



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

## **Ministry Council**

## **Inspection Report**

### **SOUTH WEST MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE**

November 2012 – January 2013

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## **GLOSSARY**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| BAP    | Bishops' Advisory Panel                         |
| DD     | Distinctive Diaconate                           |
| DDO    | Diocesan Director of Ordinands                  |
| Marjon | The University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth |
| Moodle | On-line learning platform                       |
| NSM    | Non-stipendiary ministry                        |
| SSM    | Self-supporting ministry                        |
| SWMTC  | South West Ministerial Training Course          |

## **LIST OF INSPECTORS**

### **The Revd Sam Rushton**

Former management consultant and programme manager for business strategy and planning in UK retail banking. Adviser for Licensed Ministry in Bristol Diocese, combining the roles of DDO and Warden of Readers.

### **Professor Alan Livingston**

Former Principal of University College Falmouth; Chair of the Steering Group and Executive Group of the Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC); Council Member of Arts Council England; former Chair of Arts Council South West.

### **Paul Sutcliffe**

Former Director Underwater Systems in the Defence Research Agency and Deputy Chief Scientist for Research and Technology, Ministry of Defence; Churchwarden, Diocese of Salisbury.

### **The Revd Canon Professor Paul Avis**

Senior Inspector; former General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity; Canon Theologian of Exeter; Chaplain to HM The Queen.

## **THE INSPECTIONS FRAMEWORK**

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

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

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

### **Confidence**

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

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

### **Confidence with qualifications**

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

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

### **No confidence**

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

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

# **THE REPORT OF THE INSPECTION OF THE SOUTH WEST MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE November 2012 – January 2013**

## **SUMMARY**

The Inspection team found a Course in a phase of transition, but one that is generally in good shape and good heart and that, on the whole, is steadily strengthening its performance in the delivery of ordination training (IME 1-3), public access theological teaching at University Certificate level, and Reader training. The Course currently serves the Dioceses of Exeter and Truro, though not in exactly equivalent ways. Some aspects of what the Inspectors experienced were rated excellent; much was acceptable and good; some was below par and requires closer scrutiny by those responsible. Although the Course is sound overall, and developing well, there is a need for greater rigour and professionalism in certain areas and also for more zest, sparkle and mutual challenge overall. The Recommendations that are included in this report are intended to help the Course to consolidate existing good practice, to sharpen its performance in certain respects and to raise the standard in several areas, so that it may become stronger to face the major challenges that the future undoubtedly holds.

## **Introduction**

The Inspection team engaged with the SWMTC over the three-month period from November 2012 to January 2013. The Inspection took in three elements of the SWMTC's work: IME 1-3, public-access evening classes at the University of Exeter and in Truro, and Reader Training for the Diocese of Exeter. It did not include two other aspects of the SWMTC's work: IME 4-7 in the Diocese of Exeter, and the Exploring Christianity course in that Diocese.

The Inspectors participated in a Reader Training day, a residential weekend for IME 1-3, and a joint residential weekend when ordinands and trainee Readers came together. The Inspectors sat in on evening classes and tutor groups, met with the ordinands as a whole group and with some ordinands and trainee Readers individually. They attended a meeting of the Board of Trustees and of the Finance Committee and various staff meetings. They interviewed each of the core staff, several of the part-time teaching staff and Chaplains, and the administrative staff. The Senior Inspector met with the two sponsoring diocesan bishops (Exeter and Truro), conferred with the Chair of the Trustees and had meetings with the Acting Principal and the Director of Reader Training, as well as

with the Head of the Department of Theology, and other colleagues at the University of Exeter. The Inspectors consulted the DDOs for Truro and Exeter. Inspectors did not observe any one-to-one tutorials; they were not invited to do so and such meetings were not included in the Inspection Diary by the Course. They did, however, receive student feedback on the role of the journal and tutorial discussion of it, and this element of formation is referred to below.

The Inspectors are most grateful to all the persons mentioned above for giving their time and wisdom and especially to the Acting Principal, the staff, students and Trustees of the SWMTC for their unfailing courtesy and helpfulness during the period of the Inspection. The Inspectors were provided with extensive and exhaustive documentation and are most grateful to the staff for that.

The present SWMTC is the result of the coming together of separate NSM/SSM training programmes in the dioceses of Exeter and Truro. The original ecumenical complexion of the SWMTC has been greatly diluted by the decisions of first the United Reformed Church and recently the Methodist Church of Great Britain to concentrate their ordination training elsewhere. In the past, candidates for ordination from the Diocese of Bath and Wells have trained on the SWMTC and the Course remains open to this happening again in the future. There is no OLM scheme in the two sponsoring dioceses.

In 2012 the then Principal stepped down on health grounds with a view to taking early retirement. He has done much to enhance the quality of the Course. The Dean of Studies had been asked to assume also the role of Acting Principal. A new Board of Trustees was getting to grips with its responsibilities and fresh administrative arrangements had also recently been put in place. On top of all these changes, the Common Awards proposals were creating anxiety. Clearly, the Inspection took place at a time of uncertainty in various aspects of the Course.

The academic dimension of the Course is validated by the University of Exeter, with which the Course has had a long, close and fruitful relationship.

At 1 September 2012 there were 40 Church of England ordinands training on the SWMTC, of whom 12 were recognised as having potential for incumbent responsibilities and three were preparing for the distinctive diaconate. There were two students training for presbyteral ministry in the Methodist Church; these are expected to be the last Methodist ordinands to train on the SWMTC for the time being.



There is one student with a significant disability (deafness) and another who has been diagnosed with a condition within the autistic spectrum.

Just over half of the ordinands are graduates, two having previous degrees in theology. A quarter have no degree or other professional qualification.

Nearly half of the ordinands fall into the 50-60 age bracket, while a quarter are over 60 during at least part of their training. Three quarters of ordination candidates are married.

The Inspectors were a little taken aback by the age profile of the Readers in Training. Of 20 potential Readers currently undergoing training, it seems that 8 will be over the age of 65 in 2013, of whom two will be over 70. The SWMTC's aspiration to attract younger candidates for Reader training needs to become a reality. The student Readers tended to have prior qualifications in various disciplines, some of a good academic standard, some in theology. Of course, the SWMTC is not responsible for selecting those that it is asked to train for either ordination or Reader ministry. It is food for thought that, at an age when bishops and clergy are retiring, a significant proportion of SSM ordinands and potential Readers, is still undergoing training for a formal ministry that has not yet begun. However, it is not for the Inspectors to draw conclusions from this phenomenon.

### **Summary of outcomes**

Our overall conclusion is that the SWMTC is fit for purpose for preparing candidates for ordained ministry.

| <b>CRITERIA</b>                                       | <b>OUTCOME</b>                 |
|---|--------------------------------|
| A. Aims, objectives and evaluation of the institution | Confidence                     |
| B Relationships with other institutions               | 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                     |
| F Ministerial, personal and spiritual formation       | Confidence with qualifications |
| G Teaching and learning: content, method and          | Confidence with qualifications |
| H Practical and pastoral theology                     | Confidence                     |
| I Teaching staff                                      | Confidence                     |

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| J All staff   | Confidence                            |
| K Students  | Confidence                            |
| L Governance, management, constitution and organisation | Confidence                            |
| M Business planning and risk management                 | Confidence                            |
| N Financial policies and cost-effectiveness             | Confidence                            |
| O Reserves policy and statutory liabilities             | Confidence                            |
| P Accommodation   | Confidence                            |
| <b>Overall Outcome</b>                                  | <b>Confidence with qualifications</b> |

### General observations

The Report is written in relation to the Criteria set out in the *Inspection, Curriculum Approval, Moderation, Handbook* June 2012. The paragraphs follow the Criteria which are printed in *italic* type. The inspectors' comments are in normal type and the recommendations in **bold**.

#### Strengths

- dedicated and capable staff
- an ethos of mutual respect and friendship
- beneficial relationship with the University of Exeter
- intensive formational environment
- effective management and administration
- good library and electronic resources
- useful work and worship spaces

#### Areas for attention

- more rigour and focus in some aspects of teaching needed
- the Anglican theological tradition needs to be more prominent
- adjust balance between input and discussion towards the former
- some teaching and worship-leading needs to be more inspiring

- more intellectual challenge, stimulus and encounter needed
- unbalanced churchmanship ethos of the Course, on the low side, needs to be redressed

# FULL REPORT

## SECTION ONE: AIMS AND KEY RELATIONS

### A Aims and objectives

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

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

1. The aims, objectives and policies set out in the documentation made available to the Inspectors have been carefully formulated and are generally appropriate to the preparation of students for public ministry in the Church of England and the Methodist Church. The Course aspires to provide formation for Christian ministry and to promote Christian understanding of the world. It aims to provide the Church in the South West of England with high-quality theological education, formation and research. However, see our comments and Recommendation regarding explicit attention to the Anglican tradition in ordination training, under *F.i*.

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

2. These aims, objectives and policies are, to the best of the Inspectors' knowledge, consistent with the published policy statements of the two churches. With regard to the requirements of the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993, all students are expected to attend eucharistic worship, but it is left to the conscience of the individual as to whether they receive the sacrament. 'Traditionalist' students (of whom there are currently two) are advised in advance when the president at the celebration of the Eucharist will be female. There is one female ordained core member of staff and several female part-time members, ordained and lay, including among the Chaplains.

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

3. All the Recommendations of the previous Inspection report (2006) have been implemented, either to the letter or in other suitable ways. The External Examiner's reports are affirming. Self-evaluation of the Course for 2011-12 has been carried out. The Inspectors were encouraged to see the catalogue of recent achievements, but missed any acknowledgement of gaps, weaknesses and challenges that still needed to be addressed. Future self-evaluation exercises should involve more heart-searching and critique in order to show how the Course could be further strengthened.

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| <b>The inspection team has Confidence with regard to Criterion A, Aims, Objectives and Achievements of the Institution.</b> |
|---|

## **B Relationships with other institutions**

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

- B.i There should be evidence of the institution's commitment to partnership with the other providers of theological education in the region.*
4. There is a close and effective partnership with the University of Exeter (see below), which is the only other serious provider of theological education in the region. The Course is a Partner Institution of the University and there is a structure in place to promote and monitor this arrangement.
- B.ii The institution should draw fully on the resources of universities in teaching, quality assessment, staff development and the promotion of research.*
5. Two members of the core teaching staff also teach for the Department of Theology. Staff have the opportunity to attend research seminars in the Department. Staff and students have access to the University Library. The offices and Library/meeting room of the Course are integrated with the Department, while the Director of Reader Training is based on the St Luke's Campus, where he is also Chaplain. The Department is now helping in appraisal processes for the staff of the Course. There are other less apparent benefits, e.g. advice on IT.
- B.iii It should engage effectively with local churches, other faith communities and secular organisations so as to enhance formation for public ministry.*

6. The Course is well integrated with the training and formation structures of the two dioceses. The Director of CME 4-7 for Exeter Diocese, who is also Vocations Adviser in that diocese, is a member of the core staff team. The Exeter DDO works closely with the Principal of the Course. As a Course that is highly dispersed in aspects of its operation, the SWMTC inevitably makes some impact on the parishes out in the field: the quality of that impact depends in each case on the calibre of the student and the kind of rapport that is achieved between the host incumbent and the student.
7. The demands on the Course team are considerable, with each member of staff fulfilling a number of roles. The core team is supplemented by paid and voluntary teachers and one-off outside speakers. The part-time tutors generally give excellent value. The quality of the outside presenters at the residential weekends is somewhat uneven and unpredictable. Their performance needs to be kept under scrutiny. Some of the visiting speakers (who are normally voluntary) provide a fresh and stimulating perspective on a range of important topics. This variety of external input, which is beneficial for staff and students alike, should be further developed. Devon and Cornwall is home to a wealth of artists, writers and musicians. The Course could be more imaginative in seeking to develop a fruitful working relationship with this rich resource. It would not be difficult to obtain advice on whom to approach. For example, a musician could be invited to talk about the 'spirituality of silence'; a writer might engage with a biblical book or passage; a painter might discuss Christian art in relation to a particular theological theme. While we are making this a formal recommendation, it does not affect our overall confidence with regard to this criterion.

### **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that the Course review its use of external speakers and presenters with a view to improving the quality of input and drawing on the wealth of artistic, literary and musical talent to be found in the South West, subject always to a clear sense of the desirable outcomes, detailed briefing of such persons, and disciplined timekeeping.**

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| <p><b>The inspection team has 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

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

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

8. A theological, formational and educational rationale for SWMTC's approach to mission and to formation does exist, but is dispersed throughout many documents. It is not very obvious at first sight. The Inspectors received a detailed written briefing on this at the beginning of the Inspection which reflected in an intelligent way, theologically, sociologically and philosophically, on the Course's rationale. Nothing that we saw was inconsistent with this. There is a clear description of how the elements of the Course fit together in the Handbooks for the IME 1-3 and Reader courses. However, on the basis of the written and oral evidence that we observed, we question whether most students are enabled to acquire an overall theological framework, a clear sense of how ministry, ordained and lay, fits into the mission of God, and how the ministry of the word, the celebration of the sacraments and the provision of pastoral care and oversight hang together in Christian missiology. We encourage the Course to look afresh at issues concerning coherence, framework and making connections.

### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend that the SWMTC seek to make the overall theological and missiological framework of the course more explicit and position such a rationale in a strategic place in its documentation and on its website.**

*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.*

9. The various programmes are set out clearly and in detail and are regularly reviewed and revised. The programme of learning is continuously refreshed as a result of student and diocesan feedback. There are thorough evaluations of the Course, especially of the Residential

weekends, through student evaluation forms and through meetings of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. The Partnership Management Group, which includes, inter alia, the Chair of the Trustees and the DDO of Exeter, meets once a term. The DDOs of both dioceses are complimentary about the responsiveness of the Course to comment and criticism, both in tailoring the course to suit individual students (where possible, given resource constraints) and in adapting the Course to meet the changing nature of ministry generally.

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

10. These methods are generally thorough and meticulous and enable the Course to advise the sponsoring bishops and other responsible persons on the suitability of candidates for their ministry.
11. Both the IME 1-3 and Reader-training aspects of the Course are combinations of quite different elements. The elements of the Course which are based in the University are deliberately 'academic' (as they are 'Open Access' courses) and other than the wearing of a clerical collar, it is not immediately obvious that the lecturers have a faith position themselves. The residential weekends (all ministry students; sometimes Readers as well) and study days (Reader students) presuppose that the relevant areas of study have been covered adequately in the evening classes and are therefore mainly 'formational', focusing on the development of ministerial and missional practices and on promoting the common life of the community in worship and fellowship. The tutor groups (for IME 1-3 only) are places of spiritual encounter, but they also have the 'functional' purpose of helping ministry students to develop their worship-leading skills. These three elements have threads in common but feel different in practice.
12. Perhaps in order to cope with the wide diversity of academic ability and churchmanship amongst the students, there is evidence of considerable convergence of ministerial practice and theological teaching among the teaching staff, often around non-threatening moderate positions. Some students made it clear to the Inspectors, both in the general meeting and individually, that they felt that there was not enough intellectual challenge in the input that they received and in the discussion that followed. The staff come from a range of theological and churchmanship backgrounds but this diversity is understated. This is a



- pity, because the impression received by the Inspectors was that the Course seemed somewhat lacking in 'personality' as a result.
13. The staff regularly share feedback on students with each other, and the Staff Tutors are able to develop a good understanding of how individual students are faring on the course. In addition, there are very good processes in place for two-way communication between the Staff Tutor and Home Minister and the Staff Tutor and the DDO. There is a strong sense that guiding the formation of students is a collaboration between all those who share responsibility for this task and that, on the whole, it works well. There was good evidence, for example, of how this collaborative approach was helping some weaker students to cope with the course. The Course now provides annual reports on each ordinand to the DDO and the Final Report is seen as honest and helpful in setting a framework for continued learning in IME 4-7. In Exeter, this sense of coherence is helped by the continuity of responsibility for formation by SWMTC: ordinands develop a good relationship with the staff who then continue to support them through their assistant curacies.
  14. The Inspectors found it difficult to identify any 'failure' rate on the Course. The Inspectors were not aware of any failed assignments, but this may largely be due to the good support given by staff and to the motivation of the students. It is rare for a candidate not to proceed to ordination or licensing as a Reader ( though from time to time Reader students 'interrupt' their training if they are not coping with the Course). Obviously good staff and committed students should help to keep the failure rate in any particular area to a minimum. However, any tacit perception within the Course that students do not fail assignments and, more importantly, do not fail the Course as a whole – that the SWMTC is a 'non-fail' course – would do little to support its external academic and formational credibility. It might be a salutary exercise for the staff to review student 'failures' over the past five years and then to compare their findings with benchmarks from other similar courses.

### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that the Course review the issue of failure, in relation both to specific pieces of work and overall, and take steps to ensure that no perception that the SWMTC is a 'non-fail' Course could arise in the minds of staff, students and stakeholders.**

15. We understand that minimal special provision is made for those preparing for the Distinctive Diaconate (DD). There are three such candidates at present. Both sponsoring dioceses actively encourage vocations to the DD. In recent years the Church of England nationally has produced two substantial reports clarifying and promoting this ministry: *For Such a Time as This* and 'The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church'. The Ministry Division has issued guidelines for training for the DD. We therefore recommend that the Course give attention to ways in which this vocation can be affirmed and resourced. A separate pathway is probably not appropriate, because those preparing for the DD should not stint theology, biblical study or practical and applied theology. But ways can be found to strengthen the identity of this cohort and to provide formation along the lines set out in the Ministry Division guidelines and other recent literature.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend that enhanced special provision be made for candidates preparing for the Distinctive Diaconate.**

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| <p><b>The inspection team has Confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion C, Curriculum for formation and education.</b></p> |
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## SECTION THREE: MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

### D Community and Corporate Life

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

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

16. The SWMTC is characterised by a strong sense of corporate loyalty and mutual respect and support. However, these virtues are implied, rather than made explicit in the literature available to students. The Student Handbooks for IME 1-3 and Reader Training do not include a formal statement of how the Course understands its corporate life, how this is reflected in training for ministry and how it should impact on relations between students and one another and between students and staff (there is a policy document for staff that governs their relations with each other and with students in certain respects).

#### Recommendation 5

**We recommend that the Course prepare a statement of how it understands its corporate life and how in practical terms it aims to fulfil these aspirations and that this statement should become part of the Student Handbooks.**

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

17. There is substantial evidence that SWMTC is a very good place to work and study. There is a very strong ethos of mutual respect and acceptance of others, although, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, this can sometimes lead to a lack of challenge and can inhibit the development of a truly diverse, though mutually respectful community. At times the Course felt to the Inspectors more like a collection of individuals, exhibiting a high degree of mutual tolerance, than a fully engaged community where there is freedom to argue and debate difference on relevant aspects of gender, justice and community life.

18. The SWMTC operation runs smoothly and is well regarded by students; this is a fair reflection of the quality of teaching, organisation and pastoral support offered by the Course team. However, as we have already mentioned, at times this 'closeness' seems to restrict the opportunity for a frank and vigorous exchange of views with people who hold opposed viewpoints. The courtesy and good manners that we witnessed are vital, but they should not and need not inhibit a searching and critical academic dialogue. A supportive environment is not the same as cosiness. It might be constructive for the Course team to reflect on how opportunities for constructive theological debate and argument could be better integrated within the overall learning experience.

### **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend that the Course devise strategies to enable it to avoid blandness and lack of challenge in theological exploration and to add spice and stimulus to teaching and discussion.**

19. The present student body includes a deaf student. The Course has appropriate policies in place for working with those who are disabled. It works very well with the Dioceses and with the University to provide support for students and tutors; students can access the University of Exeter's support programme for disabled students and for those with learning difficulties. Information on this is found in the Student Handbook. Staff can, of course, only respond to the needs of disabled students once the disability is made known to them and it is made quite clear in the Student Handbook that it is the responsibility of the student to do that. However, it is the responsibility of the staff to ensure that visiting personnel (including Inspectors) are briefed about disabilities that may affect communication with students. The use of microphones in worship is an innovation in response to the presence of a person with known hearing loss; but the same facility needs to be brought into large-group discussions. With regard to some disability issues, the Course is constrained by its use of buildings over which it has little control (e.g. issues related to strip lighting in class rooms at Marjon) but the Course does all it can be expected to do under these circumstances.

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

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

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

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

20. Course documentation includes clear statements of policy regarding corporate worship and the expectations that are placed on students. The standard of worship, whether led by students or staff, that the Inspectors experienced was generally good. The chapel at the University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, which is the Course's base for residential weekends, is conducive to the spirit of worship that prevails. The Inspectors were particularly impressed by the times of corporate silence.
21. However, whether the range of worship provided by the Course adequately reflects 'the tradition of the wider church and the liturgical inheritance of faith' is debatable. The general tenor seems to be middle to low church. The Inspectors observed presidents at the Eucharist in cassock, surplice and stole, and in alb and stole. Full eucharistic vestments are worn at the annual Solemn Eucharist, when incense is also used, and at Easter School. The Course might reflect on whether the current liturgical regime is adequately representative of general practice in the Church of England, even in those rural parishes where there is little or no sense of 'churchmanship' identity. Although a majority of the students comes from evangelical parishes and many will go back to those parishes initially, they need to be prepared to serve in the Church of England at large and therefore to experience the liturgy as it is normally celebrated, in various styles, week by week.
22. The Inspectors attended an optional session for ordinands on 'Ceremonial for Beginners'. This was done well and the guidance on how to serve at the altar, etc., would have proved useful to both ordinands and deacons. We understand that a similar session, covering more 'priestly' matters, is also provided. (Readers cover similar ground in a different way, as appropriate to their role.)

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

23. There is a reasonable balance between authorised and experimental worship, including use of the Book of Common Prayer 1662. The Course has to walk a tightrope with regard to students' expectations and wishes – some would like more spontaneous, even charismatic, worship; others wish for a more 'catholic' liturgical style. The Course seems to have got the balance right in terms of types of services (if not with regard to how they are conducted or celebrated: see our comments under C.iii) and does well to stand firm against pressure from some students.

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

24. The Inspectors are satisfied that this aspect of training and formation is adequately met. Liturgy and sermon preparation are well taught. The staff reflect briefly together on student-led worship at the end of each weekend. Formal feedback is given in tutor groups by staff and students. Worship feedback forms have recently been introduced. However, it was apparent at a Reader training day that some Reader candidates, already in their second year of training, had little or no experience of participating in – let alone leading – Morning and Evening Prayer, and not all were clear that this is one of the canonical duties of Readers. This is probably not the fault of staff, who do provide induction into the office and work of a Reader, but it is clearly an area that needs to be reinforced. *See also comments on E.i.*

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

25. The chapel at the University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, is an ideal liturgical space.

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

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

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

26. The Course's overall ethos of mutual respect and acceptance of difference is a key factor in assessing this criterion. Candidates are encouraged to maintain their own distinctiveness of tradition, but we question whether they are challenged to explore it critically enough. Mutual acceptance is encouraged, but sometimes at the expense of real empathy. After one particular teaching session that Inspectors sat in on, a candidate expressed to them frustration that the views of one tradition had been allowed to dominate a debate, implying that the tutor could have been more assiduous in ensuring that both sides of the debate were heard and tested appropriately.
27. The tenor of the documentation for the SWMTC is ecumenical. That raises the question of how the component traditions are to be taught, received and celebrated in their strength, richness and diversity. That cannot be done by mainly focusing on common ground in an uncontentious way: the distinctive traditions also need to be expounded in their integrity. As noted above, there are currently two Methodist students and they have a Methodist tutor. Soon all students will be Anglican. At present the prevailing Anglican complexion of the Course is largely implicit; it hovers in the atmosphere and is taken as read; it seems to us that it is seldom brought out as an object of attention and critical reflection. We doubt whether most ordinands and potential Readers emerge from the Course with a coherent sense of the theological traditions that have made their Church what it is today and with a sense of belonging to the worldwide Anglican Communion. We live from a tradition and traditions are very specific, though variegated, and are embedded in practice, institutions and locality, as well as in texts. Reader training already includes an 'Anglican' thread: this needs to be taught in a rigorous and well-focused way. But the ordinands need to be explicitly inducted into the Anglican theological tradition in its diversity (Anglican spirituality already receives attention). This need not necessarily be done by laying on a separate module, given the constraints of time and curriculum, but it should infuse in an explicit way all that is taught. By way of example and to sharpen the requirement that students should be 'immersed in the traditions of their own church', the staff could ask themselves, How much do some students know about the life and thought of the great bishops, scholars, priests and poets that the Dioceses of Exeter and Truro (itself formerly part of Exeter) have given to the Church of England since the Reformation: e.g. John Jewel, Richard Hooker, Jonathan Trelawny and Samuel Walker of Truro (all of whom are forebears of Methodists as well

as Anglicans); Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Hawker of Morwenstow, Sabine Baring-Gould and others?

## **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that, at the point when all students are Anglican, the Anglican identity of the Course be made more prominent and that explicit attention be given in teaching to the Anglican theological tradition.**

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

28. SWMTC strongly encourages candidates to seek individual support in developing their spirituality through the use of spiritual directors. Their spiritual and ministerial development is monitored through the use of personal journals and we were encouraged to hear a tutor emphasising the benefits of regular and disciplined use of these journals in a group setting, effectively challenging one candidate's assertion that the journalling regime was too prescriptive. IME 1-3 students are provided with a Personal Tutor, in addition to their Staff Tutor, whose role is to 'encourage you to reflect upon your personal development, growth in personal awareness, relationships with others and spiritual life' and to 'explore the impact of the Course on your faith and understanding of the Church, vocation and ministry'. The Personal Tutor is appointed in consultation with the sponsoring church and the student. Readers in training are allocated a Journal Tutor who has a similar role.

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

29. The development of a corporate or communal spirituality is given less attention by the Course although we did see some areas of very good practice, for example the corporate silence for 30 minutes on the Sunday of each residential. Corporate worship occurs during the residential weekends at regular intervals but there is inevitably a sense in which this is a learning / training environment as well as an act of corporate prayer. Individual voices are loud in their spoken responses in liturgical worship; gesture and posture are sometimes very individualistic. There is insufficient sense that the community is praying as a body, with one heart and mind, and that students are, so to speak, listening to each other in



prayer. There were no prayers at the beginning or end of any teaching sessions at the weekends, although we did observe some moments of quiet at the beginning and end of a number of teaching sessions. The cafeteria style of meal times means that the grace sometimes feels perfunctory. There was no prayer at the staff review session at the end of the residential weekends and no explicit reflection on how the Holy Spirit might have been at work during the weekend. Each of these points may seem insignificant taken alone, but they do, the Inspectors believe, point to a culture which does not always sufficiently encourage or model corporate prayer, continuous prayerfulness and collective attentiveness to God as the norm.

### **Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that staff give careful consideration to practical ways in which the corporately and continuously prayerful character of the Course could be enhanced.**

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

- 30.** Our firm impression is that this is generally true of the staff. The students also expressed confidence that all of their tutors were people who had a living faith. Most of the tutors are engaged in some form of personal development and there was little evidence of seriously out of date theological thinking. The Course is keen to use outside speakers who model new ideas in ministry and church life, for example some pioneer / Fresh Expressions practitioners. The Reader course seemed, on the evidence we were able to see, to be particularly well led in this regard.

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

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

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

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

31. SWMTC faces a difficult dilemma: how to create a common framework for what is not one course but a range of courses, some of which are open only to Exeter Diocese (Reader training, IME 4-7, Exploring Christianity), some validated as 'national' training courses (IME 1-3), and some Open Access. In addition the Course must cater for a very wide range of academic abilities, emotional and spiritual competence, theological positions and churchmanship that they have little or no control over. SWMTC continues to evolve and grow: the Reader course was added to SWMTC's IME 1-3 programme in 2005 and since then SWMTC has expanded to incorporate IME 4-7 (2009), an open access evening course (2010) and a lay discipleship programme (2011). There is some sharing of teaching staff between the different streams of study (IME, Reader training, etc.), but there are also areas where the same subjects are being covered separately when there might be value in integrating them, e.g. an evaluation of ordinands' and Readers' mission contexts is done separately even though the underlying task appeared to be the same. We are conscious that timetabling two courses which have different residential patterns is a complex task but would encourage SWMTC to consider whether, in accordance with their stated aim of training candidates for Reader ministry alongside those for ordained ministry, more could be done to integrate the formational aspects of the two courses. This might include encouraging a more collaborative approach to providing worship, although, again, we appreciate the complexities inherent in this and we leave this to the judgement of the staff.

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

32. This aspect is generally very sound, but our experience of the evening classes and the weekends suggests that a weak link in the chain may be the connection (or not) between the academic approach to theology that

is characteristic of the open-access evening classes, on the one hand, and the more formational approach of the weekends. The Course needs to satisfy itself that students have not only been stimulated and challenged in their evening classes, but have also come away with a coherent sense of the theology or area of study in question, as a basis for what is done at the weekends. (See also our comments under C.iii.)

*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.*

33. The learning regime of the SWMTC is a mixed economy of formal and informal teaching with plenty of time allowed for questions and discussion. However, in a commendable attempt to honour student experience and opinion, there is an observable tendency on the part of some, though not all staff to throw things back to the students in buzz groups in almost a ritual way before they have been given much material to reflect on. On certain occasions when the Inspectors were present, approximately half of the session was devoted to discussion either in small groups or in plenary. Sometimes the quantum of input from the teacher was meagre and it seemed to us that the students were expected to make bricks without straw. Although good material is provided in the written modules, it would be wishful thinking to assume, in the case of most of the students on the Course, that the written resources can take the place of substantial live teaching input.
34. In some situations the discussion was slow and sleepy. There is a tendency, no doubt for the best of motives, for teaching to proceed at the pace of the slower students. The Course is not responsible for the academic calibre of the students it receives and takes great pains to help each one give of their best. But this may be sometimes at the cost of the brighter, faster students being held back.
35. Although the Course is designed to ensure that biblical exegesis is taken seriously, the Inspectors observed staff presentations on biblical themes when the element of exegesis was very thin. It is important that staff model to students appropriate methods of biblical interpretation and this necessarily involves scholarly attention to the text in its context.
36. The Inspectors believe that students on SWMTC enjoy a unique opportunity at this stage in their lives to receive a rich diet of theology and biblical interpretation. Most of them are unlikely to have this chance again.

The Inspectors therefore advise that the balance of input and discussion be reconsidered and adjusted.

## **Recommendation 9**

**We recommend that the staff reconsider the balance of input and discussion and, while ensuring that input is substantial and clear, endeavour to make discussion more brisk and economical.**

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

37. The written modules are generally interestingly written, clear and informative. The library of 9,000 volumes is a great asset and students and staff have access to Exeter University Library. The on-line resource via Moodle II is impressive and an enormous help to most students. The Inspectors understand that recently it has been greatly improved. Some students still find it difficult to navigate and the structure is sometimes counter-intuitive; e.g. the calendar of forthcoming events does not include the residential weekends with links to the programme and resources. So there seems to be scope for further refinement.

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

38. The quantity and quality of feedback to students is very good. Assignments are usually marked and returned promptly. As previously mentioned there are now feedback forms for student-led worship.

39. The Inspectors were surprised to find that some students, who had not answered the question set in their assignment or had misunderstood what was required and written something different, had emerged almost unscathed in their assessment. The markers had noted that the students had not addressed the assignment set, but they were sometimes awarded marks that would have been broadly appropriate if they had actually answered the question. This practice had passed through both internal examiners and the external examiner and had not been challenged by the University's academic assessment procedure. We are aware that to address the question directly is not the only relevant Intended Learning Outcome, but our concern relates to the relative weighting of various ILOs in this situation. In their pastoral and liturgical ministry clergy and Readers need to be able to

focus clearly on the task in hand and to perform it publicly without seriously misunderstanding what is required of them.

**The inspection 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 reflective practitioners in the context of the developing and diverse society in which they will minister.*

40. The Course employs a broad spectrum of learning structures and formational activities, ranging from formal lectures, through group discussions and role play to the practice of worship/preaching at residential weekends, at the student's home church and in placements. Appropriate feedback is provided at each stage. In addition, the students are required to keep a learning journal, the purpose of which is 'to help you to reflect in depth on your experience and learning during your training. Keeping the journal is in itself an act of theological reflection.'<sup>1</sup> The student's learning journal plays a key role in the integration of experience to form a theologically reflective practitioner and in the assessment of the extent to which this is being achieved. During the course, the students are exposed to, and required to reflect upon, the changing nature of society and culture and the implications for their ministry. It is a strength of the Course that it does indeed 'enable students to grow as theologically reflective practitioners' in a contemporary context. Notwithstanding our comments elsewhere, especially in Section F, about the enabling of critical reflection, we have confidence in the practical and pastoral dimensions of the Course.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Reader Training Handbook 2012-2013"

## SECTION FIVE: STAFF AND STUDENTS

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

### **I Teaching Staff**

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

41. There is suitable mix of gender and lay/ordained staff in SWMTC. The fact that the outgoing former Principal is a priest in the Anglican catholic tradition is a factor that the Trustees will wish to take into consideration in the selection of the next Principal (see also our comments in the Conclusion). The staff, whether ordained or lay, core or part-time, remunerated or voluntary, are models of committed and dedicated Christian ministry. There is a new Methodist tutor for the two Methodist students, who also teaches Methodism to Anglicans, and his involvement is an asset to the whole Course.

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| <b>The inspection team has Confidence in regard to Criterion I, teaching staff.</b> |
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### **J All staff**

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

42. There were no recent and no ongoing appointment processes of core staff during the period of the Inspection. The recent appointment of three new support staff appeared to have worked out well. The University and the two sponsoring dioceses will be involved in the process for appointing the next Principal, sometime this year.

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

43. Job descriptions, etc., are in place, except for voluntary staff, and reporting lines are clear. Voluntary staff should have a clear written agreement with the Course that includes a basic role description and mutual obligations and expectations, and that this should refer to the relevant policies.

## Recommendation 10

**We recommend that all voluntary staff should have a formal agreement with the Course regarding their role.**

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

44. Staff are encouraged to engage in continuing professional development. There is little time for this, especially for theological research, which is one of the objectives of the Course, during term. While a programme of sabbaticals is in place (and 1% of the core teaching budget is set aside to resource it), the Course needs to be vigilant and supportive in ensuring the development is ongoing between sabbaticals.

45. Annual reviews take place, including for part-time staff, and the Department of Theology is now involved in assisting with this.

46. Some members of staff have professional teaching qualifications. Of those who do not, including part-time staff, some have taken training opportunities in adult educational methods. Without prejudice to our overall confidence with regard to this criterion, we advise that the Course needs to ensure that all staff have acquired, by some means, appropriate skills in adult educational methods.

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

47. The Inspectors believe that, under normal circumstances, when there is a full staff complement, the quantity of staff resources should prove adequate to the demands of the Course, and that members of staff are appropriately qualified and gifted for their particular roles. In making future appointments to the core staff, the Trustees should look for outstanding academic calibre, as well as the other necessary qualities. The close link with the Department of Theology of the University of Exeter is a significant factor in attracting staff of suitable scholarly calibre to the South West.

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

## K Students

*Inspectors will examine procedures for student admission, welfare and support,*

*appraisal and discipline.*

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

48. SWMTC aims to provide an environment that is characterised by openness to, respect for, and care of others, including both staff and students. We are satisfied that it achieves this aim.

49. A comprehensive set of policies and procedures for welfare, complaints, discipline, assessment and reporting is set out in the relevant course and student Handbooks. Evidence from staff, students and sponsoring churches, coupled with the minutes of relevant committees, indicates that all these policies and procedures are faithfully applied.

*K.ii The institution's decision-making structure should enable students to take an appropriate part in its governance, provided that students take responsibility for their participation.*

50. The students are appropriately involved in the running of the Course. There is an active staff-student liaison committee, which is taken very seriously by both sides. Students provide feed-back on course elements and have reported to us that the response of staff is very positive. Although there is no student representative on the Board of Trustees, student representatives attend meetings of the Board for relevant agenda items and are also present for the unreserved business of the Board of Studies.

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



## SECTION SIX: GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

### L Organisation and governance

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

- L.i The institution should have clear financial, administrative and management structures and an up-to-date governing document, and the governing body should be constituted in line with it.*
51. The Board of Trustees has recently been reconstituted to ensure that all Trustees are operative members with particular relevant gifts, skills and experience to bring to the oversight of the Course. The Board is effectively chaired. The Finance Committee is also suitably made up and competently chaired and is steadily moving to more rigorous and effective management of the resources. New administrative arrangements have recently been introduced, with several part-time specialists replacing one omniscient full time administrator: these recent dispositions augur well for the efficient administration of the Course.
- L.ii There should be evidence that the governing body recognises and discharges its role and legal duties in respect of stewardship of the assets; setting and safeguarding the vision, values and reputation of the institution; operational and staff oversight and support.*
52. From attendance at meetings of the Board of Trustees and of the Finance Committee, from the minutes of these bodies and from interviews and conversations, the Inspectors are satisfied that all these requirements are met.
- 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.*
53. The Board of Trustees has a suitable mix of skills and experience, supplemented by two co-opted Advisers. Major stakeholders are represented on the Board. The Inspectors have seen ample evidence of a

well-resourced, thorough process of induction when the current Board was constituted in 2011.

- L.iv There should be evidence of a structured contribution made by all community members - teaching staff, ancillary staff, the student body and individuals - so that they play an effective role in decision-making.*
54. As noted above, there is student participation in deliberation and decision-making. Appointments to the administrative staff structure are too recent to know what role these persons might play in decision-making, but administrative staff have the opportunity to contribute to discussions at meetings of the various boards and committees at which they are present to give support, and our impression is that relations between the core staff and the administrative staff are conducive to this involvement.
- L.v The institution's audited annual reports should be produced in good time and filed with the Charity Commission/Companies House as appropriate.*
55. The audited accounts are efficiently produced and filed with both of these bodies.

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| <p><b>The inspection team has Confidence with regard to Criterion L<br/>Organisation and governance.</b></p> |
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## **M Business planning and risk management**

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

- M.1 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.*
56. The draft Strategy document and the Business Plan have been seen by the Inspectors and are judged to be generally suitable for their purpose, given the caveat under 'risk assessment' below.
- M.ii Annual budgets should be prepared in line with the business plan.*
57. Annual budgets are drawn up in line with the Business Plan and in the light of running income and expenditure statements. The financial position

is reviewed at regular meetings of the Finance Committee and reported to the Trustees .

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

58. There is a risk assessment process and a schedule of risks and actions to meet them, together with the allocation of responsibilities in relation to those actions. A SWOT Analysis appended to the Business Plan recognises several areas of vulnerability: the limited customer base and dependence on the regional market; dependence on the policies of the two sponsoring dioceses; some uncertainty about future contract income; low volume on some programme units (small cohorts); and geographical constraints. The response to these areas of vulnerability, in the risk assessment schedule, is pro-actively to cultivate the various stakeholders and to promote or market more effectively what the Course offers.
59. However, given the range of uncertainties currently confronting Higher Education and ordination training, the Inspectors were not entirely clear about how SWMTC would cope or perhaps survive if the flow of student numbers declined markedly. The Trustees need to be aware of what the baseline figure is for the Course to remain viable and sustainable. The staff are currently working on projections regarding possible scenarios arising from the Common Awards scheme. A detailed consideration of these matters should be added to the draft Strategic Plan (2012-2017). Timely awareness of these sorts of risk would ensure that the Course team is forewarned and forearmed, particularly during this prolonged period of austerity. Well-resourced and inspiring vocations work in the two dioceses, including their universities, is critical. These considerations do not adversely affect our overall verdict with regard to this criterion.

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

## **N Financial policies**

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

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

60. The Course's financial assets appear to be competently managed. Unrestricted funds grew by approximately 25% in the year to 31 August 2011, compared to a small loss in the previous year. The policy is to hold in the general reserve sufficient funds to cover three months of normal working expenditure. There is a cashflow forecast for 2012-13. The Course has reasonable reserves and a decision has been taken to run at a loss for three years from 2013 while strategic changes and administrative reforms are consolidated (the precise figures are given in the Business Plan). This is a fairly high risk strategy and will need to be monitored closely to ensure that slippage against current projections does not occur.
- N.ii Management accounts showing performance against budget should be produced at least quarterly and reviewed regularly by the trustees.*
61. The Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees now receives a summary of income and expenditure at its meetings. It scrutinises the figures and initiates appropriate action where needed. In future the annual accounts and the summary will comply with the same template.
- N.iii The institution should consider its sources of income and have strategies to identify and raise the funds it needs.*
62. The Board, assisted and advised by its Finance Committee has a grip on its sources of income and ways of raising the required funds. Proposed areas of development are indicated in the Business Plan SWMTC has received generous subventions from the St Luke's College Foundation in recent years.
- N.iv The institution should have adequate financial controls aimed at minimising waste and loss, and should be appropriately advised on tax-efficiency.*
63. A representative of the firm of auditors attends meetings of the Finance Committee to advise on these matters. The Committee, armed with running income and expenditure and cash-flow figures is vigilant with regard to day to day expenditure.

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

**O Statutory and operating policies**

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

64. This requirement is fully complied with.

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

65. This is properly taken care of and featured at a meeting of the Finance Committee attended by the Senior Inspector.

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| <p><b>The inspection team has Confidence with regard to Criterion O, Statutory and operating policies.</b></p> |
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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.*

66. Formal teaching takes place at the University of Exeter, the University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, and Diocesan House, Truro, all of which are suitable. For residential weekends the Course uses the Future Inn, Plymouth which offers cost-effective, comfortable bed and breakfast. This small luxury honours the time and effort expended by the students who are all self-supporting and also the voluntary ministry of some of the tutors and all of the chaplains on the course and is to be applauded. Easter School is held at Godolphin School, Salisbury, which is suitable in many ways, except for the sleeping accommodation and ablutions which are not up to modern standards of convenience and comfort, but this aspect is judged to be outweighed by the advantages of the other facilities and the location.

67. SWMTC has one shared ownership agreement which will soon cease. Otherwise, staff are either provided with accommodation through another part of their work or live in their own homes and receive an accommodation allowance. The Course contributes to the accommodation for the Truro-based tutor. It does not provide any student accommodation. Thus its commitments with regard to property are minimal – and prudent.

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

68. SWMTC uses a variety of spaces for its teaching and all that we saw were fit for purpose. Disabled access is provided in all venues.
69. There are, on the whole, good relationships between the accommodation providers and the Course although the Inspectors did see some evidence of the communication difficulties that the Course sometimes experiences. However, the presence of the Course administrator on the residential weekends clearly helps to manage the relationship between the Course and Marjon.

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

## **CONCLUSION**

The Inspection team believes that the SWMTC has many strengths. The areas where improvement is necessary can be readily addressed – given clear leadership, adequate resources and stability (which is asking quite a lot). We believe that the Course has the potential to provide non-residential ordination and Reader training at a high level of excellence, from which candidates, whatever their abilities and aptitudes, can benefit to the maximum. There is currently a move towards greater rigour and focus in both main areas of training: the Inspectors trust that their report will give added impetus to this process.

As we have said, the SWMTC is in a transitional phase in several respects. Not the least of these is the need to appoint a new Principal. So our final observation is that the appointment of a new Principal will be of strategic importance for the future of the Course: someone with academic credibility, teaching skills, spiritual discernment, pastoral instincts, collaborative and supportive methods, leadership qualities and political astuteness will be needed!

**Overall outcome: The inspection team has Confidence with qualifications in the South West Ministerial Training Course for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry.**

## **LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that the Course review its use of external speakers and presenters with a view to improving the quality of input and drawing on the wealth of artistic, literary and musical talent to be found in the South West, subject always to a clear sense of the desirable outcomes, detailed briefing of such persons, and disciplined timekeeping.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend that the SWMTC seek to make the overall theological and missiological framework of the course more explicit and position such a rationale in a strategic place in its documentation and on its website.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that the Course review the issue of failure, in relation both to specific pieces of work and overall, and take steps to ensure that no perception that the SWMTC is a 'non-fail' Course could arise in the minds of staff, students and stakeholders.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend that enhanced special provision be made for candidates preparing for the Distinctive Diaconate.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**We recommend that the Course prepare a statement of how it understands its corporate life and how in practical terms it aims to fulfil these aspirations and that this statement should become part of the Student Handbooks.**

### **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend that the Course devise strategies to enable it to avoid blandness and lack of challenge in theological exploration and to add spice and stimulus to teaching and discussion.**

### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that, at the point when all students are Anglican, the Anglican identity of the Course be made more prominent and that explicit attention be given in teaching to the Anglican theological tradition.**

**Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that staff give careful consideration to practical ways in which the corporately and continuously prayerful character of the Course could be enhanced.**

**Recommendation 9**

**We recommend that the staff reconsider the balance of input and discussion and, while ensuring that input is substantial and clear, endeavour to make discussion more brisk and economical.**

**Recommendation 10**

**We recommend that all voluntary staff should have a formal agreement with the Course regarding their role.**