



THE CHURCH
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Ministry Council

Follow-up Inspection Report

Yorkshire Ministry Course
and Yorkshire Regional
Training Partnership

December 2012

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**YORKSHIRE MINISTRY COURSE
and
YORKSHIRE REGIONAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP**

**Follow-up Report of the Senior Inspector on Response and Action Plan
from the Yorkshire Ministry Course and the Yorkshire Regional Training
Partnership to the Recommendations of the January - March 2011 Report
of the Inspectors**

November 2012

INTRODUCTION

In carrying out the follow up to the Inspection of the Yorkshire Ministry Course (YMC) and the Yorkshire Regional Training Partnership (YRTP), the Senior Inspector had the institution's original action plan together with a record of progress made and the accompanying evidence. He met with the YRTP coordinator and one of the Diocesan Directors of Training; he spent a day in the YMC Office in Mirfield meeting with the Principal and all the other members of the core teaching team individually; and he received comments by email from both the outgoing and incoming Chairs of the Council.

The eighteen months since the Inspection in March 2011 have seen very considerable change. As with all theological education institutions sponsored by the Ministry Division, YMC has been responding to the proposal for the establishment of a system of common awards. Alongside this has been the development of the St Barnabas Theological Centre bringing together the churches of St Thomas, Crookes, Sheffield, St Michael-le-Belfry, York and St George's, Leeds, into a consortium to offer a full-time course for ordinands. Both these external developments together with the setting up of the full-time contextual pathway for which YMC received permission at the time of the inspection and which began under John Wigfield's care in September 2012, have made extra demands on staff in both YMC and YRTP.

In relation to the common awards process, the YRTP is proving a useful framework to enable a coherent approach, involving both the College of the Resurrection (COR) and YMC, and the dioceses. Negotiations are taking into account the desire not to lose entirely the relationship which has been built up only recently with the University of Sheffield (UoS), nor the more long standing one with York St John University (YSJU) especially in the light of their commitment to serving the churches in the area. It is clear that the role of the YRTP Coordinator has been very important in facilitating the various discussions.

Nevertheless responding to the implications of the common awards has resulted in an increasing pressure on the YMC staff and financially on the Course in the

absence of extra funding in this transition period. Three members of staff are directly involved in working up new modules. Time taken out of direct Course work has the obvious impact on the staff work-load. Some of the expense of travelling to meetings in London still comes out of the already tight YMC budget, although Ministry Division now part-subsidises this.

The Inspection report noted in § 28 “a growing tendency for some large evangelical churches in the county to look to external providers such as St Mellitus, which they believe offers a training of a character that resonates with their approach to mission and church life. This provides a sharp challenge to the YRTP’s and YMC’s effectiveness in responding to the needs of all the local churches, and their aspiration and capacity to value and work with diversity”. During the inspection we were aware that the Principal and the Director of Pioneering Ministries were involved in a number of visits and discussions to try to meet this challenge. The Principal and Staff expressed disappointment that unfortunately their efforts in this direction had not borne the fruit for which they had hoped. The coming of the St Barnabas Theological Centre (SBTC), also offering a full-time pathway for ordinands, means that YMC has had to review its own plans for the full-time contextual pathway and to consider how best to work alongside SBTC.

Whilst there is a welcome recognition that the agreement for SBTC candidates for ordination will be officially YMC ordinands, and that this should enable the hoped for mutual learning across traditions, enriching the YMC experience as much as that of the SBTC, there is some anxiety about how this will work out in practice, and the extra demands on both partners if the most benefit is to be gained from the relationship. A memorandum of understanding is being drawn up on this issue.

The result of some of these external pressures of change and uncertainty has been to raise questions about what the wider church now wants of its theological education institutions, and about overall policy direction. The staff expressed concern about the nature of some of the decisions they were having to make about future directions for YMC which too often seemed to be reactive, lacking the space and time to think clearly and creatively. It is not a situation conducive to wise decision-making.

The YMC and the wider YRTP are to be commended for the way in which they have approached the various changes and challenges over this last eighteen months and in seeking creative ways forward for all parties, as well as responding positively to the specific recommendations in the Report.

The recommendations from the Report (2011) are printed below in **bold** type. Action points planned and progressed are *italicised*. The Senior Inspector’s comments appear in normal type, each preceded by an evaluation in **bold**, and are drawn together in the conclusion.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Annual Meeting of the YRTP consider how to give leadership in conceptualising and articulating the further development of its vision for the future mission and ministry of the churches in Yorkshire.

Actions planned and progressed. As planned the recommendation was taken to the Annual Meeting of YRTP on September 27th 2011. A discussion was held facilitated by Canon Hazel Whitehead. Members considered the report as a whole but focused particularly on the Governance of the RTP. Specific points noted included: the value of networking, collaborative work and sharing of resources, and developing good working relationships. There was recognition of the need for a clear understanding of the roles of the practitioner groups, the Co-ordinating Group and the Annual Meeting. Similarly the relationship to, and the value of, the YRTP for the Covenanting Partners needed to be considered. The location of power and decision making was not always clear. It was agreed that the Co-ordinating Group set up a working party to review the Governance and Management section of the Covenant.

The fruits of the review were accepted by the Annual Meeting in 2012. The roles of the three main groupings in the structure are clearly set out. The Annual Meeting sets the general directions and oversees the work of the RTP, the Co-ordinating Group develops detailed policy in line with the general directions and coordinates the Practitioner Groups, who implement the policy and address key issues back to the Co-ordinating Group.

It has also been proposed that there should be a quinquennial review of the Covenant and YRTP in 2013.

Satisfactory. These new constitutional arrangements and the proposed quinquennial review will give a framework and an impetus to developing a coherent vision for the next period of the YRTP's life and the place of various training initiatives including YMC, CoR, SBTC, IME 4-7, and Reader training, within it.

Reference has already been made in the introduction to the role of the YRTP, through the Co-ordinator, in enabling the various changes in the scene to be navigated creatively by partners. He feels that the common awards process could be an opportunity to strengthen the YRTP, providing a hub point in the wider region for some devolved management of the Course from Durham University. This joined up approach, involving CoR, YMC, SBTC, and the dioceses, against the background of the present relationships with UoS and YSJU, is the one being taken in the negotiations.

In the past year the Coordinator has been involved in a number of important developments; in negotiating a good financial deal with YSJU for students on the

current Foundation Degree; alongside arranging the attendance at a recent meeting of the Co-ordinating Group of the Director of the St Barnabas Theological Centre, he has been part of the discussions surrounding the establishment of the SBTC, two Methodist colleagues have presented the report "Fruitful Field" at the Co-ordinating Group and the Co-ordinator feels that it will be important to find ways for the YRTP to find ways of drawing effectively on the additional resource of the greater number of training officers proposed in the report; the Co-ordinator has also joined the sub-group on Ministry on the Dioceses Commission for the Yorkshire dioceses to enable consideration of the impact of the scheme on the YRTP and vice versa.

Reference was made in the Inspection Report to the risks involved in the loss of HEFCE funding for the coherence of the YRTP. Addressing this issue has in fact consolidated the partnership. There is a determination to continue to collaborate, demonstrated by the continued commitment for the foreseeable future to maintain the relationship with YSJU. Discussions concerning the impact of the common awards on relationships with YSJU are continuing, including questions about the extent to which the common awards will eventually embrace all Reader candidates, and SBTC students, and if things move in this direction how the transition is best handled.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that YMC review the theological rationale to reflect the changes in its self-understanding since its inception and to ensure a greater consistency throughout with the theology and ecclesiology of *missio Dei*.

Actions planned and progressed. Update what is already written to bring to a staff meeting early in the Autumn Term 2011. A draft will then go to the Formation Committee on 24th January 2012 for discussion and decision, with a final draft coming back to the Committee in May. This process resulted in some substantial revisions which are now included in the updated curriculum documentation.

Satisfactory. See comments under the first part of the next recommendation.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that YMC consider how:

- (i) the educational rationale could be helpfully developed and articulated more fully, adding to the underpinning of the practice in relation to contextual learning and pioneer ministry.**

Actions planned and progressed. Expand Freire's insights for YMC. Make connections with the Contextual Learning Pathway, with the context of being in Yorkshire and the Mirfield site, and with Placements. This process resulted in some substantial revisions which are now included in the curriculum documentation.

Most Satisfactory. Comprehensive revisions and additions have been made throughout the first part of the curriculum validation document (CVD) which constitute an excellent response to the inspectors' comments and the recommendations 2 and 3(i). YMC's overall vision is set out in a new mission statement at the end of section (i) of the CVD, with reference throughout the section to the theological and educational understandings on which it is based. There is a much greater explicit coherence throughout with the theology and ecclesiology of missio Dei. The references to Paulo Freire have been greatly expanded, separating out his insights from those similar but different approaches by David A Kolb. The elaboration of Freire's thinking has been well related to YMC's encouragement to ordinands to reflect critically on the prevailing social, economic, political and cultural constructs affecting people's lives, and the essentially transformative thrust of the Course's educational approach. A substantial addition under section (i) c emphasises the connections between the Yorkshire context, YMC as a learning community, the worship of the community and ministerial formation, with a quotation from the new ministerial formation policy, and the various ways in which students interact with one another, through YMC groups, and through teaching cohorts and residential periods. All this articulates more clearly the essentially relational character of the Course and its approach as the inspectors observed in §66.

(ii) within the curriculum the skills of stimulating and evoking learning in others can be modelled.

Actions planned and progressed:

- *Modelling of the staff's own learning to others in class – conversations – website – Facebook.*
- *Encouraging one another to do research and reading – termly reading group (instead of a staff meeting) and academic staff to aim to take one day a month as a reading day with the aim of developing evident research-led teaching.*
- *Induction Day to include a session on what it means to be part of a Learning Community.*

Satisfactory. The commitment to achieve this objective was evident in many of the teaching sessions we observed during the inspection, and in the conversations with staff in the follow-up process. Staff have been encouraged to diary in one clear reading day a month. Annual staff appraisal now includes a question on reading. The pressure on staff meeting agendas over the last year

referred to in the introduction has resulted in the proposed staff reading morning taking place only once.

An introductory session on being part of a learning community is now part of the Induction Day programme.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that YMC consider how best to develop the particular opportunities of the full-time contextual pathway, with particular attention to:

- (i) the use of the contextual elements;**
- (ii) the communication with and training of the supervisors;**
- (iii) theological reflection within the pathway and on its wider process.**

Actions planned and progressed. The following process was proposed:

- 1. Advertising of the Contextual Pathway. To DDO's nationally (especially at consultation in October 2011), Yorkshire Bishops and strategic churches in Yorkshire. Development of a leaflet and letter advertising the route.*
- 2. Establish a Core Group. Convene a Core Group of local experienced pioneer practitioners and mentors. It is envisaged that the Contextual Pathway will start (single figures) in September 2012, supervised by this Core Group.*
- 3. Consultation. With the Formation Committee, church Army, the Fresh Expressions sub-group of the YRTP and those with responsibilities in the Yorkshire dioceses for developing pioneering re potential placement context and approach to training.*
- 4. Supervisor's job descriptions. Drawing on a variety of sources:- consultation, current YMC placement supervisor and Personal Tutor Handbooks, YRTP training for OPM incumbents, and documentation from other training institutions with a similar pathway already established.*

All to be taken to the January Staffing committee 2012 for discussion and decision.

- 5. Training of Potential Supervisors. Make use of YRTP training event for those supervising OPM curates (Feb 2012) – sessions pertinent to supervisors of ordinands on the YMC Contextual Pathway. Further training will be given, focusing specifically on training supervisors in the YMC ethos on pioneering.*
- 6. Continuing development of Supervisors. Through meetings with the Director of Pioneering Ministries (DPM) and training sessions. Termly discussions with other practitioners and supervisors, pioneer ordinands and*

DPM through “Mission in Practice” sessions. Thus building up a learning community. New supervisors may be incorporated in the Core Group and these discussions.

7. *Theological reflection within the pathway and on its wider process. A key element in the course will be a regular “Mission in Practice” session. A constant throughout the three terms and facilitated by the DPM. Ordinands will reflect on and relate theology to Pioneering case studies using published material, or from an invited practitioner, or from the context of an ordinand.*

Satisfactory. All these actions have been taken, wide advertising supported by personal visits, a core group established and functioning, a final draft of the supervisors’ job description being worked on. The major disappointment is that only one student began the course in September 2012.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the staff and students work together to articulate a more comprehensive statement on community and corporate life.

Actions planned and progressed. An initial discussion at the July 2012 Staff residential – discussions to be written up for an autumn staff meeting. YMC Groups to discuss at January 2012 weekend using a staff paper and to feed back to the staff meeting. Agenda item on the Formation Committee in May 2012 using a paper based on staff and student discussions. The results of this process has been included in the updated curriculum documentation.

Satisfactory. The substantial revisions and additions to the curriculum validation document referred to under recommendation 3 also embrace this aspect of YMC’s life. Staff and students are to be commended for the work done on this issue and on the way in which it has been integrated within the theological and educational thinking which underpins the Course.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that:

- (i) **the staff consider how the aspiration for ‘worship to be seen as an essential part of learning and training for public ministry’ can be more strongly expressed and communicated;**
- (ii) **the member of staff with responsibility for the oversight of the residential weekends actively supports the YMC Group in the pre-planning stage for the weekend’s worship.**

Actions planned and progressed. The way in which worship is understood as an expression of community life will be emphasised more in YMC's documentation (2011 Worship Guidelines and 2012 Student Handbook). At the start of a new academic year a member of staff will model what is expected in relation to prayers before weekday sessions, encouraging students to be there in good time. More information about what is expected will also be included in the 2011 Worship Guidelines. A discussion was held at the Formation Committee in January 2012, led by and drawing on the expertise of the Rev Dr Ben Gordon Taylor (CoR). Staff now lead the worship at the first weekend of the autumn term to model good practice. Students timetabled to lead worship at a weekend are linked to a staff member for consultation and feedback. The Worship Handbook has been updated in the light of the changes.

Satisfactory. Alongside the actions recorded above, the *Ministry in the Church* module has been reorganised. Previously taking place over 10 evenings in the January to Easter period, it now runs from September through to June. This allows it to draw together a whole range of issues in theological reflection, preparation for ordained ministry, placements and mission. Before placements begin there is a day in September on what is theology in YMC, what is worship, what will their placements be about, and the ordinal. This sets a framework of coherence between the different elements for the year ahead.

Those leading worship at weekends receive verbal and written feedback. A written copy of the group feedback goes into their file for them and their tutor to see.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the staff review the YMC Groups to clarify the various roles they are expected to play, and ensure that adequate time is available to fulfil them.

Actions planned and progressed. An initial discussion took place at the July 2011 Staff Residential. It identified a number of aspects of the role of the YMC Groups:

- *Formation: discipleship for leadership and future public role; personal and ministerial.*
- *Prayer and discussion*
- *Reflective space on topics of the weekend/spirituality*
- *Peer support – safe and confidential discussion*
- *Development of collaborative working skills .e.g the planning of worship*
- *Experience of living with and valuing difference*
- *A smaller community within the larger community – to encourage belonging and friendship*

- *Guided groups – some allocated tasks and topics e.g. forum for discussion of self-assessments and of spirituality topics.*

It was also proposed that there should be a change of timing of YMC groups at weekends to give more space, i.e. 9.15 – 10.45 allowing for an extra 15 minutes; this to be introduced to the new intake at the first weekend.

These proposals have been put into effect, the Student Handbook being updated and staff visiting the first meeting of YMC groups for new students to explain their role.

Satisfactory. All these actions will give more shape to the task of the groups and help students to see how these fit into the whole programme. It has to be recognised that many of the aspects of the groups' purpose identified in the bulleted list are also fulfilled in all kinds of other ways within the Course. But the groups might provide an opportunity for students to reflect on the extent to which these matters are being addressed effectively within the course as a whole including the life of their group. It is very important that the groups set their own agenda, but it might help them to maintain a clear shape and focus if from time to time they were asked to reflect on whether they were concentrating on some of the identified roles at the expense of others, or whether other issues are receiving adequate attention elsewhere. The time given to the groups is necessarily short but they are a very important instrument within the Course, as identified by many students at the time of the inspection, and their effectiveness may need monitoring from time to time, especially by the group themselves.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that:

- (i) a clear statement about how the Course seeks to integrate theory and practice is included in the Student Handbook;**
- (ii) the two placement handbooks are included in the Student Handbook.**

Actions planned and progressed. It was proposed that recommendation 8 (i) should go on the Staff meeting and Formation Committee agendas in the autumn term 2011. This has resulted in additions to the updated Student Handbook.

In respect of recommendation 8 (ii) it was suggested that a note should be included in future Student Handbooks as to the location of the Placement Handbooks on the Intranet; paper copies to be given out at the appropriate time by the Director of Pastoral Studies. It was decided however that including the placement handbooks in the student handbook was considered unnecessary and that it was better not to overwhelm students with too much information at the

beginning of term; better to give them out when needed whilst making it clear where they are available on the Intranet.

Satisfactory. The new First Year Pastoral Studies Handbook provides a very good outline of the way in which at YMC 'Pastoral Studies is thoroughly integrated into the whole course rather than being regarded as a distinct aspect alongside academic study and personal and spiritual growth", providing "the unifying core of the Course". It sets out the three key aspects of Formation for Ordained Ministry, Working with Difference, and Theological Reflection and how those are addressed through different elements during the year.

A statement drawing on some of the key paragraphs in this new Handbook, giving students an integrative framework through which to approach the academic modules and the other aspects of the Course, has now been included in the updated Student Handbook. This should help students from the outset to appreciate the integrative approach of YMC set out so well in the curriculum validation document, in its commitment to listening and responding in the light of the missio Dei, and its educational expression illustrated by the Pastoral Cycle diagram where it is clear how the various elements in the course contribute alongside one another at every stage.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the Director of Pastoral Studies ensures greater clarity about the purpose of the second year placement expectations and the nature of the non-church setting.

Actions planned and progressed. It was proposed that the Director of Pastoral Studies will introduce the second placement at the Residential in January and that more information will be given in the relevant placement handbook. Action has been taken in both these respects.

Satisfactory. The revised second year Placement Handbook for the Spring Semester 2013 sets out clearly the purpose of the placement both with regard to the UoS Church and World module – helping students 'to reflect critically on the interrelationship of Christian theology and the practice of Christian ministry within our society' – and the more formational to reflect 'on ways in which the presence of Christ is discerned and witnessed to in the wider world'. Examples of the variety of possibilities are given.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the Council put in place a formal policy setting out and detailing adequate provision for Continuing Professional Development.

Actions planned and progressed. Initial discussions were planned and have taken place at the Staffing Committee. At the May 2012 Staffing Committee it was agreed to change clause 6.4 in the current Staff Handbook to reflect the practice, particularly to include assessment and evaluation. It was also agreed to produce a policy document. Additionally, job descriptions of all staff will include a clause requiring them to partake in staff development, which will be identified from the annual staff appraisal. A policy document will be produced in due course to be taken to the Council.

Satisfactory and ongoing. While discussions have taken place, it is acknowledged that there is still more work to be done. It is clear that the Staffing Committee have had a full agenda which has delayed consideration of this issue. The pressures referred to in the introduction have played their part in that, as also has the departure of the Tutor of Anglican Studies, which has opened up a debate about what kind of appointment is now needed to replace him, not least against the background of the changes and uncertainties.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the Council develop the Risk Assessment and Management Strategy as a dynamic document subject to quarterly critical review.

Actions planned and progressed. It was proposed that there should be an initial discussion at Finance and Standing Committees with the result to be taken to the Council once completed. The Risk assessment document has been revised and updated. It will be an agenda item at every Finance and Council meeting.

Satisfactory. The Senior Inspector had sight of the Risk Assessment register. It is comprehensive and there is a commitment to see it as a 'live' document which is now reviewed termly.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the Council begin the process of preparing a formal business plan, identifying the aims and objectives of the institution over the short and medium term, taking close account of the amended Risk Assessment and Management Strategy.

Actions planned and progressed. It was proposed that there should be an initial discussion at the Finance Committee on May 23rd 2011 with the item on the agenda for the September and , if necessary, the January 2012 meeting of both the Finance and Standing Committees with the results being taken to the Council in November 2011 or March 2012.

Satisfactory and ongoing. As recorded in the comments following Recommendation 3 (i) a new Vision Statement for YMC has been developed. This was approved at the Council meeting in June 2012.

The pressures referred to in the introduction, especially the process towards common awards and the development of the SBTC, with the accompanying uncertainties, have made it much more difficult than was the case at the time of the inspection to set out the aims and objectives of the institution over the short and medium term. At the time of the inspection YMC was beginning to establish its own ethos out of the inheritance of the Northern Ordination Course, now articulated in the new vision and mission statement. It was clear that YMC was part of a wider network under the umbrella of the YRTP which gave it connections to the CoR, the Diocesan Schools of Ministry and Reader training, and a regional IME 4-7 programme. It had recently formed the new arrangement with the University of Sheffield, whilst retaining the relationship with YSJU and the Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry. It had just received permission to develop an ambitious full-time contextual pathway to start in September 2012 and was working hard to promote it in the Yorkshire dioceses. Against that background and in the context of the YRTP the bones of a business plan were beginning to take coherent shape. The Inspectors warmly commended the progress and ambition of the YMC and their main recommendations were concerned to encourage the Course, and the YRTP, to build on the foundations laid, to clarify elements of their theological and educational approaches to articulate them more strongly, and then to express that in a business plan which might deliver their aspirations. The changes in the scene which have taken place in the last eighteen months have made this a more substantial task than was envisaged in March 2010. In the light of that it is understandable that the actions set out in the original action plan have not moved as quickly as was hoped. But the commitment to make progress is clear, indeed becomes even more necessary in the changing circumstances.

Conclusion

As set out in the introduction the last eighteen months have been a time of very considerable change for YMC and YRTP which is still ongoing. In the change there have been pressures and disappointments; pressures arising from responding to the common awards process, and to the establishment of the St Barnabas Theological Centre as another theological education provider in Yorkshire; disappointment at not being able to develop the innovative full-time contextual pathway in a way which would meet the needs of all the churches in Yorkshire. In spite of all the pressures and uncertainties, both YRTP and YMC are to be commended for their response to the vast majority of the inspectors' recommendations.

The YRTP has responded very effectively to the changes, seeking to use its umbrella role to provide a coherent approach to the common awards process, involving the various partners in the region. It has also sought to embrace the SBTC as a new partner.

The YMC has made an excellent response to the inspectors' plea to articulate more fully aspects of the curriculum validation document which define the specific ethos of the Course. It has also acted very effectively on those recommendations which were concerned with the more operational aspects of the Course, in ways of achieving the aspiration for 'worship to be seen as an essential part of learning and training for public ministry', in articulating more clearly the role of the YMC groups and the understanding of YMC community and corporate life, and in steps taken in Pastoral Studies to appreciate the integration of work in that area with the other elements in the Course.

Understandably given the external pressures it is on those recommendations which relate more to strategic thinking about the future where there is more work to be done. In spite of those distracting influences, YMC is to be commended for the fact that so much has been achieved in relation to those recommendations concerned to improve the student experience on the Course. In spite also of the disappointment about the slow start of the new full-time contextual pathway, there is real commitment to develop and promote its well developed distinctive approach.

R LANGLEY
The Ven Bob Langley, Senior Inspector
31 January 2013