



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

## **Ministry Council**

## **Periodic External Review Report**

**Birmingham Diocesan  
Reader Training Course**

November 2015 – January 2016

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## **LIST OF REVIEWERS**

**The Revd Canon Dr Bob Reiss** (Senior Reviewer), Canon Emeritus of Westminster

**Mrs Ruth Sowerby**, Adult Education and Training Officer, Diocese of Chichester

**Dr Mike Stuckey**, retired Science Teacher; Reader and Sub-Warden of Readers, Manchester Diocese

## **THE PERIODIC EXTERNAL REVIEW FRAMEWORK**

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

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

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

### **Confidence**

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

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

### **Confidence with qualifications**

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

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

### **No confidence**

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

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

# THE REPORT OF THE PERIODIC EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM READER TRAINING COURSE

November 2015 - January 2016

## SUMMARY

### Introduction

The Diocese of Birmingham's Reader Training Course is an integral part of the Diocesan Lay Training Programme. The Bishop's Adviser for Lay Adult Education is also Director of the Reader Course. She and an administrator are the only full-time members of staff, but there are three part-time tutors who have other Diocesan responsibilities. Use is also made of two others in the Diocese on a part-time basis for particular parts of the training. The Director has been in post since 2004, and she also has overall responsibility for the Diocesan *3D* course, which is an initial year long programme of lay training and which all candidates for the Readers course should have completed unless they have a theology degree.

The Reader Training course lasts just over a year, starting in September and with final assessments in November of the following academic year. Readers are then licensed in the following January, sixteen months after starting training. The Diocesan '*Next*' course is for newly qualified and other Readers in the Diocese and is discussed in the full report.

There is little contact with other educational institutions in the region and this is discussed in section B of the main report.

The current Course has nine students and the previous year had eighteen.

This is the first Periodic External Review for the Course and it was conducted over a residential weekend in November 2015 and then two days in January 2016. In the latter there was an opportunity for the reviewers to meet with some incumbents who had recently received Readers and with a group of spouses of candidates. The reviewers were supplied with very comprehensive documentation about the Course, and were treated with great courtesy and consideration by the staff and students alike, for which the reviewers were very grateful.

### Summary of outcomes

We saw some excellent examples of teaching and found a student community that was engaged, warm, welcoming and committed to the exercise of preparing for ministry. Much of the Course was well managed and organised. Inevitably for the first periodic review of the Course we also saw some events that were less effective and demonstrated significant weaknesses. Our recommendations are aimed at addressing those issues so that the Course is better able to serve the needs of a very varied and diverse Diocese.

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>
A. Aims and objectives	Confidence with qualifications
B. Relationships with other institutions	No confidence
C. Curriculum for formation and education	Confidence with qualifications
D. Community and Corporate life	Confidence with qualifications
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 with qualifications
H. Practical and pastoral theology	Confidence with qualifications
I. Teaching staff	Confidence
J. All staff	Confidence with qualifications
K. Students	Confidence with qualifications
L. Organisation and governance	Confidence with qualifications
M. Business planning and risk management	Confidence
N. Financial policies	Confidence
O. Statutory and operating policies	Confidence
P. Accommodation	Confidence
<b>Overall Outcome</b>	Confidence with qualifications

## **General Observations**

The Report is written on the basis of the Criteria set out in the *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Formation Handbook* October 2014. The paragraphs follow the Criteria printed in *italic* type. The reviewers' observations are in normal type and the recommendations are in **bold**.

While the Course has been in operation for many years, we were aware that a first Periodic External Review could be quite a stressful experience for those being reviewed. For many years one senior member of the Bishop's staff had an overall watching brief on matters of ministry and his departure a few years ago with no obvious single person in that role has probably added to that stress. However new senior staff to the Diocese have been appointed, including a new Suffragan Bishop, and our hope is that this report will enable a new support structure for the staff to be developed.

## **Strengths**

We particularly noted the following areas of strength.

- The ability of the Course to attract some with limited academic qualifications to join others with many more qualifications and to form them into a student body with an enriching and supportive community life.
- A course where the organisation was generally of a very high standard.
- The close integration of the Reader Training Course into the wider issue of Lay Training in the Diocese.
- A comfortable and effective teaching centre in the Diocesan Offices, which are central to Birmingham and within easy access from most parts of the Diocese.
- A financial structure well embedded into the Diocesan Board of Finance, which means that the burden of financial management is relatively light.

## **Areas requiring attention**

- The implications of a course that results at the time of licensing of an average standard of theological knowledge in the students that is less than in some comparable Dioceses.
- Relationships with other institutions.
- What should be more formally assessed and how.
- The use of placements during the Course.
- Ensuring that the best training styles are reflected across all teaching.



# FULL REPORT

## SECTION ONE: AIMS AND KEY RELATIONS

### A Aims and objectives

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

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

1. The stated aim of the Initial Training Course is 'to equip people for an authorised lay ministry of preaching, teaching and leading worship in a pastoral context.' The Reader in Training Handbook gives a comprehensive description of the work of the course and the aims, objectives and policies are certainly appropriate.
2. Before any student starts on Reader training in Birmingham Diocese they either have to have completed the preliminary 3D course or have a degree in theology. The main Reader Training course then lasts just over a year, and those accepted for Reader ministry are licensed in the January following their completion of the course. They are then asked to join the *Next* course. We comment further on the 3D and *Next* courses in Section C.

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

3. The Course has a document that shows how the various elements of training for Reader ministry in Birmingham Diocese relate to the national criteria expected at licensing. In some areas the work for being ready for licensing is not completed except in the context of the *Next* course, which only starts after licensing. We have therefore considered the *Next* course as part of the initial Reader training in the Diocese (see Recommendation 4).
4. The published national policy statement about Reader Training in the Church of England talks about criteria, but it does not stipulate the standard that should be reached. While the Birmingham Course has carefully related its work to what is required at licensing, we do not believe the final result, certainly at licensing and even, depending on the choices made in the *Next* course, thereafter, is comparable, for example, to the standards required for courses that use the Durham Common Awards. We completely understand the need of the Diocese to have a course that does not discourage those with few academic qualifications from entering training, which is the basis for the Diocesan decision not to adopt Common Awards. That decision quite properly belongs to each

Diocese. However we can only note that we do not consider the Birmingham Course including the *Next* course, is at every point comparable to the standard required for Common Awards. Therefore:

## **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that the Course and Diocese reflect carefully on the standard of understanding and knowledge required at the end of the Course. Given that a Reader qualification is potentially transferable across Dioceses, that reflection should include the implications regarding comparable standards across the Church of England.**

*A.iii The institution should show that it has built on earlier learning, including through action in response to the following, and that it has an effective culture of self-evaluation:*

- *previous PER, curriculum approval and follow-up reports;*
- *other external bodies' evaluation eg QAA reports; and*
- *self-evaluations.*

5. This is the first external review the Birmingham Course has experienced, but it has a regular internal review conducted by an external reviewer and an internal reviewer. The reports of such reviews show that the Course has engaged constructively with the evaluation in those reviews.

<p><b>The review team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion A, Aims, objectives and achievements of the Institution.</b></p>
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## **B Relationships with other institutions**

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

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

6. In the past the Birmingham Readers Course participated in the Regional Training Partnership, but the RTP has now ceased to exist. The Readers Course was not party to that decision.
7. The Course continues to have a residential weekend at the Queen's Foundation in Birmingham, but they simply use Queen's as a venue to meet. When Queens embarked on the Common Awards programme the other links that used to exist with Queen's ended. This included the regular use of the library at Queen's for Readers in training, although Readers in training can use it during their residential weekend.

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

8. At present there are no links with the Theology Department at either Birmingham University or Newman University, also in Birmingham. We believe that, without losing the Course's openness to students with no academic background, it would be beneficial both for students and even more for the Course staff to have regular contact with those universities and with the staff at Queens. Some of the Course staff are clearly well able to hold their own in such an academic environment, while others might benefit from such contact. Therefore:

## **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend that the Course considers how to build relationships with the University of Birmingham, Newman University and the Queen's Foundation to use some of their resources both for staff and students.**

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

9. Students participate in a Mission and Ministry Project where in groups of three they visit each other's parishes, interview people and look at the different ways in which those churches engage with their mission. The staff assesses this together. However this experience is not as thorough as a longer engagement in the form of a placement in a parish other than their own. This is discussed further in Section F.
10. We also note that during the Course there is no engagement with chaplaincy to secular institutions, and only a limited engagement with other faiths, partly through a visit to a synagogue in the *3D* course and to a mosque in the *Next* course. Given the very great opportunities of engagement with those of other faiths that Birmingham provides and the considerable experience of some of the clergy in the Diocese with this, we found that surprising. Therefore:

## **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that the Course reflects further on how those on the Course engage with other faith communities and secular organisations by using some of those clergy in the Diocese who have good contacts with them.**

11. Given the lack of contact with other educational institutions (although we recognise this is not always the fault of the Course), the lack of contact with secular institutions and the limited engagement with other faiths we conclude that

<p><b>The review team has no confidence with regard to Criterion B, Relationships with other institutions.</b></p>
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## SECTION TWO: CURRICULUM FOR FORMATION AND EDUCATION

### C Curriculum for formation and education

*Reviewers will consider the curriculum's design and content.*

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

12. Initial Reader Training lasts for 15 months for those who have completed 3D, a 30 week diocesan course delivered by volunteer tutors and which could effectively be considered as the first year of the Course. However, it is possible for a gap of 30 years to have elapsed between the two, as is the case with one of the current Readers in Training – there is no time-limiting framework. After licensing, all newly licensed Readers move into the *Next* programme, which consists of five termly meetings and six units of work, to be completed within the first 18 months of licensed ministry, although there is some thought about the possibility of extending that period to two years.
13. The theological and formational rationale that lies behind the Reader Training Course is summed up simply: that when meeting together, they are not just a training group of individuals but 'we aim intentionally to participate in the body of Christ'. The pattern of training provides an opportunity to share intensively in the Gospel by being the church within the confines of a relatively small group – praying, reflecting and ministering together. 'This is reflected in the way we are expected to live and work together, respectful of one another, even when there are differences of opinion. This is the wider context within which training for Reader ministry takes place.' Likewise, a short, intensive course, which focuses on the particular in order to develop skills that can be used in the more general context, is a feature of the approach to Biblical Studies. The core focus of Reader Training is considered to be the development of Reader ministry within the church community not the classroom. Identity as a minister is a key part of formation, and Readers in Training are required to engage in the practices of being a Reader from the first term of training; 'through preaching (5 times during the training); leading worship (on the course and in their own church) and exercising a pastoral ministry (on the course, amongst Readers in training and tutors, as preparation for the pastoral opportunities in church and for some at work), the trainees are given opportunities to grow into the identity of a Reader.' The lack of any sort of pastoral / parish placement other than in their own parishes during training does, however, limit the opportunities given for the development of such a pastoral ministry. (See recommendation 9 in Section F).

14. The syllabus is designed in such a way that the educational, formational and theological aspects are addressed and that can be clearly seen in the document that relates it to Ministry Division's Guidelines for Selection. However, based on taught sessions observed, materials given to students and input at a residential weekend, we concluded the depth in which some areas of theology are studied is sometimes too shallow. In the areas around intercessory prayer and leading intercessions, theological reflection and the Biblical precedents for pastoral care, the three aspects were not held in equal balance. (See Recommendation 5 below).

*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. *3D* is a well-established and well-received course that has run throughout the diocese for a number of years. Locally delivered by volunteers, it is largely aimed at those who are established in their Christian faith and who are interested in finding out more about it in a small group setting. Its major focus is on encouraging people to make the link between faith, scripture and their everyday experiences. The session we observed was held on a weekday morning and there was a lively group with a range of ages from mid twenties to mid eighties, very engaged and enlivened by what they were studying. The course has been revised and updated in recent years with new topics added and some sessions rewritten. In a session with incumbents, *3D* was seen positively and many had parishioners who had benefited from taking part in the course. A recent revision, where more practical exercises have been added to supplement written materials, has been welcomed as it makes the course more accessible now to those whose learning is less text based. The course runs for 30 sessions over one year and is the required step for those wishing to offer themselves for Reader Training. Those who have followed the Course are not formally assessed. In relation to the Formational Guidelines for Selection, *3D* is considered to have important input into Criteria A (Christian faith) and some into B (mission) and C (spirituality and worship).
16. There is no time limit between completing *3D* and applying for Initial Reader Training, although the Course Director interviews potential students for the course if there has been a long gap between the two, and then there is a formal Diocesan selection process. For those where there has been a long gap between the completion of the *3D* Course and the start of their training the Director and Selectors carefully examine the question of whether they are really ready to start training.
17. The Initial Readers' Training Programme meets on a weekly basis for 32 evenings, plus one weekend Residential and three Saturdays over a 12 month period. The whole programme was reviewed when the suite of Common Awards was introduced by the Church of England and the diocese of Birmingham decided that it would not go down the route of

university validation for its courses. This was based on the diversity of the diocese and the belief that, were the Course to be university accredited, some genuine leaders from within local churches would not offer themselves for Reader Ministry, regardless of their true abilities and calling. This was borne out by one incumbent who talked about battling against a mentality of people 'knowing their place' and not being willing to move from that. However the Educational Survey undertaken amongst Readers licensed in the last 5 years shows that while half of those who trained were not graduates, the other half were. This is certainly the case with the current cohort, of whom over 50% are graduates, one with a PhD in Theology. Whilst there is evidence in the documentation of a review of some areas of the syllabus e.g. the area of Theological Reflection, the Course still needs to be sufficiently differentiated so as to challenge the most able students and not just to find a common denominator that will cater for all. The question is whether the standard overall is adequate preparation for people who will become preachers, teachers and lay theologians. The evidence seen from the weekend residential and the session on leading intercessions are two areas in particular where this should be carefully considered.

18. *Next* is the post-licensing programme that extends for the first 18 months of ministry. It has undergone extensive revision and has been essentially 're-launched' in January 2016, with a much greater emphasis on it as an extension of Reader Training and, therefore, compulsory. This is in response to feedback from licensed Readers and incumbents, borne out in the meeting of incumbents with the reviewers. The aim of *Next* is to support the Reader in 'maintaining their enthusiasm for Christian ministry; developing their skills for ministry and mission; enabling growth in collaborative working with their incumbent and others and in their serving the parish and diocese.' The units of training include more theological study; the opportunity to undertake ministry in another parish (although according to the brochure, this appears to be limited to preaching or leading a service); theological reflection. There is also a new requirement for the recently licensed Readers to keep a Portfolio, which will be submitted and assessed at the end of the *Next* course. Whilst a post-licensing course of this nature is commendable, we feel that some of the content should be in the Initial Training course, or at least dealt with in more depth there, as mentioned above.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend that the 3D and NEXT courses should be seen more as a cohesive whole with Initial Reader Training. Where appropriate, work done on the NEXT course should be clearly assessed and marked.**

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

19. As stated previously, 3D is the required 'route' whereby someone may offer for Reader Ministry, but this course is not assessed. An Educational Reference is, therefore, required or an interview takes place with the Course Director before entry to a formal selection day for the Initial Reader Training course in June of each year organised by the Diocese.
20. On the course, the key assessment points are the Interim Assessments in January and June and the End of Course Assessment in September. The Interim Assessments are formal meetings between student and tutor where 7–8 areas are considered. These include such things as academic progress, pastoral care, general wellbeing, etc. out of which 2-3 targets will be decided to work on, to be reviewed at the next meeting. The End of Course Assessment form is completed by the student, tutor and the incumbent and signed off by the Director of Reader Training. Students are allocated personal tutors, who supports the students' on-going self-appraisal, and meet with them most weeks before the teaching sessions. These are allocated on a mixture of geographical basis, as it is the tutor who will visit the student's home parish to hear them preach, and considerations of who would be most appropriate for the needs of a particular student. Much emphasis is put on the tutors' assessment of their students by observation at weekly sessions, their interactions in groups, etc. In most of the Interim Reports seen the comments and targets set were reasonable.
21. However, there were a number of students who raised the issues of finding theological concepts hard and their knowledge of the Bible poor and needing help with that, to which one response was that the course was too short to cover everything and a second comment raised no response from the tutor at all. This links in with our previous concerns as to whether or not sufficient attention is being given to the depth of Biblical Studies for a preaching and teaching ministry, and indeed whether observation by tutors alone is a sufficient basis for that assessment. The End of Course Final Reports were generally good with one tutor offering particularly insightful comments, indicating a very good knowledge of their student. However, here again, there was evidence of concerns raised by students about to be licensed about their anxiety over a perceived lack of ability in the areas of Biblical Interpretation and Theological Reflection. While this is addressed in *Next*, it ought to be *at the point of licensing* that candidates and their incumbents can be confident in the knowledge that they are well-trained lay theologians, able to preach and teach the faith to others. We note that some of the five sermons given by students during the year are not marked, and that their portfolio work is not marked. They are also only asked to produce a theological reflection exercise of 500 words, which is also not assessed. The reviewers believe that the students themselves would feel more confident if that was formally assessed and it was at least twice the length. Therefore:

## **Recommendation 5**

**We recommend that the Course should reflect further on how to ensure that the balance and depth of theological study and reflection is sufficient and is properly assessed for the training of effective lay theological educators. In particular we recommend that all portfolios and all sermons are assessed and commented upon, in the case of sermons post delivery, and that written exercises of theological reflection are lengthened to between 1000 and 1250 words and formally assessed.**

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



## SECTION THREE: MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

### D Community and corporate life

*Reviewers will consider the institution's quality of common life. Is it a good environment for work and study? How is the community built across local training contexts and in 'dispersed' mode? In particular:*

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

22. A clear statement of the understanding of corporate life and its implications for training ministry and relationships between members is given at beginning of the Course handbook. The introduction as already noted states that 'we are not just a training group consisting of individuals but part of the body of Christ.' It is later stated that there will be opportunities to share intensively the Gospel by being the church within confines of a relatively small group. Throughout the course it is evident that this vision is applied.

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

23. Clear statements of the understanding of issues of gender, ethnic grouping, disability and other matters of natural justice are given in the Course handbook. However in part of the assessed material of a student where English was probably the third or fourth language there was an observation that their use of English grammar and usage was imperfect and that they would have to think further about how to write better English. This clearly raises complex and very sensitive issues for a course operating in a very multicultural Diocese. Therefore:

#### **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend that the staff consults carefully with others in the Diocese experienced in multicultural settings and reflects carefully on what is necessary for effective ministry in such a context, and what educational provision, if any, should be made for those whose command of English is limited.**

24. This matter should also be considered in the context of course governance on which we comment in Section 6.L

25. Overall the good and respectful community life shared amongst staff and students was very obvious during the training weekend and the Course elements observed during the review.

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

26. The institution has clear and well-managed policies for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, as specified and agreed by the Diocese.

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

## **E Worship and training in public worship**

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

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

27. The policy and practice of corporate worship clearly states that the aim of the Reader Training programme is to enable the participants to worship together on every occasion they meet and to reflect the tradition and liturgical inheritance of the Anglican denomination.

28. However there was no reference in the course to the five guiding principles for the two integrities in the Church of England, and this in a Diocese where examples of both integrities can be found. This lack was reflected in some of the worship we observed. Therefore:

### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that, given the existence of the two integrities in the Church of England regarding the ordination of women, the Course give some thought to how it can observe the five guiding principles for the two different integrities in its worship.**

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

29. The policy on worship in the training programme offered a balance of worship, which includes authorised and innovative forms. Both forms of worship were observed during a training weekend at the Queen's Foundation where it was led by the tutors. Records of both forms were included in the portfolios of participants and records of the staff tutor meetings evidenced planning of these events.

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

30. All the participants were required to lead an act of worship at least once on training evenings when they met. A further two worship sessions were led by the Readers in training at their own churches and assessed by members of their congregation. These were then discussed with their incumbents. Constructive feedback was recorded at Interim and final reports stages of the course, although in reading some of that feedback, while some was certainly excellent, other examples were more varied in quality. Several acts of worship were observed and records of services taken by the Readers in training in their own churches were included in their portfolios.

### **Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that the Course should review the feedback provided on worship conducted by students to ensure that a high standard of feedback is consistently provided.**

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

31. The Liturgical space at the Queen's Foundation, consisting of lecture rooms and a chapel where a final Eucharist to the weekend away was held, and in the Diocesan offices, which contain well-lit open spaces, were adequate for this purpose.

<p><b>The review team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion E, Worship and training in public worship.</b></p>
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### **F Ministerial, personal and spiritual formation**

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

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

32. Throughout the Course Readers in training are based mainly in their own church and are therefore immersed in their local tradition. There they develop their ministerial skills, where they preach five prepared sermons and lead at least one act of worship. Throughout their training period they are encouraged to be involved in developing pastoral and group leading skills. The interim and final reports record these and the incumbent is required to comment.
33. Whilst it is evident that participants of this course come from a wide variety of church and faith traditions it is only the 'Mission and Ministry Project' that formalises the requirement to look at traditions other than their own. The completion of this work requires some interaction with participants from different backgrounds, interviews with lay and ordained members of the churches and the delivery of a written report. The

reviewers were not convinced that this process was as thorough as it might have been. The report on the Project and a presentation are then assessed by the Course tutors. The requirement to prepare and deliver one sermon in a church of a tradition other than the one from which the student comes in the post-licensing *Next* course.

34. However the complete immersion of a Reader in training in a parish of a different tradition for a period of time does not occur. The Reviewers believe that would certainly give students a more thorough understanding of the breadth of Anglicanism, and possibly of a variety of approaches to pastoral care. (See Recommendation 9 below.)

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

35. Training and guidance is present in much of the Initial Readers Training Course. The corporate nature of this guidance is present in the ethos of the Course and the Course handbook provided. Individual guidance is delivered through tutors and the Course director. The development of individual Course participants is regularly reported during staff meetings. Initial and final reports evidence the observation of growth in this area, including the development of a regular prayer life.

36. Whilst encouragement to seek confidential spiritual counsel is a personal matter for the Course participant, it was the reviewers' strong impression that it could be more encouraged than at present. This could be provided by a variety of people from within the Diocese, certainly not all of whom might be ordained. But each individual student could benefit from such a link with an appropriate individual. (see Recommendation 10 below.)

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

37. The common life and guidance offered during this Course has been developed for a number of years. The guidance is offered at regular meetings of small groups and individuals by tutors assigned to participants at the start of the Course. The incumbent of the parish is an important member of this process and observes the development of the growth of discipleship of their Reader in training. There was strong agreement from a group of training incumbents that this was a particular strength of this Course, as all had seen their individual trainees grow in Christian discipleship and confidence to share their faith with others throughout the training period.

38. There is development in theological reflection through the preparation and delivering of sermons as the participants grow into their role as a Reader in training. However there is only a single short written

theological reflection exercise of 500 words, which takes place after an evening teaching session and a Saturday presentation with group exercises. The written exercise is not formally assessed. Further opportunity for theological reflection is provided over several sessions, but none of it results in written work.

39. In terms of enabling students to 'engage with the world' we found that much of the experience on the Course was based on engagement with the church in various forms, but there was little on engaging with a secular society. Yet there are opportunities for doing that in the Diocese not least of all through chaplaincies to secular institutions such as hospitals, hospices, schools or prisons. (See Recommendation 9 below.)
40. An evening spent discussing 'apologetics' is required in the *Next* post-licensing course, but it too is not formally assessed. We have said earlier (Recommendation 4) that assessment should take place during the events in the *Next* course.

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

41. The course director has recently completed a MA in Applied Theological Studies at The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham (2013). Other tutors include ordained ministers either in post or retired and a Reader with several years of experience. During many examples of teaching the broad personal spirituality of the staff was certainly revealed, and their own continued learning and reflection on practice was demonstrated. However in one teaching event only one rather narrow view of spirituality was expressed, and was not presented in such a way that it easily led to challenge or open discussion by the students. There has therefore been clear evidence that F.iv has not been fully met by all tutors.

### **Recommendation 9**

**We recommend that the Course reflect further on how students can be given a wider impression of the breadth of the church both in terms of churchmanship and the church's involvement in secular institutions. This might be addressed through a placement either in a church of another tradition, or in a chaplaincy to a secular institution exercised from the basis of another tradition. This should happen in the Initial Training Scheme prior to licensing.**

### **Recommendation 10**

**We recommend that stronger encouragement be given to students to find someone whom they would trust to have conversations about their own spirituality (who need not be ordained).**

<b>The review team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion F, Ministerial, personal and spiritual formation.</b>
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## SECTION FOUR: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### **G Teaching and learning: content, method and resources**

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

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

42. Reviewers were able to read the course outlines compiled by the Director of Reader Training and other staff and to observe sessions for *3D*, Initial Reader Training and *Next*. One *3D* session was observed, which was led jointly by an experienced tutor and one who was new to the course this year. They both exhibited skill at enabling people to make links between the course material and people's own experiences. The team was able to discuss the course with the leaders and the participants informally before the session began. The course is well structured with each session having clear aims; these are phrased appropriately in general terms rather than being specific to Reader ministry because the course is for all Christians.
43. The Initial Reader Training course is divided into individual weekly sessions which all have clearly stated Aims and Learning Objectives. These are on the weekly hand-out given to the students containing the work that will be covered in the session. Some of the teaching sessions observed were excellent, but we also observed sessions where the teaching was less good. In one case individual experiences raised by students were not integrated by the speaker as an important part of learning; examples raised by them from their own lives were glossed over or simply not dealt with. Despite the efforts of another tutor and one of the students to counter balance the argument, the session was less effective than it could have been.
44. In another observed session it seemed that the Learning Objectives were not actually written by the person who was teaching the session. Major issues of intercessory prayer were not opened up as they could have been. This stood in sharp contrast to another class observed on John's gospel, where the tutor expanded the basic Learning Objectives and delivered an engaging and challenging session on the difference between John and the Synoptics.
45. The only *Next* event the reviewers were able to observe was an introductory session for newly licensed Readers. The options for the future were outlined and the newly licensed Readers certainly seemed committed, but we were not able to observe specific teaching on that course.

## Recommendation 11

**We recommend that the Course consider how to ensure that the best teaching style applies to all teaching. This might be achieved through more peer observation and sharing of good practice, with the brief for other staff to be more explicitly complimentary or critical.**

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

46. The sessions provided in Initial Reader Training generally engaged the students' interest well and were well received. They spoke positively about the support they received from tutors and we were able to spend time with the students at the Residential weekend where they spoke honestly about their vocational journeys thus far. The tutors provide much informal support on a weekly basis and the formational aspect of training is covered well. However, the lack of written academic work other than exegesis in preparation for sermons and not for its own sake is rather limiting and narrow; similarly, the lack of real Theological Reflection assignments (which is a prerequisite in most ministerial training courses) needs addressing. (See Recommendation 5 above.)

*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.*

47. The review team was able to observe sessions led by a visiting speaker at a Residential weekend as well as sessions led by all tutors at the weekly Initial Reader Training meetings. We did not see the Director of Reader Training teach. The best teaching involved a range of methods within a single unit, from full group to small group discussion, with clear tasks to perform and combined presentation, discussion and exercises that both stimulated and challenged the students. All sessions were supported by handouts and some with PowerPoint, though the effectiveness of their use varied. However as noted in G.i above not all observed sessions were effective.

48. In the introduction to the Course, students are advised that weekly preparation should take them an average 5 hours a week. However, although there is preparation of some sort set each week, it is difficult to see how the more able students might be stretched to this extent. Certainly the preparation for the sessions the team saw should not have taken that long, even for less able students.

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

49. The Initial Reader Training course meets in the diocesan offices at 1, Colmore Row. The rooms are well equipped with IT equipment, screens

and conference tables and chairs. There is a cupboard which serves as a lending library and that is open for the evening sessions, with students able to browse and borrow books. The stock is limited in terms of the range of theological books available and appears to be geared towards what is needed for the assignments, rather than for the study of Theology for its own sake. There is no course website with guidance on the many online resources which would be more easily available to students than books. Something of this nature would also enable the sharing of key resources that would be useful for tutors, students and visiting speakers. Online discussion forums / blogs have been used successfully on other courses as alternative means of assessment and a course website would open up all these opportunities.

## **Recommendation 12**

**We recommend that the library at Colmore Row is updated to contain a wider variety of books, including more on biblical interpretation and theological studies in general, and that the Course considers the setting up of a course website or virtual learning environment e.g. Moodle / DropBox.**

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

50. The 3D course contains no assessed tasks for the students. In Initial Reader Training, five sermons and the Mission and Ministry Project are formally assessed, though it is usual that only one sermon is commented upon post-delivery. Written guidelines, largely based on notes by a former tutor, are provided for the tutors when assessing the draft sermons. However, these are rather subjective and do not contain any assessment criteria which results in a lack of consistency in the academic standard of the feedback. In the selection of marked work the reviewers saw there was some excellent examples of feedback, but others were less helpful and too generalised. Similar written guidelines are given for oral feedback after the sermons are preached and the students have received feedback from their incumbents and congregations; while these are useful prompts again they do not contain any assessment criteria.
51. The Mission and Ministry Project has stated aims and objectives and the feedback form has four headings under which the project is assessed (Presentation; Information; Analysis; Overall Comments). The sample that we saw were generally marked well with constructive comments and useful points for consideration, though here again there were no assessment criteria, thus making it difficult for the students to know at what level they are learning and the staff to know the level at which they are teaching. The reviewers noted that all five tutors marked every project using separate mark sheets and wondered if this was entirely



necessary. The need for Theological Reflection was particularly highlighted in this project.

52. Assessment is regarded as on-going throughout the Course and students are encouraged to see it as something that is not done *to* them but rather that their own honest appraisal of their progress and development is an essential part of the learning and formational process. Much emphasis is put on the tutors' informal feedback assessment of their students by observation at weekly sessions, their interactions in groups, etc.
53. While the reviewers completely understand the desire not to be over academic, nonetheless we consider that some formal academic work and assessment is required. Accordingly:

### Recommendation 13

**We recommend that the Course carefully considers how the academic aspects of training may be enhanced, developed and assessed. In particular a review of mark schemes should happen which will include clear assessment criteria that will help to standardise marking.**

**The review team has confidence with qualifications 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 reflexive practitioners in the context of the developing and diverse society in which they will minister.*
54. As already stated the overall training programme of 3D, Initial Reader Training and *Next* are three clearly separated components which are studied consecutively. *Next* is increasingly seen as the second part of Reader Training and there is more practical theology on that course.
55. The Course handbook outlines the rationale for its emphasis on the combination of theory and practical:
  - ***What we think and what we do*** – *theory and practice - both are vital for ministry and we aim to develop both thinking and practical abilities during the course – it is out of the combination of both activities that wisdom and theology at their best arise.*
56. Preaching, Leading Intercessions and the Ministry and Mission Project are examples of how this is met. However, this is very 'church based' and the lack of a Pastoral Placement for a sustained period in some sort of sector ministry, together with the lack of Theological Reflection built

into the syllabus from the beginning, does rather restrict this growth as practitioners. This is further reason for our Recommendation 9 in section F above.

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

## SECTION FIVE: STAFF AND STUDENTS

*Reviewers will consider the recruitment, expertise, resourcing, appraisal and development of staff. In particular:*

### **I Teaching staff**

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

57. The Course director is an ordained minister and the other tutors consist of two ordained ministers and one Reader. The balance of male to female staff is in line with the Readers in training who are largely female.
58. The teaching staff on the 3D course which is a prerequisite for Reader training is mainly ordained and has almost an equal gender balance.
59. We have no concerns in relation to criterion I. However in Section J that follows we do comment on other matters relating to the teaching we observed and include Recommendation 14.

<p><b>The review team has confidence with regard to Criterion I, Teaching staff.</b></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 relevant partner bodies.*

60. The Director of Reader Training was recruited by national advertisement as part of the full time role as Bishop's Advisor for Lay Adult Education and Training for the Church of England, Birmingham. Interview was conducted with regard to standards required by recruitment processes of the Church of England.
61. The process of selection for Volunteer part-time tutors was carried out with the assistance of the then Director for Ministries, and this is now done with consultation with the Bishop's Advisor for CME. A list of potential clergy and Readers were identified and invited to an exploratory meeting which included the job description and training programme aims, and topics were presented. This enabled them to gain a sense of what they would bring to that role.

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

62. The job description for the Director of Reader Training is clear and appropriate. It is reviewed by the Diocesan Board of Finance on an annual basis.
63. Job descriptions for volunteer tutors are clearly outlined in the Tutor handbook. Appointments are made on an annual basis and before the end of the year tutors are asked if they wish to continue in this role. They report directly to the Director of Reader Training.
64. It is apparent from the reports of frequent staff meetings that their roles are reviewed at regular intervals, where individual strengths are identified.
65. Volunteer tutors work together in the presentation of training programme facilitating weekly sessions. They work on an individual basis to small tutor groups for the preparation of sermons and conduct both interim and final assessments.
66. All tutors are involved in the assessment of the Mission and Ministry Project.

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

67. The Director of Reader Training – with, on one occasion, other Course tutors - used to attend the Adult Anglican Education Network Conference where practice and current issues were shared, but these Conferences have now ceased. Since 2015 she attends the National conference for Directors of Reader training at Sarum College and intends to go regularly in the future.
68. Annual appraisal was carried out for staff over the last three years. Appraisals were evident for two of the volunteer tutors, a third tutor only re-joining this group after an absence of two years. A pro-forma for this process is clearly identified in the Tutor Handbook. Strengths were noted and areas for further training identified. All staff are willing to attend training if needs are identified in their annual appraisals. However note recommendation 14 below.

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

69. The three volunteer tutors are sufficient in number for the number of Readers in training this year. In a previous year where numbers were double there was an additional tutor and the group split into several smaller groups for discussion and workshop exercises. The Director and one other tutor have post graduate degrees in Theology. All tutors have experience in teaching adults.

70. The staff copy of the teaching material is always available and contains printed copies of the Course material including that to be distributed to the participants. There is much evidence of the updating of this material. Staff meeting records show that tutors work to their strengths in delivering the content. All tutors are normally present at each training event, although one event the reviewers observed there was not enough guidance or depth despite other tutors present who could have provided further theological questioning.
71. Although this Diocese aims to recruit and train a greater proportion of non-academic Readers in training it was evident from a further evening session that where a deeper theological approach was presented there was a thirst and active interest in the material. Discussions were lively and levels of deeper understanding and learning were present.
72. However overall on the teaching side we have referred at various other points (Sections C.i; C.ii; G.i and Recommendation 11) to the different standards of teaching we observed at various points, and mention that again above. This obviously relates to the expertise, appraisal and development of staff. Accordingly we recommend:

#### **Recommendation 14**

**That the Course reflects on the expertise needed at the time of recruiting staff and considers whether open recruiting may not be a better way of finding tutors. Subsequent methods of appraisal should ensure that all staff are developed in such a way that high standards of teaching apply at all teaching events.**

**The review team has confidence with qualifications regard to Criterion J, Staff.**

#### **K Students**

*Reviewers will examine procedures for student admission, welfare and support, appraisal and discipline. In particular:*

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

73. Student admission requires the completion of the 3D course or a theology degree. The discernment of whether the candidates can handle the course is part of the guidelines for the selection day process carried out by experienced selectors.
74. Policies for welfare, complaints, discipline and assessment are all provided in the student handbook. Reporting to sponsoring churches take place at regular intervals at interim and final assessments. Readers

in training do much of their training in their local parish church where the incumbent is part of the process.

75. Readers after their licensing have to complete the NEXT post-licensing programme, failure to do so will result in the Warden of Readers being informed and may lead to the revoking of their licence.
76. There is evidence that Readers in Training have been removed from Initial Training for matters of discipline, or because of a pastoral issue.
- K.ii The institution's decision-making structure should enable students to take an appropriate part in its governance.*
77. Although students do complete response forms to some training events there is a complete lack of other formal involvement of Readers in training having any appropriate part in the decision making process. (See Recommendation 15).

<p><b>The review team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion K, Students.</b></p>
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## SECTION SIX: GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

### L Organisation and governance

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

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

78. The Readers Training Course is an integral part of the Lay Training Department in the Diocese and does not have a Governing Body. The financial structures are determined by it having a budget within the Diocesan budget and this is negotiated each year between the Financial Officers of the Diocese and the Director of the Course. The Principal requests payments to be made by the Diocese for any expenses in running the course and she does not personally sign any cheques. From our discussions with both the Director and the Head of the Finance Department in the Diocesan Office the finances seem to work reasonably well and efficiently.

79. There is within the Diocesan structures a Readers Matters Group, which is the body where the Director can most easily raise broad issues of policy about the Course. At the moment that Committee has no formally constituted governing role of the Course. We completely accept that a full formal Governing Body is not needed, but we believe that Committee should be given a definite brief with respect to the Course and that is the subject of Recommendation 15 below.

*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 and effectiveness of the institution; operational and staff oversight and support.*

80. The Diocesan Board of Finance exercises all of these functions as the assets used by the Course are all assets within the Diocesan Board of Finance's control in collaboration with the Principal. There appear to be no problems in this area.

*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.*

81. The Readers Matters Committee, one of whose meetings we attended, is a small group with the Diocesan Warden of Readers and three other members of considerable educational experience, including the person who is the external reviewer of the Course. It is in a state of flux as two members are likely to leave in the next few months and at present there is no Chairman of the Committee. We believe the Committee has a potential role as a 'critical friend' of the course and as a source of guidance. At present none of the Committee observe any of the training provided by the Course and we believe such occasional observation would be beneficial both for the Course and for the Committee. In Recommendation 6, we have commented on the question of training those whose command of English is limited, on which question the Readers Matters Committee should also be consulted. While the Readers Course is too small for any large 'risk assessment' we believe the Readers Matters Committee could also be given a watching brief of that issue. Accordingly:

### **Recommendation 15**

**We recommend that the Readers Matters Committee extend its brief to be a formal forum for deeper reflection on the Course. This should include**

- **members of the Committee sometimes observing teaching events**
- **monitoring the issue of those whose command of English is limited**
- **undertaking some 'risk assessment' of the Course**
- **considering student representation at least for their discussions on matters relating to the Course**

**When a new Chairman of the Committee is appointed we believe the Principal should be accountable to that Chairman, and the appointment be made with regard to that line of accountability.**

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

82. The whole community of the Course, staff, students and ancillary staff, is small enough to allow a good deal of informal discussion to take place, while formal feedback on events is provided by the students. As far as we could judge decision-making is largely a collaborative activity. However we believe that some official student involvement in the process could be enhanced by Recommendation 16 above.

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

83. The audited accounts of the Diocesan Board of Finance, which contain the finances of the Readers Course, are regularly submitted to the Charity Commissioners.

<p><b>The review team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion L, Organisation and governance.</b></p>
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## **M Business planning and risk management**

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

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

84. Such a long-term strategy document does not exist at present, neither is there a forward looking business plan. The Diocese as a whole has a forward plan for its role and purposes, but that is not translated down to a specific plan for the Readers Course. The Director of Readers is able to take part in any Diocesan discussions about broader ministry questions, including any forward plans, but these are inevitably of a rather general nature. There are estimates made of how many potential Readers in training there might be in the coming year, but no forward planning beyond that.
85. It could be argued that such a relatively small operation, whose finances are wholly dependent on Diocesan financing, does not need any long-term strategy document or business plan. This is a matter on which the Course, assisted by the Readers Matters Committee, should reflect. Accordingly:

### **Recommendation 16**

**We recommend that the Course and the Readers Matters Committee reflect on whether a long-term strategy development plan is needed. If so, they should consider what it should be and whether it needs a detailed business plan.**

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

86. Annual budgets are drawn up by the Diocesan Board of Finance, which includes a budget for Lay Training in general and the Readers Course in particular.

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

87. Risk assessment is undertaken by the Diocesan Board of Finance for all of its work, and we have suggested in Recommendation 16 that the Readers Committee in its extended brief might consider that as it applies to the Readers Course.

<p><b>The review team has confidence with regard to Criterion M, Business planning and risk management.</b></p>
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## **N Financial policies**

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

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

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

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

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

88. The Course has no investments and the Diocesan Board of Finance has a reserves policy. All of the other financial policy matters are covered by the Diocesan Board of Finance, and there are regularly produced reports for the Course to show expenditure against budget. The financial controls operated by the Diocese appear to be wholly effective.

<b>The review team has confidence with regard to Criterion N, Financial policies.</b>
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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 offsite.*

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

89. Proper books of accounts are kept within the Diocesan Board of Finances structures, where authority levels are also maintained.

<b>The review team has confidence with regard to Criterion O, Statutory and operating policies.</b>
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## **P Accommodation**

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

90. The main teaching area for the Course is the suite of meeting rooms in the Diocesan Office and they are certainly fit for purpose, and well maintained by the Diocese. For the residential weekend the resources of

The Queen's Foundation in Birmingham are used and are similarly fit for purpose and well maintained by Queen's.

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

91. The meeting rooms are easily accessible for any disabled students as are the teaching facilities in Queen's. There is a well worked out plan for evacuating anyone with disabilities in the event of the lifts being out of action to the Diocesan Offices.

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

## **CONCLUSION**

**The review team has confidence with qualifications in the Birmingham Diocesan Reader Training Course for preparing candidates for Reader ministry.**

## **LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that the Course and Diocese reflect carefully on the standard of understanding and knowledge required at the end of the Course. Given that a Reader qualification is potentially transferable across Dioceses, that reflection should include the implications regarding comparable standards across the Church of England.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend that the Course considers how to build relationships with the University of Birmingham, Newman University and the Queen's Foundation to use some of their resources both for staff and students.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that the Course reflects further on how those on the course engage with other faith communities and secular organisations by using some of those clergy in the Diocese who have good contacts with them.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend that the 3D and NEXT courses should be seen more as a cohesive whole with Initial Reader Training. Where appropriate, work done on the NEXT course should be clearly assessed and marked.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**We recommend that the Course should reflect further on how to ensure that the balance and depth of theological study and reflection is sufficient and is properly assessed for the training of effective lay theological educators. In particular we recommend that all portfolios and all sermons are assessed and commented upon, in the case of sermons post delivery, and that written exercises of theological reflection are lengthened to between 1000 and 1250 words and formally assessed.**

### **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend that the staff consults carefully with others in the Diocese experienced in multicultural settings and reflects carefully on what is necessary for effective ministry in such a context, and what educational provision, if any, should be made for those whose command of English is limited.**

### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that, given the existence of the two integrities in the Church of England regarding the ordination of women, the Course give some thought to how it can observe the five guiding principles for the two different integrities in its worship.**

### **Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that the Course should review the feedback provided on worship conducted by students to ensure that a high standard of feedback is consistently provided.**

### **Recommendation 9**

**We recommend that the Course reflect further on how students can be given a wider impression of the breadth of the church both in terms of churchmanship and the church's involvement in secular institutions. This might be addressed through a placement either in a church of another tradition, or in a chaplaincy to a secular institution exercised from the basis of another tradition. This should happen in the Initial Training Scheme prior to licensing.**

### **Recommendation 10**

**We recommend that stronger encouragement be given to students to find someone whom they would trust to have conversations about their own spirituality (who need not be ordained).**

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- monitoring the issue of those whose command of English is limited**
- undertaking some 'risk assessment' of the Course**
- considering student representation at least for their discussions on matters relating to the Course**

**When a new Chairman of the Committee is appointed we believe the Principal should be accountable to that Chairman, and the appointment be made with regard to that line of accountability.**

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