

# Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

## Coventry Diocesan Reader Training Course

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## Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the March 2018 Periodic External Review

### Introduction

A Periodic External Review was conducted of Coventry Reader Training in March 2018. The reviewers were Revd Dr Phillip Tovey, Canon Christine McMullen and Dr Sally Buck.

The reviewers' report was published in May 2018 and, as is standard practice, the Course Director was then asked to produce an action plan setting out the Course's intended response to the report's recommendations and expected timescale for each. The plan was approved by the lead reviewer in August 2018. It organised intended actions into four main areas: capturing in writing the diocesan vision for Reader ministry; establishing a Course Review Group for oversight; establishing a subsidiary task group to review and implement improvements in training; and identifying the areas and issues for improvement.

The lead reviewer met the Course Director again in September 2019 to review the state of play with the action plan; and there is good progress to report. It should be noted, however, that there have been no candidates this year in Coventry and thus some of the recommendations await a new cohort of candidates. The previous cohort was 6 candidates and the next will be possibly 4-6. Reader training in Coventry is in the context of a large programme of Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship and Ministry (BCDM, 2 years) with a final 'year' for those selected for Reader Ministry.

The following are the recommendations from the March 2018 review and comments on progress. The original recommendations are in **bold**, and the reviewers' comments in regular type.

### **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.**

The structures for doing this are now in place. Full implementation, drawing on student feedback, awaits the new cohort. However, self-evaluation reflecting the current state of play and staff thinking around development will also be of value and we urge that an ASE should be produced to the current (end-November) timetable for 2018-19. This should be urgently added to the agenda of the Course Review Group.

### **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.**

This has begun to happen in an organic way with the previous cohort and the plan is to make it a part of the programme. As this develops it will become an IME2 programme for Readers which – while primarily designed to serve Readers' immediate post-licensing needs - will also be open as CMD. This is in early stages but was something the cohort began to do by opting into other modules they had not done. There was a sense of a desire for ongoing learning and wishing to continue to meet. The staff noticed this and encourage it as it showed a promising sign that the desire to inculcate a practice of lifelong learning was beginning to take root.

### **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.**

This has been considered and the principal is going to come to the Sarum Reader trainers Conference this year. There have been new contacts with the educational sector in consulting with someone from the QAA office in Coventry and from Worcester University.

### **Recommendation 4**

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

DBS clearance is already required at selection stage. Implementation awaits the new cohort but will be done.

### **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.**

Implementation awaits the new cohort. The Course Review Group clearly has the remit to consider this recommendation and has put it on the list of issues for improvement. It would be good to see the outcomes in the ASE.

### **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.**

In terms of the governing vision, *Celebrating the Gift of Lay Ministry: Readers Past, Present – and Future?* is a major and substantial diocesan report which has been produced on lay ministry and the place of Reader ministry. The report was presented to the Annual Readers' conference and is being developed and implemented in the Reader Strategy working group. This is renewing the vision of the diocese for lay and Reader ministry. The aim is to give readers a rationale within the development of lay ministries. Coventry are to be commended for this work and it is hoped that this work will be shared more widely.

In response to the above recommendation, a Course Review Group has been put in place. This includes the Principal, the Discipleship and Mission adviser, Director of Reader Training, teaching staff and students. This Group reviews both training provision and progress of candidate. This has considered the length of training, the development of IME2 and has reviewed and revised various modules. The major task of this group while there are no candidates has been to develop the vision for Reader ministry. Major areas for improvement have been identified which include, other faiths, worship policy, staff development, reporting, individual development plan and handbooks. These are all being considered by a Task Group, set up to respond to these aspects of the report. This is all in progress in the Course Review Group and will be referred to the Reader Committee.

### **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.**

To be implemented with the new cohort but the Course Review Group has already put this on its agenda and is in progress of implementation of developments.

### **Recommendation 8**

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

This is being developed with the concretization of an IME2 process, as mentioned above. The process began because those that were admitted wanted to continue to meet and learn together. This also relates to the Vision for Reader Ministry where a number of models of Reader Ministry are envisaged, continuation, extension, and supplementary. There is also a discussion of Readers as pioneers and catalysts. The implementation of this will require an ongoing development plan for Readers.

### **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.**

This is being implemented with the new cohort. There have been various debates in the past about a VLE Moodle versus other systems, and progress became possible following the award of national Strategic Development Funding for a major lay development project called 'Serving Christ' in July 2017. This includes a significant e-learning element, known as the 'E-Quip hub'. This is currently in development with two other partner dioceses. The project will use Moodle and be available to all BCDM users, who will enrol in it as part of their registration. This will therefore include all Reader trainees. The E-Quip hub will be launched publicly by September 2020, and current students will shortly be enrolled on the pilot version.

### **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.**

This has been on the agenda of the Course Review Group and is being developed for the new cohort. It will need to be continued until the cohort has gone through IME1.

### **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.**

The Course Review Group has begun this work reviewing the BDCM training provision and the preparing for Admission course.

### **Conclusion**

In this year with no candidates for Reader ministry the concentration has been on setting up structures to make further implementation possible and vision, in the Course Review Group the composition and work

having been touched on above. Considerable effort has been put into the vision document. A plan for its implementation is in progress is being developed by the Course Review Group and this reports to the Reader Strategy Working Group chaired by the Bishop of Warwick. This looks a very positive development. The Course Review Group has identified as issues for improvement those items recommended in the PER and has begun to implement them or knows how they will be implemented with the new intake.

Coventry have engaged themselves with the process and I am confident that the elements that await the new cohort will be implemented. I think that this is sufficient to conclude the PER process satisfactorily.

**Revd Dr Phillip Tovey**  
Senior Reviewer

17 October 2019