

Formation in Curacy: Guidance on Good Practice

This guidance follows that included in ***The Appointment and Training of Training Incumbents Guidance on Good Practice***, issued by Ministry Division in 2013 and revised in 2017, with additional sections covering the IME 2 programme and the deployment of curates. As in that document, while the language of parish and Training Incumbent is used, it should be interpreted to mean the context for training and those responsible for training.

I. Selection of Training Incumbents and placing curates with incumbents

Training Incumbents are chosen on merit and the context is appropriate for training.

Evidence might include documentation such as guidance and expectations for prospective Training Incumbents, format for the parish profile, guidance sent to prospective Training Incumbents, an indication of who is involved in the discernment process, and comments on the provision of curate housing.

Careful selection of training incumbents is important and should be based upon the ability to train rather than on the Incumbent's need for assistance, for example.

In order to assist in the selection of suitable training incumbents and parishes dioceses should have a clear statement of expectations including a description of what the role involves and the qualities demanded of a training incumbent, including e.g.

- having their own consistent pattern of personal prayer,
- a commitment to and participation in their own continuing ministerial development,
- collaborative skills,
- self-awareness,
- and the ability to enable reflection on practice and theology.

This enables a number of positive elements of good practice such as,

- The opportunity to explore someone's suitability to be a TI, potentially in the context of MDR,
- Realistic discussions with PCCs about what is involved;
- Open and transparent appointments processes with the possibility of applications alongside invitations to incumbents to consider the role.

The appointment of a Training Incumbent should be made on the basis of shared wisdom and following a personal interview with the Incumbent to ascertain such matters as continued spiritual life, reading, understanding of supervision, and, experience in enabling the ministry of others.

It is important that the Training Incumbent is aware that a curate is a colleague in whose nurturing the Training Incumbent is sharing, not a junior assistant who will serve as 'their curate'.

Particularly useful information may come from the observation of the potential training incumbent's ability to nurture lay ministry within the parish(es) they serve and their

approach to vision setting within the parish. A successful Training Incumbent is one who will have already nurtured and supervised ministries in the parish and who has a collaborative approach to vision setting. They will need to have been in their present parish for long enough to demonstrate these behaviours are stable in this context. Those who can helpfully comment on the suitability of a potential Training Incumbent should be consulted as a matter of course. These are likely to include: Archdeacons, Bishops, DDO, and IME2 Officer, particularly with reference to training history and feedback from previous curate(s).

The placing of curates will be a matter of discernment between a number of individuals who may include the DDO, the sponsoring bishop, the IME2 officer, Archdeacon or HR director. The curate's penultimate report from their TEI should be available as an indication of their formation and likely context for flourishing. Dioceses should be able to demonstrate that judgements are triangulated, and that they are made with due attention to fairer recruitment processes.

2. Training of training incumbents

Training Incumbents receive training and ongoing monitoring and support.

Evidence of good practice may include the syllabus or programme for the training of Training Incumbents, a description of the ongoing monitoring and support of the curacy (in particular as it relates to the relationship between the curate and Training Incumbent, including monitoring the quality of training in context), any opportunities for development of skills or reflection on practice.

Working with and identifying potential.

Potential Training Incumbents should understand and own the expectations of the diocese upon them for this role before accepting it. This may be facilitated by a one-to-one meeting with an IME 2 Officer or equivalent, and/or by setting out in writing what the role entails. Consideration may also be given to potential Training Incumbents undertaking formal training, as part of a process of mutual discernment, about the appropriateness of their taking on this role. This may take the form of existing specialist provision, or a Training Incumbent training programme. Such a programme might include some form of peer and tutor observation, ideally in a supervisory and training interaction, which can be achieved through well-structured training exercises, with observation.

Training should be expected of every Training Incumbent on each and every occasion before receiving a new curate. A residential component is desirable in order to model the space and time necessary for learning and to convey the seriousness of this activity. This area of training is difficult and demanding, and consideration should be given to various ways of sharing resources across dioceses.

Good quality training will include the following elements:

The curacy process:

Training Incumbents should understand the purpose of the Church of England curacy, including the use of the House of Bishops' Agreed Formation Criteria in shaping training, and the process for Assessment at the End of Curacy. They should be clear about how these national guidelines have been contextualised in their own diocese's curacy process.

Training in the curacy process should therefore include work on:

- understanding the nature of the curate's ministry prior to ordination and the gifts and experience that he or she brings to ordained ministry
- understanding the nature of the training the curate has already experienced and exploring their expectations as to what learning looks like;
- working with the final college/course/scheme report in identifying training goals;
- devising learning / ministerial agreements, including clear annual learning / training goals;
- any portfolio or other system for monitoring learning that the diocese makes use of;
- engagement with diocesan IME Phase 2 training provision;
- writing evidence-based reports; and
- the diocesan system for Assessment at the End of Curacy

Supervision: Training in supervision should include the following elements:

- Understanding the purpose of supervision and its functions (planning and managing the curacy, supporting the curate, reflection and learning) in the specific context of the Church of England curacy.
- good practice in supervision (e.g. the frequency of meeting, the priority of supervision meetings, the content of meetings, keeping records, reviewing how supervision is working, etc.);
- the skills involved in good supervision (e.g. listening, giving feedback, enabling reflection, giving space for curates to explore their feelings about and responses to challenging incidents in ministry), and the qualities that enable good supervision (e.g. good self-organisation, self-awareness, being unthreatened by a colleague's abilities, genuine concern for a colleague's well-being, etc.);
- handling difficulties, poor performance or conflict.

This training should provide opportunities for observed practice and feedback; the learning of skills includes not simply understanding theory, but the opportunity to practice skills in observed situations and to receive feedback (eg in role play). Formation requires a breadth and depth of experience that will bring spiritual challenge as well as challenge in skills.

Diaconal and priestly formation and ministry/incumbency skills:

Within the curacy, the recently ordained need to be helped to develop specific skills, but this will take place within an overarching process of formation involving the development of spirituality and ministerial character. The training of training incumbents should give space and attention both to offering models and techniques for coaching curates in specific skills, and also to understanding and working with this broader formational vision.

During the curacy:

Training Incumbents should be offered support and ongoing training once the curacy has begun. These may include the following:

- opportunities to meet with the IME2 Officer (or other appropriate diocesan appointee) to reflect on their work as a training incumbent and discuss issues and challenges;

- training events on specific areas of the work (e.g. giving feedback, training colleagues in preaching or liturgy, etc.);
- opportunities to meet with other training incumbents to reflect on their work in this role and discuss issues and challenges (issues of the curates' confidentiality need to be considered carefully here); this work could periodically take the form of group supervision or action learning sets;
- opportunities to engage in training alongside their colleagues.

Dioceses may make arrangements for training incumbents to be supervised themselves in relation to the supervisory work they are doing with curates, and/or provide opportunities for them and their curate to meet a mentor on at least two occasions a year to discuss their training/working relationship, and give opportunities for issues to be discussed with a trusted third party. In addition curates should be asked periodically to feedback in the form of appreciative enquiry on the training they are receiving.

3. Learning Agreements (Formation/Training Agreements)

Curates have a learning agreement

Evidence may be in the form of a sample format for the Learning Agreement and description of the process by which the agreement is shaped, who is involved, and who signs the final agreement., and what processes are in place for its subsequent review.

Learning agreements are intended to help plan out the training over the span of the curacy. They include reference to:

- the curate's end of IMEI report (NB training needs are not just academic). It is essential that the training incumbent and the IME2 Officer should have access to the final report from the TEI.
- the House of Bishops' Formation Criteria and the forms of assessment operating in the diocese. These should clearly differentiate expectations for Assistant and Incumbent status ministers.
- the curate's expected ministry, so that it is clear that learning/training is part of the agreed work of the curate, and that it is directly related to the valuable ministry in which s/he is engaged.
- opportunities for learning in the parish and beyond

They should be regularly reviewed by the Training Incumbent, Curate, and IME2 Officer.

4. IME 2 Programmes and beyond

Dioceses contribute to the formation of curates

Evidence is likely to be in the form of the Curate Handbook, the IME 2 programme, the Common Awards programme and documentation about the assessment of curacy with reference to the Formational Criteria. Dioceses may indicate how they monitor and review their provision.

Formation of curates is a partnership between the curate, the parish, the Training Incumbent and the diocese. Formation includes opportunities to develop in knowledge,

character and skills not only in the parish, but within a peer group or with others in ministry.

IME 2 pathways support curates in achieving formation sufficient to meet the Bishops Criteria for Assessment at the End of Curacy. They may include local or regional provision of both hard and soft skills training, opportunities for reflective practice, and assessed programmes under Common Awards.

A good quality programme is likely to include:

- Developing knowledge in canon law, parish governance, safeguarding
- Skills in preaching, pastoral care, liturgy, mission and evangelism, nurturing disciples and growing others in their life of prayer
- Experience in mission in the local context, experiencing new contexts, managing volunteers, managing conflict, working in teams, leadership and reflective practice
- Opportunities for biblical study, theological reflection, reading and further theological education

A high quality IME 2 programme will also:

- demonstrate that it is responsive to local context and preparing curates for future ministry in a changing world
- provide space and opportunities to enable curates to explore new opportunities, for example in chaplaincy, or developing a Fresh Expression or Church Plant
- Have some ability to take account of individual needs and developmental areas, to their curacy mode (e.g. stipendiary, SSM, chaplaincy), and to the varying mode and content of trainees' prior IME1 programmes

The Handbook

The diocesan approach to training curates and training incumbents should be documented so all know what is expected. The sorts of things to include are:

- Roles and expectations of a training incumbent and others involved in supervision
- Learning agreements
- The IME 2 programme
- What to do if things go wrong – this should make clear informal and formal processes

A Handbook may also demonstrate how the wellbeing of curates is supported, including the provision of pastoral care, access to counselling, and good practice in supporting families in ministry.

At the end of curacy, good quality evidence based assessment will include reference to the curate's engagement with the diocesan IME 2 programme and reports from supervisors and Training Incumbent. A final report should make reference to the bishop's agreed formational criteria.

5. Retention and future deployment of curates.

Dioceses support curates moving to incumbency and posts of first responsibility.

Where possible, dioceses are also able to demonstrate how the deployment of curates fits into a wider deployment strategy.

Curates should be supported in discerning the next steps in ministry, and monitored in the period between the completion of curacy and a successful appointment to a first incumbency or post of responsibility.

This might include:

- Assistance in identifying opportunities and potential posts
- Guidance in writing applications and interviews
- Coaching, mentoring, or placements

Dioceses should consider their future ministry needs, the place of those they have trained as curates in their strategy for meeting those needs, and how they are taking steps to ensure this is the case. However, the strategy should also respect that curates may rightly discern a vocation to serve elsewhere in the Church of England.

Dioceses may from time to time shape the training of curates with a view to them developing a particular ministry such as initiating a Fresh Expression or planting a church. In such cases any deployment policy should demonstrate how the move is managed – ie clarity about the length of a training post, recruitment versus retention, and continued supervision.