

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Report

Coventry Diocesan Reader Training Course

March 2018

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GLOSSARY

ASE	Annual Self Evaluation
BCDM	Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship and Mission
CMD	Continuing Ministerial Development
Cert HE	Certificate of Higher Education
CWDP	Common Worship Daily Prayer
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
PER	Periodic External Review
PfA	Preparing for Admission (Reader-training phase of study)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TEI	Theological Education Institution
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

LIST OF REVIEWERS

Revd Dr Phillip Tovey Deputy Warden of Readers, acting Principal Oxford Ministry Pathway and Director Postgraduate Curates Course, Diocese of Oxford.

Canon Christine McMullen Former Vice-Principal of the Yorkshire Ministry Course, Tutor on the Derby Diocese Reader training course, Reader, and Chair of Derby Diocesan House of Laity

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THE PERIODIC EXTERNAL REVIEW FRAMEWORK

For ministerial training institutions that offer the church's Durham University-validated Common Awards programmes (as most do), Periodic External Review is a joint process that meets the quality assurance needs both of the sponsoring churches and of Durham University, and enables the church to conduct an external quality check of each TEI against national standards and expectations for ministerial training and formation.

On behalf of the sponsoring churches, review teams are asked to assess the fitness for purpose of the training institution for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry and to make recommendations for the enhancement of the life and work of the institution. Within the structures of the Church of England, this report has been prepared for the House of Bishops acting through the Ministry Council.

For Durham University, the PER process is the university's mechanism for gathering and evaluating information from multiple sources to inform decision-making on: (i) renewal of the Common Awards partnerships with approved Theological Education Institutions (TEIs); (ii) revalidation of Common Awards programmes that have been approved for delivery within TEIs.

Review teams are appointed both by Ministry Division from a pool of reviewers nominated by bishops and TEIs and by Durham University's Common Awards office. The latter will take lead responsibility for PER criteria E and F covering teaching and learning infrastructure and delivery. In effect, this part of the review represents academic revalidation by Durham as the church's partner university. But evidence-gathering is shared and judgements are owned by the review team as a whole.

Recommendations and Commendations

PER reports will include **Recommendations** which may either be developmental, naming issues that the reviewers consider the TEI needs to address, or they may urge the enhance of practice that is already good. They will also include **Commendations**, naming instances of good practice that the reviewers specially wish to highlight. The reviewers' assessment of the TEI is expressed as much through the balance of Recommendations and Commendations in their report as through its criterion-based judgements.

Criterion-based judgements

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

Confidence

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

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

Confidence with qualifications

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

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

No confidence

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

Criterion 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.

In respect of Sections E–F, university validation does not currently apply a hierarchy of quality judgements. Instead, the practice is to grant continuing approval subject to the fulfilment of conditions expressed in the reviewers' recommendations. Thus, where Common Awards programmes are part of the PER, the reviewers' shared judgements under these two sections will normally be expressed as 'Confidence, subject to the implementation of the recommendations in this section'.

The Common Awards team's findings will be part of the joint PER report, but will also be included in a stand-alone report prepared for the university's governance bodies, and which can be made available to the TEI under review if wished.

For training institutions that do not offer the Durham-validated Common Awards programmes, PER will be undertaken entirely by Ministry Division-appointed reviewers, applying criteria A-F but with appropriate adaptation in the case of E and F. Some diocesan Reader training schemes, for example, will fall into this category, as does the Coventry Reader training course.

REPORT OF THE PERIODIC EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE COVENTRY DIOCESAN READER TRAINING COURSE

10-12 March 2018

SUMMARY

Introduction

Coventry Diocese Reader training has gone through a number of changes over recent years. A more traditional Reader training course has developed into the Bishop's Certificate for Discipleship and Ministry with selection to Reader training part way through this course and additional compulsory modules taught to each year's Reader training cohort. The restructuring has been in light of the need for more lay training and development of discipleship in the diocese.

In light of the discipleship agenda and the needs of the diocese, the training begins with short open access modules leading to a foundation certificate. These are delivered across the diocese. The open access modules appear to be well attended. Potential Readers join these courses and their vocation is fostered as they participate in this preliminary stage. For Reader candidates, seven initial modules are compulsory. Any not studied in the first stage of the course are required to be completed before licensing. Anyone who completes ten modules (five of which are assessed) is awarded the Bishop's Foundation Certificate. This is followed by a 'going deeper' year in which six assessed modules are offered. Two modules have an extra component for Readers. Finally, after formal selection, Reader candidates follow a six-month programme entitled '*Preparing for Admission*'. These modules are not assessed. At the time of the reviewers visit there were six candidates preparing for admission.

Coventry's present structure is not unlike that of other dioceses using the Exploring Christianity course. Coventry, however, has chosen to produce its own course in order that it might respond easily to the needs of the diocese. There is an understanding, in the senior staff and Principal, that this is at the beginning phase of operation and that there are exciting possibilities and opportunities, although there is much to be developed. The direction of travel seems to be gaining momentum and this needs to be further encouraged.

Although there was not a significant amount of paperwork - handbooks and policies, for example - there was a clearly expressed vision of Readers as key ministers in the diocese with a variety of complementary models. The review team heard this vision verbalized by bishops, course staff, placement supervisors, and to lesser extent past and present students. The models we heard expressed were:

- supplying more ministers particularly in rural ministry; continuing ministry.
- lay theologian within the context of the need for catechesis: facilitators of learning and discipleship.
- a more pioneering role in mission and evangelism: extending ministry.

The latter seems to be a strategic area for development.

There have recently been problems in staffing, leading to an over-reliance on the Principal, However, it was clear that staffing needs were beginning to be addressed and that a wider team was being developed. This will need to be kept under review as the program develops.

The review team was able to gather information by:

- speaking to both bishops
- talking with the Principal
- observing two courses being delivered
- speaking to present and past students
- meeting incumbents and placement supervisors
- meeting the newly appointed Warden of Readers
- visiting diocesan offices
- meeting administrative staff for the training partnership

They were also able to have access to a variety of paperwork including:

- course materials
- diocesan policies
- a handbook of Reader training
- diocesan budget
- departmental budget
- departmental organizational chart
- risk management documents

It was also possible to access information on the diocesan website.

General Observations

This was the first review that had happened under the present Ministry Division review structure. Although concerns were expressed ahead of the visit about the nature of the review, all participated openly and willingly. The reviewers are grateful for the time given to this process and for the willingness of staff, students and supervisors to engage openly and willingly with the review process. There was a clear desire to learn from the review and to be able to use it to prioritize the development of this program.

The Report is written in relation to the PER Criteria outlined in the September 2017 edition of the *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Formation Handbook*.

Summary of outcomes

The review team has **Confidence with Qualifications** in the Coventry Reader Training Scheme.

CRITERIA	OUTCOME
A Formational aims	Confidence with qualifications
B Formational context	Confidence with qualifications
C Leadership and management	Confidence with qualifications
D Student outcomes	Confidence with qualifications
E Partnership with university	Confidence with qualifications
F Taught programmes	Confidence with qualifications
Overall Outcome	Confidence with qualifications

FULL REPORT

SECTION A: FORMATIONAL AIMS

A1 The TEI's formational aims are clearly stated, understood and owned within the TEI.

1. As outlined in the introduction, the team was encouraged by the clearly expressed aims of the course regarding the provision of Readers in the diocese who would be equipped to continue ministry in the rural parishes of the diocese, be the lay theologians and facilitators of learning in the diocese and extend the diocese's ministry through the development of lay pioneer roles in mission and evangelism.
2. The team was particularly heartened that the staff and team demonstrated care for trainees and a clear vision and enthusiasm for the potential of their future ministries. This indicated a level of internally communicated and understood shared formational aims.
3. However, the lack of prospectus, policy documents or readily accessible public-facing on-line material relating directly to Coventry Reader Training, combined with the absence of governing documents and statements of purpose makes it difficult to assess this aspect of the life of the course fully. Whilst it was clear that there are shared values within the training partnership itself, there is no forum for communicating these more widely and coherently. See **Recommendation 6**.

Commendation I

The review team commends the enthusiastic and clearly verbalised vision for Reader ministry in the diocese and their intention to train Readers who will be equipped to meet the ministerial needs of the diocese into the future.

A2 The TEI's formational aims are appropriate to the ministerial training requirements of its sponsoring church denominations.

4. As stated above, the lack of documentation makes it difficult to comment on Coventry Reader Training's formational aims. The extent to which formation is understood by the programme leaders to be in line with national developments in Reader ministry needs clarification by the documentation. Annual Self Assessment is not currently practised, making it difficult to identify the place of ongoing evaluation and review of course material and formational aims. Former students felt that they would have benefited from more information and consideration of the role of Readers with reference to national developments as well as understanding the role of the Reader in Fresh Expressions of church. Hence our recommendation below, which also draws on matters referred to later in this report.

Recommendation I

We recommend that the training partnership develops an Annual Self Evaluation process which includes reflection on, and development of, practices relating to corporate life and reflection on, and feedback from, student evaluation of individual modules and the whole course.

5. The Reader Training Development Document identifies that 'the flexibility of training is helpful in allowing the Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship and Mission participants not to be identified as potential Readers until 6 months or so before admission, but this can lead to confusion, especially for late entrants'. This was evidenced in our meetings with both past and present students. The very short time of training post-selection for some students limits the depth of formation available to someone identified as a Reader candidate.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that Reader candidates, after selection for training, need a longer time learning together in order that there can be a greater intentionality about formation, preparing them for the ministry that the diocese recognises as being specific and strategic.

A3 The TEI's aims, activity and achievement are understood and supported by wider church audiences.

6. Conversations with past and present students indicated that the recent change in training structure has been well received and created an environment in which the aims of the course are better understood. The quality of training was also reported as having increased with a sense that it was appropriately 'challenging'.
7. Incumbents and placement supervisors affirmed the quality of students and their work in context. However, they did express a lack of formal information which would assist them in understanding their contextual formational role both in one-off placements and longer term ministerial contexts. Section D8 and **Recommendation 7** refer.
8. It was identified in the meeting with past students that the training has had very little relation to the Reader network in the diocese. This connection, however is being re-made through the activities of the Reader Development Group and in connection with the recently appointed Warden of Readers.

Commendation 2

The work being put into revising the activities of the Reader Development Group and communication with staff newly appointed to diocesan roles is to be commended.

The review team has Confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion A: Formational Aims.

SECTION B: FORMATIONAL CONTEXT

B1 The TEI draws on partnership with theological educators in the region and local faith community organizations to enhance training and formational opportunities for students.

9. Apart from connections with local churches, there is no evidence that links with any theological educators or community organizations exist. The SWOT document identifies that 'neither the Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship and Mission nor Preparing for Admission currently engages with other faith traditions in a multicultural society.'
10. In our meeting with past and present students it was apparent that partnerships outside of the course were limited to placement churches and any links that exist in training parishes.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the training partnership develops relationships outside of itself with theological educators through such networks as the Theological Educators Network, with community organisations and local faith groups in order to enhance the students' formational experiences.

B2 There are well understood and embedded practices of corporate life, so as to enhance the process of students' formation.

11. The number of Reader students is small. Our experience of the current Reader training cohort was of a group of people who have clearly become an expression of community. Hospitality was shared and an open welcome was extended to the reviewers (who significantly increased the number of people in sessions and at lunch).
12. The lack of handbooks, documentation and evidence from an ASE process means that our comments are based only on experience and anecdotal evidence. It is our consideration, however, that the qualities and values expressed could effectively be expressed and documented, thus strengthening the formational process for future students. In line with national safeguarding requirements, DBS checks should be made at the point of selection, before they go on placement and not left till licensing.

Commendation 3

The training partnership is to be commended for the quality of relationships fostered between staff and students and within the student cohort providing support and encouragement of formational development.

Recommendation 4

DBS checks should be carried out at the point of selection for training.

B3 The provision of public social and private living accommodation is satisfactory [see also E3 for teaching accommodation].

13. Due to the nature of training, social and teaching space are one and the same thing. For the cohort observed in this review process, the accommodation was sufficient. However, the rooms would not be accessible to anyone with mobility problems, as we reflect further at section D4, and we urge the Course leaders to keep this matter under review.

B4 The TEI's corporate worship and liturgy are balanced in range and tradition, including authorised and innovative rites.

14. During our visit we were involved in conversations with, and between, students which evidenced a wide range of worship experience in the current Reader student cohort. Due to the nature of the training and short duration of placements, however, it is not possible to say with confidence that Reader candidates will have the opportunity to experience a particularly wide range of corporate worship during their training. Much depends on home parish context and placement experiences. Small cohorts of students also limit the range of worship that will be offered before teaching sessions.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that space is found to celebrate a wider variety of worship including, for example, Holy Communion and a service of the Word with homily, in the training group with peer feedback as part of ongoing modelling of reflective practice and formational learning throughout the curriculum.

B5 Staff model an appropriate pattern of spirituality, continued learning and reflection on practice.

15. Students spoke very positively of their learning about spirituality both from modules and from the example of staff members. There are, however, very few opportunities for staff and students together to engage in reflective practice and for students to engage in ongoing learning alongside others once they have been licensed. With larger student cohorts there would be increased opportunities. We are recommending the introduction of the Annual Self Evaluation process (**Recommendation 1**) and would suggest that it includes reflection on practices relating to corporate life. See also **Recommendation 8** at D9 in terms of students' future learning and development.

The review team has Confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion B: Formational Context.

SECTION C: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

C1 The TEI has clear and effective governance structures.

16. Coventry Diocesan Training Partnership is integrated into the diocesan structure. Financial structures, planning and risk management are all part of the diocese and finances. There is a clear job description for the Principal of the Training Partnership which is in the process of being updated. The management structure is clear and the financial structures weave into the diocesan structure with appropriate lines of accountability.
17. However, it would be expected that there would be some sort of governance structure to oversee the training. This does not exist at present, but this was acknowledged as an aspect that needed development. We see this as a key area, and accordingly:

Recommendation 6

The reviewers recommend that a governing body should be established to consider specific training matters. This body should include student participation and will be in a position to

- a) **create documentation which expresses the formational aims in governing documents;**
- b) **provide a prospectus or similar publication and online public-facing material which can include disability policy, complaints procedure etc;**
- c) **consider the minimum time a student is engaged in training post-selection in order to provide sufficient ministerial formation;**
- d) **devise a staff development plan including peer review of teaching and assessment standards and identification of training needs; and**
- e) **review the reporting policy to include robust ongoing, end of training and placement reporting procedures as well as feedback from local training incumbents.**

C2 The TEI has effective leadership.

18. The Principal seemed to get on well with the voluntary staff. The appointment of new staff to the team was happening as we visited and this should make for a more viable team to carry on the program.
19. There was a clear articulation by senior staff and the Principal of Coventry's vision of Readers and how it fitted into their overall discipleship training. There was also a sense of the potential to be realized in the future. As stated above, this could perhaps be better advertised to the diocese.

C3 Trustees are appropriately recruited, supported and developed.

20. In this diocesan context this is not relevant.

C4 The TEI has effective business planning and fundraising.

21. Financial planning is as part of the diocesan budget. There were appropriate internal processes for budget negotiation. In terms of building support for the diocese's wider discipleship programme out of which Reader training grows, the BCDM publicity material is good and commendable.

Commendation 4

The quality of the publicity material for the Bishop's Course in Discipleship and Ministry is to be commended.

C5 The TEI has sound financial and risk management and reporting.

22. Accounting, reporting and risk management were all included in the diocesan structure. Budgeting decisions were held by the Principal in negotiation with diocesan staff.

The review team has Confidence with Qualifications with regard to Criterion C: Leadership and Management.

SECTION D: STUDENT OUTCOMES

D1 Students are growing in their understanding of Christian tradition, faith and life.

23. We saw some excellent teaching on the Anglican traditions and Worship module (for Readers only). This session included a careful and objective evaluation of the effects of the European Reformation on Prayer Books. We also sat in on one session of a five-week study module of the book of Romans, which is part of the BCDM This was well taught from a historical and a critical viewpoint and well engaged with. We went on to meet four of the teachers who were all competent and enthusiastic about teaching though it seemed a small number of teachers for the number of modules advertised. We saw other module handbooks which looked equally well based in terms of content and engaging in terms of delivery style. There are some very useful modules offered especially on the Bible and Spirituality.

Commendation 5

We commend the high quality of the teaching we saw.

24. Worship at the sessions seemed to vary. The groups we saw were fairly small (6-8 people) and we heard of no student rota for leading worship sessions. It is helpful to Readers not only to learn how to lead worship, but to get used to being assessed on their leading and to become familiar with all the authorized texts. The Reader-only session started with prayer from CWDP and there was a shorter worship time in the BCDM session. When we were there, no service of Holy Communion took place, or any full service of the Word with sermon or homily. Perhaps because of lack of residential periods, growing in worship appears to be left to the local incumbents. The local incumbents we spoke to took this as part of their duties (see F4 below).
25. Members on the course are all Anglicans, but there was respect for different traditions within the Church of England and differences of style were widely acknowledged in the group.
26. We studied the helpful 'Coventry Reader Training Curriculum Mapping Document' and saw multiple outcomes expected from most modules. We did not, however, see any continuous assessment (e.g. a learning journal or portfolio) given to students that enabled them to follow their own development as a Reader by reflecting on what they have learned and what they are doing. Nor was the concept of Reflective Practice talked about whilst we were there (See F3 and **Recommendation 10** below).

D2 Students have a desire and ability to share in mission, evangelism and discipleship.

27. Students came from a good variety of expressions of Anglicanism. All the Readers in training said they had joined the Bishop's Certificate course because it gave them a wider knowledge of their discipleship and helped them engage with mission better. From conversations with students we heard they were supportive of this diocesan vision.
28. During interactive aspects of the day's teaching, students spoke freely to each other of how much they were learning about their faith. We heard of times when they tackled sharing their faith in and outside the church context, but we did not see any in depth reflection, evaluation or feedback of the work

they did in the local church or on placement, which is where many Readers practice evangelism and Mission (see F4 below).

29. We met some former students who felt well equipped by the course to teach about their faith, some through the modules they had attended and some through their local incumbents whilst working with them 'on the job'.
30. In conversation, current students gave the impression that they were still working on their own vocations and were not yet ready to enable others to find theirs.

D3 Students are growing in personal spirituality and engagement with public worship.

31. The students we met spoke of leading worship or parts of liturgies in their home churches and some of them had preached. Levels of experience seemed to depend on the tradition of the church they attended and the incumbent there. Local incumbents said they understood what the course required of them though we did not see any handbook for them to follow nor hear how parity of assessment is reached (see F3, below).
32. Students we talked to had a growing knowledge and appreciation of individual prayer and corporate worship. Several of them valued highly a 'Going Deeper' module on prayer which included different classical styles of praying e.g. the concept of prayer as desolation and consolation and prayer as a conversation. Some of them found this exploration very new but all of them felt positive about what they had learned. The placement incumbents talked about how they shaped the students in how to lead public worship (see D1).

D4 Students' personality, character and relationships

33. The students we saw were teachable. They came from different ecclesial backgrounds but they engaged collectively with the material in the day and evening teaching we attended. They listened, they joined in discussion times, they engaged in the whole group work and in pairs and were clearly at times seeing things that were new to them. We heard of no-one who had been unable to cope with the new knowledge and new interpretations being presented to them.
34. The students appeared to learn from each other and acknowledge differences between themselves, seeing differences as opportunities to explore rather than as barriers between them. Students said that tutors would give them help if they asked for it and the local incumbent and the placement incumbents spoke of spending time mentoring students when they asked.
35. Students appeared to know each other quite well, considering how little they had been together as a discrete Reader group – though it was hard for those who (because of the timing of the two Annual selection panels) had not been part of the group for very long. Some gaps in the Reader curriculum (see F2 below) could be put into an expanded time of Reader specific training and would benefit their progression up to their licensing – hence **Recommendation 2**.
36. In such a short acquaintance it is very hard to know all that is going on below the surface, but we got no hint of anything other than healthy relationships in and outside the Course or within the groups.

There was a good sense of looking out for each other. We saw nothing in the curriculum which suggested that care of self was looked at formally but it could be if more pastoral studies are included.

37. It was hard to see where the professional boundaries for Readers were discussed, the Reader specific training being quite condensed and short. The Reader students all seemed aware of safeguarding issues although the Readers had different levels of information on Safeguarding from ordinands. They do need to know about basic confidentiality. Pastoral visiting boundaries and listening skills should be made clear too (see D3). Perhaps their awareness of the needs of disabled people should be sharpened up, for instance, the teaching rooms were comfortable and appropriate except that they were on the first floor of an old building with no lifts or loop system that we noticed. We saw one person with a walking aid struggling up the stairs.

D5 Students are developing in the dispositions and skills of leadership, collaboration and ability to work in community.

38. Most of the students we saw in March had not yet done their placement and it could be here that they built up their skills of collaborative working and working in community. The placement supervisors we met all appeared to feel that the placements worked well and both parties learned from them. No-one raised matters of power and authority but we noticed there are some helpful courses in this area for clergy which might be opened up to Readers later on.

D6 Students show a calling to ministry within the traditions of the sponsoring church denomination.

39. Students we saw did appear to have a genuine calling to be Readers, and they came from a diverse range of church traditions. Most would expect to serve in their own parish, but some were willing to look wider. It was not clear, with only one placement, if they had all explored the breadth of possibilities for Reader ministry outside the traditional church role - but if there were a second placement this could be rectified (see F4, below).

D7 Pioneer ministry training

40. There is no training for Readers as Lay Pioneers, but a senior member of staff did not discount the possibility in the future.

D8 The TEI has clear and robust procedures for end-of-training assessment of students' knowledge, skills and dispositions, and reporting on students' achievement.

41. The end of course assessment procedures were weak at most levels. We saw no ongoing reports showing a student's progression through the course and no suggested areas they should strengthen in their ministry nor a final summative report. We also saw no letters of recommendation to the bishop before licensing. Length of post-selection training is again an issue here (**Recommendation 2**).
42. Ongoing assessment of written work was inconsistent. We saw essays which were marked with merely an encouraging comment at the end, with little attempt at learning or formational responses. Nor was there mention of whether or not the student had responded to the learning outcomes of the

module or how it could have been improved (see F3). As sections A3 and F4 reflect, we also found a disconnection between placement supervisors' oversight and students' learning.

Recommendation 7

With reference to Recommendation 6 above, we recommend that reporting and reflection which includes feedback from contextual supervisors (placement and home parish) is made more robust at every stage of the training and that end of training reports are submitted to the Warden of Readers to be kept as part of the Readers' ongoing records.

43. We did not see any initial learning agreement with individual Readers. We saw evidence that a general summary of Reader's taught skills was measured against the outcomes for a Reader at end of training in the SWOT analysis, but we saw no evaluation of the student by their home incumbent. We did see placement evaluations and some self-assessment in the brief evaluation sheet on their placement.

D9 The student has, during and at the end of initial training, a personal learning plan or other clear basis from which to learn and grow further in ministry and discipleship.

44. We saw no end-of-training plans for individual students' development after licensing, though we noticed that one recently licensed Reader has started as Reader Development Officer and could perhaps work on this gap. In addition, we saw no end of training reports nor did we see any examples of a final letter to the Bishop recommending licensing. See **Recommendation 10**.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that students leave training with a development plan for their future learning and spiritual development.

D10. The TEI learns from the pattern of its students' ministerial and formational achievement and acts on areas of particular need.

45. We did not see or hear very much about post licensing training, and it is outside the brief of this review, but we were aware that there are other practical training courses running in the diocese, especially in the clergy Continuing Ministerial Development which it may be possible for the training partnership to encourage Readers to engage with post-licensing.

The review team has Confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion D: Student Outcomes.

SECTION E: PARTNERSHIP WITH UNIVERSITY

[Not all the PER criteria under Sections E and F apply as they would if the Coventry course were a TEI and a partner with Durham University in Common Awards. The reviewers have commented where appropriate.]

E1 Quality control and assurance procedures governing the partnership are robust.

46. Coventry Diocesan Training Partnership is not a university validated course. It was explained that a number of years ago it was decided not to seek university validation, although it appeared to be roughly equivalent to a Cert HE. Nevertheless, the principles of this section still apply. We were able to see a self-evaluation done as a SWOT analysis, the diocesan equality policy and talked to a group of tutors.
47. The partnership has not yet participated in the Ministry Division annual self-evaluation process (**Recommendation 1**). This we saw as a major point for development as it will provide the structure to gradually develop the program and the quality management of the program. With the lack of a governing body students were not participating in quality management. There were no assessment criteria available and they need to be developed as a priority.

E2 Overall provision for academic and pastoral support and guidance is adequate.

48. While there was good relationship observed between staff and students, there were no complaints or appeals processes. There were no examples of student with disabilities for us to observe the process of adjustment to their needs.

E3 Overall learning support and infrastructure in relation to the ability to meet requirements for awards are adequate.

49. Students seemed to borrow or buy books, there was no library facility, apart from some books recovered from the closure of the diocesan retreat house, and no VLE. The teaching facilities were in St Michael's House, owned by the cathedral. These were adequate although it was unclear about access for those with disabilities. The adoption of the common Church of England VLE (Moodle) would provide some online resources and increasing material through the Hub. As noted and commended at F3, some course handbook material that we saw was of high quality.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the partnership considers setting up immediately a VLE (the suggestion being Moodle) and provides online resources for students including chapters of books under the diocesan copyright agreement.

E4 Overall staffing (academic and support) in relation to the ability to meet requirements for awards is adequate.

50. The staff appeared to be appropriately qualified, although there seem to be no systematic recording of their qualifications. The equality policy is that of the diocese. Some thought should be given to a staff development plan (see **Recommendation 6.d**). Connection to the national church would give opportunity for staff to participate in national training.

E5 The TEI has appropriate mechanisms to ensure the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to the partnership.

51. The courses were promoted on the website and on paper as appropriate for the diocese.

The review team has **Confidence with qualifications** with regard to **Criterion E: Formational aims.**

SECTION F: TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

F1 The programme is viable in terms of market and likely number of entrants.

52. The current numbers are viable, but the diocese is aware that since changes in the training schedule, there has been a drop in numbers for Readers in training. In our view, demand could well increase as the new structure embeds and when the staff is up to capacity again with new appointments in place and a maternity leave coming to an end - as is planned for next summer. Reader training is done entirely in the diocese and recruitment is done through the current internal Diocesan training programme. In a preparatory paper for the Periodic External Review, the Principal helpfully outlined the changes made in training since the diocese had moved away from segregated training and incorporated the principles of Natural Church Development into their training vision.

F2 The structure and design of the curriculum are appropriate to the aims and learning outcomes, and to the target student body

53. The course has a good and holistic approach for widespread education and mission, but we are not convinced that the Reader specific modules over 6 months in stage 4 equip Readers sufficiently well for the start of their ministry. The curriculum design appears to us to work well for lifelong learners wanting to engage better with mission, Stages 1-3 have a good and clear sense of progression but stage 4 seems more of 'a catch-up clause' than part of a programme of progression to a ministry in the church (hence **Recommendation 2**).

54. We say this because the design and content of stage 4 (Reader-specific training) is limited, although we accept that some relevant areas are covered in the BCDM 'Going Deeper' modules, including church history and biblical exegesis. Within the Reader-specific Preparing for Admission programme there is some attention to voice production; but the programme does not appear to include coverage of some aspects of Pastoral Care (e.g. listening skills, care of the dying and care of self), which are important for the ministry of many Readers.

55. Reflective Practice was not evident in the paper work and when we asked students about how they reflected on their Christian understanding in the light of new knowledge, they asked, 'What do you mean?' It was clear as we spoke with them (and some former students) that some students were reflecting through a lens of theology and growing through past experience, but learning to think of it as an intellectual and formational tool could be improved. Via **Recommendation 10** below we urge the Course to build reflective practice more fully into students' ongoing self-assessment.

56. There is no Governing Body, and we saw no evidence of students being part of the design and development of the programme. The Reader Development Officer is new to the post so this may be part of her job description (see **Recommendation 6**).

F3 The programme employs teaching, learning and assessment methods that will enable the learning outcomes to be achieved by typical students and that achievement to be measured.

57. Whilst the content of the teaching we saw was excellent, the area of written assessment and student progression was variable.

58. The module handbooks we saw contained learning outcomes, and the two teaching sessions we observed were taught within that framework. Although some teaching handbooks were carefully and helpfully written, the Placement handbook was only a single side of A4 (see F4, below). The placement incumbents sent in a brief report form on how the placement had gone, but we saw no evaluations of preaching or worship leading from members of the congregations. We did not see an introductory Course Handbook or a Study Skills Handbook, nor one for the local incumbents.

Commendation 6

We commend the high standard of teaching material.

59. Some of the comments on written work that we saw made no reference to the outcomes at all. This meant that marking could be (but was not always) little more than a brief encouraging comment at the end of the assignment. We did not see much marking that expected students to relate the module outcomes to the assignment or pointed out helpfully how the assignment could have been improved. Whilst this is less important for people on the BCDM students who drop in for particular modules, for trainee Readers it means they may find it hard to assess their progress and progression through the course.
60. We saw no initial or placement learning agreements so could not tell how students' knowledge and skills progressed, and presumably, neither could they. Certainly former students did look back on how much they had learned whilst on the course and parish and placement incumbents both saw their roles as that of mentors. One former student, however, said that working in the parish after licensing felt as if they '...had been thrown to the lions.'
61. We saw two modes of assessment – placement reports which were sometimes inadequate (see F4 below) and essays, the assessment of which could be fit for purpose as long as all tutors are trained to the same marking standards.
62. When we met some local incumbents and placement supervisors they clearly had taken their mentoring role seriously, but it felt as if they had done it because they thought it a good thing to do rather than being encouraged to professional standards by the Course leaders. We did see some thoughtful reports on students on placement but we saw nothing about local incumbents reporting on students in their parishes before a final report is sent to the bishop recommending licensing.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that a more robust reporting policy is established which includes ongoing assessment of all ministry students, learning agreements, self-assessment and reflection, assignment marking and feedback, final reports and a letter from the principal to the bishop pre-licensing.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the good practice in evidence on our visit in both taught programmes and formational input is more intentionally verbalised and recorded in a number of handbooks (taught programmes, study skills, placements, home church formational input, safeguarding

policy), along the lines of the handbook recently produced for the course which the review team found to be of a high standard.

F4 There are appropriate arrangements for placements.

63. The course as taught at the moment has only four weeks of placement during the whole of the Reader training – and that over a major festival when not all churches would call on a trainee Reader to take a big part, and it is very near to the licensing day as well. We question whether this placement is long enough to do all the Reader-specific work needed before licensing
64. We saw that some placements incumbents who gave helpful assessment of their student Reader, but we heard of no training or support days for these incumbents.
65. The hand book was a sheet of A4 outlining the aims and timing of the placement (over Easter before an autumn licensing) and listing the expected content (e.g. preaching, worship leading and different sorts of liturgy). The supervisors were given an expandable sheet of A4 asking for specific brief feedback. Students were given the same explanatory outline of the placement and another similar sheet of A4 for their placement report. We felt this to be inadequate for such an important part of Reader training. We wonder if this brief guide to what was expected in the placement gave sufficient help to student and supervisor.
66. We met with a group of placement supervisors and saw some of their reports as well as some placements reports written by students. The incumbents we met were all experienced and enthusiastic clergy who clearly enjoyed working with the student Readers and were pleased to meet together, but there appeared to be no on-going training for them. Some placement incumbents talked about how they 'shaped' the students in how to lead public worship.
67. We felt that the placement report expected too little in terms of assessment. It could have been an ideal opportunity to ask for some serious reflection as they observed different ways of doing things and grew into inhabiting their Reader role. Former students spoke of the benefit of their placement but the quality seemed to come mostly from the placement supervisors and their educated enthusiasm.
68. The students were asked where they would like to do their placement, then discussed it with a tutor. It was not clear who assessed and followed up the student's report or who read the incumbent's report.

F5 The programme appropriately addresses the University's Principles for the Development of the Taught Curriculum.

69. The course is not externally validated and currently there are no in-house research facilities.

F6 The programme is subject to appropriate processes for curriculum review, including mechanisms for student representation and engagement.

70. Coventry's is a small internal training course for lay discipleship and Readership. It is related to no external body and it is answerable to the Bishops. There are many good things about it, but there are

several omissions which it would not be too difficult to remedy. We noted that not all the modules listed could be taught because of a shortage of able tutors. We did not hear of any formal student representation in the system of governance. The Reader training is, however, in a time of change, reorientation and growth so this would be a good moment to include proper module evaluation and student representation on any Governing Body – hence **Recommendation 7**.

The review team has Confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion F: Taught Programmes.

CONCLUSION

71. The review team wishes to emphasise that we found a small dedicated team in Coventry who have a clear and well articulated vision for Reader ministry in their diocese into the future. We have made two key recommendations (1 and 6); that a governing body should be established and the Annual Self Evaluation process should be engaged with. We firmly believe that if these two substantial pieces of work take place, all other recommendations can be put into place and monitored within this more robust training structure. We wish the training partnership and students well and look forward to seeing the developments they make.

Overall outcome

The review team has Confidence with qualifications in the Coventry Diocesan Reader Training Course for preparing candidates for licensed lay ministry.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the training partnership develops an Annual Self Evaluation process which includes reflection on, and development of, practices relating to corporate life and reflection on, and feedback from, student evaluation of individual modules and the whole course.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that Reader candidates, after selection for training, need a longer time learning together in order that there can be a greater intentionality about formation, preparing them for the ministry that the diocese recognizes as being specific and strategic.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the training partnership develops relationships outside of itself with theological educators through such networks as the Theological Educators Network, with community organizations and local faith groups in order to enhance the students' formational experiences.

Recommendation 4

DBS checks should be carried out at the point of selection for training.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that space is found to celebrate a wider variety of worship, including, for example, Holy Communion and a service of the Word with homily, in the training group with peer feedback as part of ongoing modelling of reflective practice and formational learning throughout the curriculum.

Recommendation 6

The reviewers recommend that a governing body should be established and that it should include student participation. This body will then be in a position to:

- a) create documentation which expresses the formational aims in governing documents;
- b) provide a prospectus or similar publication and online public-facing material which can include disability policy, complaints procedure etc.;
- c) consider the minimum time a student is engaged in training post-selection in order to provide sufficient ministerial formation;
- d) devise a staff development plan including peer review of teaching and assessment standards and identification of training needs; and
- e) review the reporting policy to include robust ongoing, end of training and placement reporting procedures as well as feedback from local training incumbents.

Recommendation 7

With reference to recommendation 6 above, we recommend that reporting is made more robust at every stage of the training and that end of training reports are submitted to the Warden of Readers to be kept as part of the Readers' ongoing records.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that students leave training with a development plan for their future learning and spiritual development.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the partnership considers setting up immediately a VLE (the suggestion being Moodle) and provides online resources for students including chapters of books under the diocesan copyright agreement.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that a more robust reporting policy is established which includes ongoing assessment of all ministry students, learning agreements, self-assessment and reflection, assignment marking and feedback, final reports and a letter from the principal to the bishop pre-licensing.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the good practice in evidence on our visit in both taught programmes and formational input is more intentionally verbalized and recorded in a number of handbooks (taught programmes, study skills, placements, home church formational input, safeguarding policy) along the lines of the handbook recently produced for the course which the review team found to be of a high standard.

LIST OF COMMENDATIONS

Commendation 1

The review team commends the enthusiastic and clearly verbalized vision for Reader ministry in the diocese and their intention to train Readers who will be equipped to meet the ministerial needs of the diocese into the future.

Commendation 2

The work being put into revising the activities of the Reader Development Group and communication with staff newly appointed to diocesan roles is to be commended.

Commendation 3

The training partnership is to be commended for the quality of relationships fostered between staff and students and within the student cohort providing support and encouragement of formational development.

Commendation 4

The quality of the publicity material for the Bishop's Course in Discipleship and Ministry is to be commended.

Commendation 5

We commend the high quality of the teaching we saw.

Commendation 6

We commend the high standard of teaching material.