



Bishops' Guidelines

Ordained Pathways in IMEI

May 2017

A reference for Dioceses and TEIs

Flexibility and Confidence

Part of the purpose of the RME reforms is to give dioceses the right and the responsibility to make decisions on the appropriate training for their own candidates. Previously national Bishops' Regulations largely limited the options available to each candidate, with the candidate's age the most significant factor in the decision.

However it seems clear that diocesan decisions should still be shaped by an overall national framework in order to preserve national confidence that all clergy are properly trained and that money contributed to the national training budget is being appropriately spent. This was the overwhelming view expressed at national consultation events for dioceses and TEIs last year.

Hence new Bishops' Guidelines have been produced. These set out a flexible framework, based on what is commonly accepted across the dioceses and TEIs in terms of length, level and type of pathway. In most matters they set out norms rather than absolute requirements, making clear that exceptions to the norm are acceptable, provided they are exceptions for appropriate candidates, while most candidates remain within the norm.

Keith Beech-Gruneberg
IME Pathways Adviser

Bishops' Guidelines for Ordinand Pathways in IMEI

1. Making decisions

The Bishops' Guidelines seek to create a **flexible framework** within which good decisions can be made for the training of a diverse range of candidates for ordination called by God to serve the church and world. Decisions on training pathways are always matters of **discernment of the needs of the candidate and the church**, and often a matter of weighing a number of different factors. Therefore there can be no neat formula for determining the appropriate pathway for a particular ordinand. Dioceses will also need to **have regard to the cost implications of the choice of pathway.** .

2. Responsibility for decisions

It is ultimately the responsibility of the bishop to decide on an ordinand's training pathway, in consultation with the ordinand, the DDO and the training institution, and in light of the agreed policy of the House of Bishops. In principle a pathway includes every aspect of the ordinand's formation and training and sets **parameters for the training.** It allows the TEI **flexibility on matters of detail** which can be discussed with the diocese.

3. The goal of IMEI

The goal of any IMEI pathway is to **ensure that good foundations are in place for the ordinand's ongoing learning and ministry**, including that the ordinand **fulfils the relevant formational criteria agreed by the House of Bishops for the point of ordination.** It is reasonable to ask a candidate for ordination to train beyond the minimum required if this enhances their future ministry.

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4. Training institution

Other than in the most exceptional circumstances, ordinands will train through **an institution** (or on occasion more than one institution) **accredited by Ministry Council of behalf of the House of Bishops** to offer ordination training for the Church of England, whose standard training pathways for ordinands have been given specific validation.

5. Corporate dimensions of training

The church values both diversity in its ordinands as individuals, and the corporate and community dimensions of training, where ordinands learn with and from others, and give to others as well as receiving from them. **Appropriate training pathways are generally those which place the ordinand in a cohort of other ordinands** for at least a significant part of their learning, rather than pathways shaped primarily around the personal requirements or features of the particular candidate. Ordinands may also be part of a cohort of others training for lay ministries and this can supplement the corporate aspect of their formation. .

6.. Length of training

Unless ordinands have significant relevant prior learning they will normally train on either a 3 year part-time pathway, a 2 year full-time pathway or a 3 year full-time pathway. Only in the most exceptional cases will training take less than 1 year. Some key considerations around deciding on length of training and variations from the norm are identified in paragraph 9 below.

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7. Level of training and HE accreditation

When aspects of an IME pathway are HE accredited, ordination **candidates for incumbent focus almost always achieve a Diploma of Higher Education (level 5), a Bachelor's Degree or a higher award** in theology/ministry unless they have such an award already. **Candidates for assistant focus generally achieve a Diploma of Higher Education or an award at a level above this. In order to meet the formation criteria all candidates require a level of understanding and skill characteristic of level 5**, though an academic award is not the only way in which such understanding and skill can be demonstrated.

8. Advice from Ministry Division

It is expected that in cases which depart from what is set out as normal in the Bishops' Guidelines, advice will be sought from the Pathways Adviser in Ministry Division. This is both to provide support where needed and also as a matter of mutual accountability over the use of Vote 1 resources which are held in common and over agreed standards of training for the national cohort of clergy.

9. Factors which may influence individual decisions

Factors which may influence the shape and length of the training undertaken by a particular candidate include:

- a. Existing personal and emotional maturity
 - *cf. Selection and formation criteria relating to personality and character, and relationships*
 - e.g. Someone who has not yet demonstrated resilience and growth in the face of a wide range of life events may benefit from longer in formation/training than someone who has done so

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- b. Existing faith development
- *cf. Selection and formation criteria relating to faith and spirituality*
 - e.g. Someone who has relatively recently come to faith may need longer formation/training than someone with a long history of active Christian discipleship
- c. Existing ministerial or missional experience
- *cf. Selection and formation criteria relating to ministry in the Church of England, leadership and collaboration, mission and evangelism*
 - e.g. Someone with five years' experience of Reader ministry may need less ordination formation/training as a result

Long experience will in general be a valuable resource on which the candidate may draw. However sometimes it may mean the candidate is set in particular ways of thinking and behaving which may need time to modify.

- d. Prior study, especially of ministry and/or theology
- *cf. selection and formation criteria relating to faith and quality of mind*
 - e.g. Someone who has 120 credits at HE level of study addressing areas across the ministerial curriculum may need less ordination formation/training as a result (degrees in 'Theology and Religion' will need careful assessment to see how much of the normal content of ministerial training is included); some pathways may assume those coming on them are already graduates in another discipline

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- e. Existing transferable experience (and evidence of the ability to transfer it)
 - *cf. selection and formation criteria relating to mission and evangelism, leadership and collaboration, and relationships*
 - e.g. Someone who has worked for several years full-time as a community worker, and can relate this to the role of a deacon may need less formation/training than someone with no such experience
- f. Envisaged future ministry
 - e.g. Is the candidate being prepared for the demands of assistant-focus or incumbent-focus ministry? Are they being equipped to minister in one context for the next few years or for ministry in potentially a diverse range of contexts across several decades?
- g. Personal characteristics, with full inclusion of those with disabilities a particular priority
 - e.g. Preferred ways of learning
- h. Personal circumstances including family circumstances
 - e.g. Can training be combined with the candidate's existing employment? What would the effect of different training options be on the candidate's family?
- i. Particular development needs
 - e.g. It may be desirable for a particular candidate to undertake a pathway with particular emphasis on interfaith engagement; it may be desirable for a potential theological educator to undertake a higher degree in their training (and possibly for them to have extra time for this)

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