately a 25 % reduction in reserves as a result of the decrease in student numbers and loss of HEFCE income. This has raised concerns about the future viability of STETS beyond August 2014 as larger student cohorts exit and are replaced by smaller ones, if the current trend continues. This point has been identified by STETS and its Management Committee and was discussed at the meeting of the Council attended by members of the Inspection team. The Inspectors urge the Council of Reference to follow through on their intention to address the implications on the future viability of STETS beyond August 2014.
100. STETS had not anticipated the decision of the Methodist Church to concentrate future training of ordinands at the Queen's Foundation and Cliff College. The gradual reduction of ordinands in recent years was masked by new HEFCE income offered for Foundation Degree students and the taking on of OLM students from Salisbury Diocese.

Recommendation 13

Urgent consultation and engagement is required between the Council of

Reference and the Board of Trustees in order to address the question, in the light of their financial situation, of how the training provision offered by STETS can be maintained beyond the short-term.

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

101. There is evidence of good discipline in the management of finances. The cost of running STETS programmes is reviewed regularly to minimise waste and loss. The Finance Officer is supported in this by members of the Board of Trustees.
102. The future of STETS is controlled by external factors influencing future recruitment. The main factors are the withdrawal of the Methodist church from STETS, the loss of virtually all HEFCE funding beyond August 2014, and the uncertainty on numbers of ordinands coming from the sponsoring Dioceses. Although plans for increasing income have been implemented by STETS, there remains real concern about future financial viability beyond August 2014.
103. In summary, the Inspectors wish particularly to emphasize the following in regard to our assessment on 'Criterion N Financial Policies'. First, we note the major and rapid changes in the funding context for STETS within the space of a few years. These include the drop in the number of Anglican ordinands, the withdrawal of United Reformed Church candidates, and the loss of HEFCE money. We are mindful too of the impending withdrawal of the Methodist Church from STETS. Second, we are aware of the projected deficit of 25% in the current year from an earlier position of having healthy reserves. Third, STETS identified concerns to the Inspectors about the financial viability of the Course in a strategic document and discussed with us constructive proposals for partly addressing the shortfall, such as the sale of its distance learning materials and reducing staff costs. Nonetheless, the Inspectors did not see evidence of clear or concrete plans from the Trustees, or of commitment from its key stakeholders, to assist STETS in addressing the full impact of the financial change in circumstances due to the funding short-fall. For these reasons, the Inspectors reached the conclusion of 'No Confidence' in Criterion N.

The inspection team has no confidence with regard to Criterion N, Financial policies.
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O Statutory and operating policies

- O.i Proper books of account should be kept, with computerised data regularly backed up and stored off-site.*
104. Proper books of accounts are kept in hardback and computerised form and backed up regularly and stored offsite. This is monitored by the Board of Trustees which includes a Trustee with relevant expertise.
- O.ii Bank mandates should be up to date, with appropriate authority levels.*
105. Bank mandates are up to date and have appropriate authority levels. The Finance Officer is able to draw on advice from a member of the Board of Trustees to manage financial matters.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to criterion O, Statutory and Operating Policies

P Accommodation

- P.i The i) public, ii) teaching & iii) provided living accommodation should be fit for purpose and suited to students' needs.*
106. STETS has no public, teaching or provided private living accommodation of its own. A base for STETS staff and administration is leased at Sarum College in Salisbury, where staff also have private offices and access to a wide range of amenities, although increasing charges from Sarum College has increasingly limited this access. STETS also lease accommodation and catering from Sarum for the majority of their residential weekends. The quality of accommodation has improved in recent years and now each bedroom offered to STETS students has en-suite facilities. Students also have use of a Common Room and photocopying facilities. To reduce costs STETS now rent fewer meeting rooms and have also cut one residential weekend per year group from the provision hired from Sarum College. For their Spring School, when all the staff and students attend, they need access to larger premises which they hire from Dauntsey's School, a co-educational boarding and day school for 11-18 year olds, located on the northern edge of Salisbury Plain set in an estate of over 100 acres of Wiltshire countryside.
107. Sarum, based in the former Salisbury and Wells Theological College, is situated in Grade I-Listed buildings, the oldest part of the college dates from 1677 and is attributed to Sir Christopher Wren. It is a further and higher education college and conference venue. Inspectors were able to visit STETS administration offices, staff studies and their common room, all of which were fit for purpose. All Inspectors attended two weekends

- and ascertained that the facilities leased for Weekend Schools were also fit for this purpose. Most guest bedrooms are modern, newly refurbished en-suites. Single, double and twin rooms are all available with tea and coffee-making facilities. At the time of the inspection a programme of refurbishment was in progress to convert the remaining rooms to en-suites by April 2013. The lift gives access to all the floors, and there is a common room with easy chairs and licensed bar for students to use. STETS uses all five meeting rooms of varying sizes, the largest of which, the Cavell Room, can accommodate up to 90 people. All of the rooms can be equipped with tables, chairs, digital projector, laptop, OHP, flipcharts and DVD/video players as required. Students and staff are provided with access to WiFi facilities.
108. The College also houses a restored 19th century chapel, designed by architect William Butterfield, which offers a dedicated space for worship and prayer. There is a recently refurbished dining room which is light and airy and the Inspectors can confirm that the enjoyment of communal meals is part of the residential learning experience of Sarum College, which has a well-deserved reputation for excellent food. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided to help students keep pace with a formidable workload during weekend schools.
109. All STETS students are automatically members of Sarum College Library, an academic theological library with a collection of more than 40,000 books arranged in Dewey Decimal order and available for search online on a computer catalogue. The College rose from the ashes of the Salisbury and Wells Theological College, which closed in the mid 1990s, and took over its library. In the late 1990s the Library acquired several thousand books from the former Sowter and Clerical library in Church House, Salisbury. All STETS students are offered a library induction at the beginning of the academic year. The collection consists of books, journals, denominational newspapers, a music resource, photocopying, word processing and internet facilities, as well as space to study. The stock covers philosophy, psychology, theology, ethics, spirituality, liturgy, world religions and sociology. There is also a large 'stack' of historical books, journals, sermons and pamphlets as well as a number of special collections. Some of the most popular titles are now available as e-books. The Library also subscribes to about 50 journals, which are available for use in the Library only, but one article from any one issue may be photocopied. The Library provides extended hours on STETS Weekends but STETS students and staff may use the Library outside these hours as long as the College Reception desk is open. Students can request books or information by post, phone, fax or e-mail and Library staff operate a postal service and inter-library loan facilities. STETS students greatly appreciate and warmly applaud the services provided by Sarum College Library.

110. STETS students, Local Tutors and Training Ministers are eligible to receive a 10% discount at Sarum College Bookshop, a well-stocked academic theological bookshop which ensures copies of the main texts needed for the course are easily available. It also has a well-stocked second hand book section. The Bookshop is open on STETS weekends and also operates a postal service.
111. Dauntsey's School was graded 'excellent', the highest grade possible, in the 2012 Independent Schools Inspection. The main teaching areas employed by STETS are:
- a) the Memorial Hall – a large, gloomy space which doubles up as assembly hall, concert hall and chapel. It has full audio/visual facilities with two large screens very high up. One end is a stage and the other has a modern stained glass illustrating the Resurrection, which provides a highly appropriate visual backdrop to an Easter School and a focus for worship during the Eucharist. STETS use of this space for teaching and worship was constrained by the shape and size of the hall. We saw some creative use of the space for worship but urge further reflection on how to improve arrangements for worship, as we have already outlined in E above.
 - b) William Dauntsey's Room - at the top of a flight of stairs a long narrow room with good audio/visual facilities just sufficiently large enough to take all STETS students and staff.
 - c) Smaller groups met during the week in the Lower School and the Maths Block.
112. The focal point of the STETS Spring School was in the Dining Room, where students and staff gathered to eat, take refreshment between sessions display notices and buy books. The food was good, with a range of hot and cold dishes and catered for a variety of diets. The bedrooms ranged from elegant and spacious with en suite to standard but comfortable rooms – all with adjoining common room space, where WiFi facilities were available but not in the rooms due to appropriate concerns of the school.
113. All Inspectors attended four days of the Spring School and ascertained that the facilities leased from Dauntsey's School were entirely fit for this purpose.
114. Both Sarum College and Dauntsey's School have an appropriate range of health and safety provisions, including full fire certificates, first aid provision and accident books. Both sites have Fire Action Instructions in place in every bedroom. On both sites there was a clear and appropriate

allocation of security and health and safety responsibilities between STETS and site officers. All accommodation used is fit for STETS purposes and suited to student' needs.

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

115. Sarum College welcomes students and visitors with disabilities. There is a detailed Access Statement. The Chapel and the Cavell Room are fitted with induction loops. A lift located just through Reception takes guests to all floors. The guest dining room is approached by a small landing where there is a chair lift to enable wheelchair users to descend to the dining hall level. Ten bedrooms have walk-in showers. There are conveniences fitted for use by students with disabilities.
116. Dauntsey's School has a clearly articulated and publicly available Accessibility and Disability Policy. The teaching and residential areas for pupils are fully wheelchair accessible.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to criterion P, Accommodation.

Overall outcome: The inspection team has confidence with qualifications in the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

That STETS should continue its exploration of ways to draw upon Salisbury Cathedral as an Anglican formational resource.

Recommendation 2

That the Course moves swiftly to identify a qualified liturgy tutor responsible for:

- a) overall supervision of worship and worship feedback in the residential components of the Course;**
- b) co-ordination of the information and advice to students on the crafting of services and;**
- c) encouraging among students a confident use of set authorized forms and the role and use of the Psalter in its liturgical context.**

Recommendation 3

That more emphasis is placed on explaining the variety of church and faith traditions, how they arose and how they function now, so that students are aware of the theological, social and political implications of worship they encounter and deliver.

Recommendation 4

That the Course redoubles its efforts to commend the practice of Spiritual Direction or its equivalent as a necessary tool for ministers.

Recommendation 5

That the Course addresses the issue of training ministers' selection with DDOs and other relevant authorities with a view to ensuring more consistent support and participation.

Recommendation 6

That the core staff put in place a more robust process to ensure that marked work is returned within an agreed period.

Recommendation 7

Action should be taken to:

- a) add an ordained Anglican woman onto the staff complement as soon as circumstances allow and;**
- b) provide greater modelling of different patterns of diaconal and priestly ministry in the Anglican tradition through additional ordained Anglican involvement in residential components.**

Recommendation 8

That the process by which the Chair of the Board of Trustees manages staff appraisals should be reviewed with special attention to the provision of feedback from the Trustees to the Principal.

Recommendation 9

The Trustees should ensure that all staff appraisals are carried out annually.

Recommendation 10

Trustees need to become more deeply informed about the core work of STETS and in particular the delivery of courses by occasional attendance at residential weekends and the Easter/Spring School.

Recommendation 11

There needs to be action on acquiring a set of Trustees with the range of expertise required; a Handbook for Trustees should be produced outlining their responsibilities.

Recommendation 12

That STETS develops a more active programme to promote its work and profile with existing and potential customers in the region and beyond.

Recommendation 13

Urgent consultation and engagement is required between the Council and the Board of Trustees in order to address the question, in the light of their financial situation, of how the training provision offered by STETS can be maintained beyond the short-term.