

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

Peterborough Diocesan Reader Training Course

October 2017

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Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ

Switchboard: +44(0)20 7898 1000 Email: ministry@churchofengland.org Website: www.churchofengland.org

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Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the January-February 2016 Periodic External Review

October 2017

Our Review Report was published in June 2016. The response to it has been slow as the Principal, Quentin Chandler, was in process of accepting an appointment in another Diocese at about the time it was received. As is inevitable in a Course so dependent on one person as the Peterborough Diocesan Reader Training Course there was no response until a successor had been appointed and had taken up post – early 2017. I met with the new full-time Principal, Andrew Coleby, shortly after this – late February – and we agreed that it made sense to delay the follow-up visit until the autumn. We agreed a date in mid-October for this visit.

Andrew provided a report of the actions that were being taken some months before this meeting. The October follow-up visit was with Andrew and did not include other staff or diocesan representatives. Through our two hour conversation he showed that he had an excellent understanding of the issues and challenges and gave every indication of a determination to meet these. After the meeting he made significant and helpful additions to the documentation provided. It was very reassuring to hear his vision for the Course and to see the actions already in place or in process. Much inevitably remains to be done but the indications are very positive.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that ways are found to make the aim of growing to become more effective 'disciples and ministers of Christ' part of a more challenging and critical culture within the Course.

Our concern with the Course as we experienced it in 2016 was that it risked prizing uncritical affirmation of all spiritualities, traditions and personal experiences above appropriate challenge and development. Evidence of change on this front included the 'Mission Statement' now available on the Moodle Site. This emphasizes the importance of 'be-spoke', 'ground-up' training where the needs of any particular situation are balanced through the 'catholicity' of the 'wider church'. It also stresses 'the importance of teamwork and collaborative ministry'. The new Principal explained that creating 'a more challenging and critical culture' was at the centre of his concerns. He pointed to advances in a number of ways:

- talks given at the residential weekends underlining the importance of specifically Anglican disciplines and structures,
- the daily office being seen as a norm for lay ministers as well as ordained ones
- students are being encouraged into more up-front roles in leading worship

We are satisfied that very good progress is being made in relation to Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the aims and objectives of the Course are reimagined and set-out in challenging, dynamic, growth-focused and end-orientated ways that fit both the local vision and strategy of the Diocese and that of the national Church.

The evidence provided here pointed to the 'Mission Statement' and promised 'a more in-depth approach'. We did not see evidence that the aims and objective had been set out in a more dynamic and challenging way. As we said in the Report some of this had already happened in the document 'Values for the Diocesan Training Team' but this is not a Course document. Something along the lines suggested in paragraph 7 of our 2016 report needs to be produced to achieve Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Course take further steps to develop a culture of self-evaluation and, as part of that, produce the Self Evaluation Report required annually by Ministry Division.

A Self-Evaluation for this year has been produced and there is evidence of real progress here.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Principal attends at least one Conference of his TEI training peers per annum.

This is now happening.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Course finds a strong external link, ensuring regular, on-going challenge and inter-action, with a body which has similar mission, training and academic objectives.

This has not happened as yet. As we discussed this with the new Principal, the only difficulty was finding another institution with the right 'fit'. He is committed to finding one and with help from the networking that he will establish with other Courses, and if necessary from Ministry Division, we anticipate that this Recommendation will be met.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that:

- **the training of Incumbents is re-examined to ensure that they understand and are supportive of the realities of training**
- **the making of support groups within the parishes/benefices from which students come be made mandatory**
- **consideration is given to developing a module in multi-faith issues that will meet the needs of Peterborough Diocese**

The training for incumbents is now delivered at the Introductory day for incumbents and first-year students in September, and a training day for final year students and incumbents is planned for next April with Bishop Donald. An annual module on multi-faith issues is beginning. Support groups have been 'commended'. Our feeling from wider evidence available to us was that they needed to be 'mandatory' for this to work for all.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Course is reviewed to ensure that there is a higher emphasis on mission and this emphasis is seen clearly in the handbook and the module outlines and assessment papers.

Our conversations with the new Principal made it evident that this Recommendation resonated strongly with him. We welcomed his assurance that ‘mission and evangelism are at the centre of his vision for lay ministry’ and that he will be ‘using every opportunity to bring them into the taught content of the course’ . The challenge of turning this intention into a reality remains.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that Readers’ training is consistently brought up to the widely accepted practice across the dioceses of HE level 4.

This is an area that still needs attention. There is a debate in the Diocese about this direction as it seeks to move away from ‘hard and fast distinctions between Readers and other types of Lay ministers’ (see comments under Recommendation 10)

Recommendation 9

We recommend that:

- **the policies on corporate life, and on gender and ethnicity, be made explicit.**
- **these policies should be available online through a VLE**

Policies, including an Equal Opportunities Policy, are now available on Moodle.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that:

- **an explicit policy on worship be developed, including a clear statement of the differences required for diocesan ministries and Reader ministry.**
- **consideration of the incorporation of Incumbents into the process of feedback on leading worship and preaching for Readers be included in this policy.**
- **this policy should be available electronically in a VLE.**

There is evidence of progress on several of these fronts such as stronger involvement of Incumbents. Progress has been made on worship and a new policy has been written and is on Moodle. As mentioned in relation to Recommendation 8 the Diocese is reluctant to differentiate over-much between diocesan ministries and Reader ministry. As this is a matter of importance (both locally and nationally) – representing as it does something of a re-calibration of the Church’s recent understanding and practice of lay ministry - it would give greater clarity to those considering lay ministry locally and would be helpful to the wider Church to have the theological, pastoral and missiological rationale for this clearly documented.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that a VLE be developed (e.g. Moodle), that the use of online resources be considered for every module (e.g. useful websites and the use of chapters online via the Diocesan Copyright system).

Considerable progress has been made here with the staff having had a training day; the Principal having undertaken a Moodle training course; students having been inducted to and using Moodle and most policies now being made available on Moodle.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that

- **all tutors, full time and part time, on the Course have a contract which states clearly the hours expected of them and their essential duties, including marking deadlines (see also Recommendation 14)**
- **staff review to ensure that every assessment information sheet is accompanied by the module's Learning Outcomes and that trainee Readers are required to meet them and staff to mark to them.**
- **We recommend that students are encouraged to be proactive in seeking the support of their Incumbent and that Course staff monitor and review the effectiveness of this support.**

Again good progress has been made here. So far it has involved conversations between the Principal and tutors making them aware of the framework of expectations. There is an Information Sheet of expectations and mutual responsibility for Base Group Leaders. For module tutors there is an assignments policy displayed on the Moodle site. This covers the prompt marking and return of assignments. This represents significant progress but the Self-Evaluation report for this year indicates that this is still a problem. The Principal is seeking to make standards clearer by marking across modules and outside of his own teaching area. It is an area that needs to be kept under review until an acceptable standard has been reached.

There are as yet no formal contracts.

Progress has also been made in providing Course staff support for students. Here Base Group Leaders are key and helped by their very clear role-descriptions. There is also for the first time a Base Group for third-year Readers to provide fellowship.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that:

- **the Diocese carefully considers the resourcing implications of its strategy on training and ensures that LMC, at every level from Principal downwards, is adequately staffed for the task.**
- **a lay member of staff is appointed as soon as possible**
- **as the Course grows careful Diocesan attention is given to appointing:**

- suitably qualified people who have, as part of their job specification, a role as theological educators
- a full-time Administrator

Considerable progress has been made on some of these points. The Principal is full-time as is the Administrator and three lay staff members have been appointed. One area that remains for decision and development is that of the Diocese recruiting 'theological educators'.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that:

- a review be made of job descriptions and a review process of the voluntary staff.
- a programme of continual professional development for the voluntary staff be developed.

This has been approached informally through conversation and formally through the annual training day, which now includes training for both tutors and incumbents (see recommendation 6). Job descriptions and contracts (see Recommendation 12) are areas of some sensitivity as tutors undertake the work in a voluntary capacity. None the less we feel that a movement towards a more precise implementation of this recommendation is still required.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that:

- policies with regard to K.i (including student admissions, welfare, academic support and subsequent deployment) be made explicit and available online in VLE.
- governance structures be clarified and that student representation on those bodies be included.

All relevant policies are now available through Moodle. The Principal has termly meetings with student representatives from each cohort. There does still need to be clarification about governance structures. We encountered some reservation about student representation on the Lay Ministry Development Forum and the Lay Ministry Meetings. This seems to be chiefly on the grounds that meetings typically happen during normal working hours. We were told however that students 'could' be invited to these committees. The Reviewers specified formal representation and we are unpersuaded that this cannot be achieved. We understand that it has now been decided to invite the student representatives to attend the Lay Ministry Course meetings, to see whether their attendance is feasible.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that a governing body should be formed for the Course which includes student representation.

Progress still needs to be made here. We were told that the LMDF would discuss this. We did not have evidence that this has happened as yet. It remains an area of unclarity. We would therefore welcome

assurances that the Course accepts the direction in which this Recommendation points – that is a clear governance structure with student representation (para 60).

Overall then there is a strong sense of movement in a very positive direction. This direction certainly echoes many of the points and recommendations we made. We are therefore content to say that, while some qualifications inevitably remain and while many new issues will arise, we are encouraged by and have confidence in the general response to our Report on the Peterborough Diocesan Reader Training Course.

Revd Dr Peter Williams
Senior Reviewer

7 November 2017