

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Report

Queen's Foundation, Birmingham

October 2019

The **Methodist** Church 

The logo for The Church of England, featuring a stylized cross inside a circle.

THE CHURCH
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GLOSSARY

APL	Accredited Prior Learning
AQSG	Academic Quality and Standards Group
ASE	Annual Self-Evaluation
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BCP	Book of Common Prayer
CMD	Continuing Ministerial Development
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
IME	Initial Ministerial Education
LFA	Learning and Formation Agreement
MCPOC	Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee
MEQ	Module Evaluation Questionnaire
PER	Periodic External Review
OfS	Office for Students
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RME	Resourcing Ministerial Education
SSCF	Staff-Student Community Forum
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TEI	Theological Education Institution
ULO	University Liaison Officer

LIST OF REVIEWERS

For the Church of England

Revd Canon Nick Moir, lead Church of England reviewer, Vicar of St Andrew's Chesterton and Ministry Training Officer (Diocese of Ely)

Ms Sue Waterston, Licensed Lay Minister and West Bingham Deanery Lay Chair, Southwell and Nottingham Diocese.

For the Methodist Church

Revd Dr Philip Luscombe, lead Methodist reviewer, former Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge.

Revd Dr Christine Jones, former Director of the Urban Theology Unit, Sheffield

For Durham University

Dr Frances Clemson, Assistant Professor of Theology and Ministry, Common Awards academic team

Miss Alyson Bird, Quality Assurance Manager, Common Awards

Revd Dr Christine Jones, external subject specialist

THE PERIODIC EXTERNAL REVIEW FRAMEWORK

For ministerial training institutions that offer the church's Durham University-validated Common Awards programmes, 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 training institution's fitness for purpose in 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. Within the Methodist Church, it is addressed to the national governance structures of that church.

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 include representatives of the two sponsoring churches and of Durham University's Common Awards office. The latter 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 also includes comment on wider formational matters where appropriate. Evidence-gathering is shared, and judgements are owned by the review team as a whole.

Recommendations and Commendations

PER reports include Recommendations which may either be developmental, naming issues that the reviewers consider the TEI needs to address, or they may urge the enhancement of practice that is already good. They 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

Reviewers are asked to use the following outcomes with regard to the overall report and individual criteria A-F. Throughout, the outcome judgements are those of the Ministry Division-appointed reviewers, as university validation does not use a similar framework; but in respect of sections E and F those judgements are especially informed by the views, recommendations and commendations of the Durham-appointed reviewers in the case of TEIs offering Common Awards programmes.

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 apply a hierarchy of quality judgements but instead grants continuing approval subject to the fulfilment of these sections' conditions and recommendations. Thus, where Common Awards programmes are part of the PER, the reviewers' shared judgements under these two sections is normally expressed as 'Confidence, subject to the implementation of the recommendations in this section'.

The Common Awards team's findings are part of the joint PER report but are also 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 is undertaken entirely by church-appointed reviewers, applying criteria A-F but with appropriate adaptation in the case of E and F. Some diocesan Reader training schemes, for example, fall into this category.

REPORT OF THE PERIODIC EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE QUEEN'S FOUNDATION

October 2019

SUMMARY

Introduction

Queen's College was founded in the early part of the nineteenth century and has a long history of preparing candidates for various forms of ministry. In 1970 it became an ecumenical college, preparing students both for the ministry of the Church of England and for the Methodist Church and, later, for the United Reformed Church. At the beginning of this century it became the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education (known as 'The Queen's Foundation' or simply 'Queen's').

Training provision at Queens

The Queen's Foundation implements its vision (see section A1) by:

- i. forming and developing the churches' ordained ministers in the Centre for Ministerial Formation
- ii. offering rigorous theological education for active discipleship, including those training to be Readers in two Anglican dioceses (Worcester and Lichfield), in the Centre for Discipleship and Theology
- iii. forming and developing the churches' lay leaders and ordained ministers, especially probationers and curates in their early years of ministry, in the Centre for Continuing Ministerial Development
- iv. being globally connected and engaged, through exchange programmes, partnerships with colleges and seminaries in the Global South, and being a place of hospitality for study and dialogue with scholars and students from the world-wide church
- v. nurturing the ministries and leadership of Christians of Black and Asian heritage, and especially those belonging to Black Majority Churches
- vi. scholarship and research, especially through the provision of PhD programmes in partnership with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

During 2018-19 the Centre for Ministerial Formation had 140 students training for ordained ministry in the two sponsoring churches, 69 (39 Anglicans, 30 Methodists) in a 'college' pattern (midweek daytime training, including some students who are part residential) and 71 (43 Anglicans, 28 Methodists) in a 'course' pattern. Methodist numbers have been declining but there is hope that a new partnership agreement and more vocations work will help to reverse this. A 20% increase in the intake for 2019-20 is a welcome start. The trend in Anglican ordinands is upwards for younger, full-time students (reflecting a strategic shift in the Church of England), but downwards for older candidates training part-time (not helped by the pressure to reduce funding from three to two years).

The different modes of training offer considerable flexibility. The daytime programme is focussed on Monday-Thursday; students can commute daily or weekly (some from quite a distance). It is also possible for part-time students to use the daytime programme (Tuesdays & Wednesdays). The evening/weekend

programme brings together students from different centres and has crossover points (particularly worship and meals on Tuesday evenings) where daytime/evening cohorts can mix. Anglican ordinands' part-time training is known as the *Queen's Regional Course*; its evening classes are physically accessible to partner dioceses. Methodist part-time training is national and the *Queen's Connexional Course* therefore uses a good deal of online teaching.

During 2018-19 the Centre for Discipleship & Theology included 21 training as Readers in the dioceses of Worcester and Lichfield. The latter diocese did not take on new students for that year as they were reviewing their training provision. They have now reshaped their programme – still in partnership with Queen's – and have launched with a large intake (27) of new students.

The Centre for Continuing Ministerial Development was reviewed for the Methodist Church only, but together with other centres (for Black Theology, Global Christianity and Research & Scholarship), helps to create an environment, ethos and community life that is distinctive, diverse and vibrant - as well as creating a complex set of programmes and relationships that can (and do) only thrive because of the quality of leadership both individual and shared.

The Relation of the Queen's Foundation to its sponsoring church denominations

The relation of Queen's to the sponsoring denominations is inevitably asymmetric. This is well described in the Queen's initial PER response, where the first Threat to the Foundation is described as 'The tension of responding to being in **both** an unrestricted marketplace (Anglican) **and** a monopoly of a sole provider (Methodist).' Similarly Queen's identifies continuing tensions within the Methodist Church as a further threat: 'Pressure in the Methodist Church for different patterns of training (especially for more localised or specialised ministries) that fragment the cohorts of students or the resources available to Queen's, weakening Methodist identity and presence here.' (Threat 7; see also Weakness 5).

A new Partnership Agreement between the Methodist Council (representing the Methodist Church) and the Queen's Foundation came into effect in September 2019, a few weeks before the Review itself. The Principal comments that 'the partnership agreement was developed over more than two years of high-quality discussion and cooperation.' We unambiguously support this agreement.

We reflect further at Sections B and D of this report on equipping Methodist (and, to an extent, Church of England) trainees for working within a wide diversity of church traditions and at the required level of responsibility. But we believe the 'sole provider' issue also points to a continuing underlying need for lines of communication between the Foundation and the Methodist Church to work as effectively as possible, so that both parties can be responsive to each other's requirements. The new Partnership Agreement seeks to address this issue, but as the review took place soon after its implementation, the team were unable to observe its provisions in operation. We believe that **Recommendation 2** at Section A will help those charged with its future practical outworkings.

PER evidence gathering

The Ministry Division-appointed reviewers visited the Foundation as a group during the week of Monday 21st to Thursday 24th October. In addition, individual members of the team visited the preceding residential weekend and on November 7/8 training for Methodist Probationer presbyters and deacons (under the auspices of the CMD) and a meeting of the Methodist Oversight Committee.

The PER included revalidation by Durham University, building on the university's initial validation of Queen's programmes in 2014. The Durham reviewers visited on the Monday 21st October to carry out a series of interviews with key members of senior management staff, teaching staff, and student representatives from different facets of the TEI, and also met to debrief with the Ministry Division team at the end of the day.

The Common Awards programmes delivered by the Queen's Foundation and under review for this revalidation exercise were:

- Foundation Award in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60444);
- Certificate in Higher Education (CertHE) in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60446);
- Certificate in Higher Education (CertHE) in Christian Ministry and Mission (V60346);
- Diploma in Higher Education (DipHE) in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60447);
- BA (Hons) in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V604);
- Graduate Diploma (GradDip) in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60422);
- Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60414);
- Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60412);
- Master of Arts in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60407).

The combined review team gathered information by:

- written submissions from stakeholders (Anglican dioceses – including bishops and DDOs, Methodist representatives, former students)
- meetings with the principal, president of governors (and one other governor), Reader training directors, centre directors, chaplain, librarian
- meetings with the audit committee, leadership team, staff-student community forum, college oversight committee
- meetings with representatives of students (including Readers-in-training), staff (academic and administrative), spouses/partners, placement supervisors
- observation of a teaching weekend, probationers' module, weekday daytime and evening teaching and worship

We also had access to a variety of paperwork and information including:

- The 2014 Ministry Division inspection report
- The Foundation website
- Sample learning & formation agreements
- Sample bishops' reports
- Uploaded onto Moodle: SWOT and self-evaluation, strategic development plan, welcome handbooks, worship handbook, academic policies and documents, learning outcomes and mapping documents, QAA reports, Office for Students documents, annual report 2018-19, governor reports, action plan and risk register, annual self-evaluation reports, partnership agreement between Queens and the Methodist Church

The reviewers would like to thank all the members of staff and students of the Foundation for the warmth of their welcome and their generosity in sharing of their time, thoughts, hopes and fears. We found a

community that was open, undefensive and positive; we also experienced a sincere resolve to grow in wisdom, holiness (personal and corporate), theological insight and ministerial competence.

Summary of outcomes

The Report is written in relation to the PER Criteria outlined in the September 2019 edition of the *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Formation Handbook*.

The review team’s outcome judgements on the Queen’s Foundation in preparing candidates for ministry in the two sponsoring churches are set out in the table below. In short, and as we hope is clear from our commendations and recommendations, we have found in Queen’s a clear vision for formation and a vibrant learning community characterised by collaborative leadership, mutual respect and the modelling of life-long learning and development. We encourage the College to take forward the good work of consolidating its working relationship and communication with the Methodist Church via the new partnership agreement, to look at the range and pattern of corporate worship and at the tutorial process, and to discuss with sponsoring churches the issue of appropriate programme length for initial formation, in order to ensure that students can be equipped for their roles as effectively as possible.

In addition, the Common Awards review team was satisfied with the quality and standards of the programmes listed at page 9, recommends that they should be revalidated for a period of six years, and is satisfied that the Queen’s Foundation continues to be a suitable collaborative partner for the University.

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

FULL REPORT

SECTION A: FORMATIONAL AIMS

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

1. The charitable objects registered with the Charity Commission are:
 - *the provision of part time and full time training for ordination within their respective churches for members of such Christian denominations as the board of governors shall from time to time determine;*
 - *the provision of such forms of theological education and training as the board of governors shall from time to time determine;*
 - *the promotion of research in theology and related subjects.*
2. Before the last Review Report (April 2014) – and in response to a recommendation of the one before that – the Foundation had reformulated its vision (fully in keeping with the above objects) as below:

Queen's is dedicated to excellence in theological education and personal formation by:

 - *Nurturing and equipping Christians in their discipleship*
 - *Preparing people for mission and ministry in lay and ordained roles*
 - *Resourcing research that serves the mission of God in the world.*

We celebrate unity in diversity, in a community that is international, multi-cultural, and ecumenical. We aim to enable Christians to deepen their spiritual life, to grow in a faith that is generous, enquiring, deeply rooted and creative in thought and practice, and to be passionate for God's work in God's world.
3. These aims have not changed and appear prominently on the website, in the welcome handbooks and in the strategic plan. These are fleshed out by statements of ethos that reflect further decisions taken by staff and governors in recent years, such as the launch of the Centre for Black Theology in 2018.
4. The consistent reference to the vision is coupled with a continuous re-articulation of the Foundation's ethos. We found this to be fully embedded in the documentation and well understood by staff, students and other stakeholders.
5. The Reader training programmes for the dioceses of Lichfield and Worcester are a partnership between the Foundation and the respective diocese. They have both been recently reviewed and the Lichfield programme substantially reformulated to reflect new thinking in the diocese.
6. The diocese of Lichfield gives special focus to Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism in all its work. This is articulated in the Reader Handbook, together with the three priorities for Reader ministry of the Central Reader Council (to be encouraging enablers of mission, to be inspirational teachers of the faith, to exercise leadership in society as well as church) alongside an understanding of Readers as trained lay theologians. The recent reformulation of the programme was led by these aims and

resulted in a conscious disconnecting of the Reader Training programme from ordination training to reflect the specific priorities for Reader ministry.

7. Both dioceses give prominence both to their own diocesan vision statements and to that of the Foundation. The diocese of Worcester has fewer Reader candidates (approximately five per year) and therefore continues to use the evening classes at Queens, thus also practising collaboration with those training for ordination. There is opportunity to instil its own diocesan ethos in the weekend and Saturday modules that focus on preaching and communicating faith in today's culture.

Commendation I

We commend the Foundation (and, for Reader Training, its partner dioceses) for the clarity of its vision and formational aims and for the vision/aims-led development of their programmes.

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

8. The Foundation's programmes and pathways have been developed within the Common Awards framework, which itself was constructed to meet the 2014 Church of England learning outcomes (with Methodist participation). They also conform to additional criteria required by Ministry Division for pathway approval. Documentation was provided by the Foundation to show how modules in the different pathways map onto those learning outcomes. We were assured that the new programme for Lichfield Readers was developed with reference to the Reader learning outcomes (though there is no specific mapping document for this).
9. The Foundation has responded to the desire of partner Anglican dioceses for greater flexibility in its part-time provision by providing a graduate diploma and a 180 credit certificate of HE.
10. There is ample evidence in ASE documents and elsewhere that programmes – including those aspects that are not credited under Common Awards – are carefully reviewed and adjusted. The foundation has been understandably shy of a full-scale review in the light of Church of England learning outcomes, as these are likely to change in the next twelve months (for ordinands, and with likely consequences for Reader formation).
11. In 2016 the Methodist Conference adopted new criteria and competences for candidates for ordained ministry and for those entering their first appointments as probationers. These are being gradually introduced so that students leaving Queen's in summer 2020 will be assessed by the college oversight committee according to the old guidelines, but during their probation will be subject to the new competences. The Queen's PER summary notes the problems which this causes:

We work closely to the learning outcomes that our two sponsoring churches have agreed, and which are regularly revised to embody developing strategic aims and priorities. We note that these learning outcomes were at one point common but are now diverging, which is a particular challenge to us as most of the curriculum is shared. (PER document 1.b.iv)
12. The Queen's Foundation has amended its procedures to take account of these changes. The 2020 Methodist leavers will be prepared for the changes before they leave Queen's.
13. Both the Methodist Church and the Church of England have begun to emphasise much more urgently the need to prioritise evangelism and for its ministers to be formed as confident and

effective practitioners in this field. We noted in the Foundation's submission their desire to 'have a heart for mission, in which evangelism and nurture of believers is inseparable from loving service and social justice, and that leadership in all these areas is part of what it is to be an ordained minister'. Placing evangelism within that wider context is a characteristic of the Foundation, noted and valued by the stakeholders we consulted. However, it may be that to meet the expressed needs of both sponsoring denominations the Foundation needs to be more confident in addressing the topic of evangelism without adding a 'but'.

14. We were encouraged to hear from the Principal of recent discussions with the Methodist Church leading to evangelism 'being foregrounded' with the appointment of an evangelism specialist. A past attempt at this was not successful, perhaps attributable to the shortage of potential candidates who might also have the spiritual and theological chemistry to inhabit the current ethos with the right mix of sympathy and challenge. We make the following recommendation aware, following our conversations, that this is pushing at an open door but we want to underline its importance.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Foundation enhances its teaching staff with someone with the specialism of evangelism and that that this priority is made explicit in strategic and other documents (and therefore in the culture).

15. The Foundation is undoubtedly ahead of the curve, however, when it comes to addressing recent Church of England priorities in widening diversity and opportunity. The (unusual) success in recruiting BAME teaching and tutorial staff and in making Black Theology an integral part of the curriculum has been the fruit of a clear strategy and determined action. It has helped widen the Foundation's diversity and create a culture that is instinctively more inclusive and hospitable.
16. The review team was privileged to receive a large amount of feedback from various Methodist constituencies in response to the requests made prior to the review visit. Members of the team also had conversations with Methodist Connexional Officers, and were reminded of previous debates at the Methodist Conference and at the Methodist Ministries Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee. Several different strands of the feedback and discussions highlight the tension inherent in Queen's situation as the sole provider of initial ministerial training (we have noted earlier Queen's own acknowledgement of this tension). Both Methodist Connexional committees and Officers, and the staff at Queen's, work hard to reduce these sources of tension. As long ago as the 2014 Inspection it was noted that better mechanisms of communication were needed between Queen's and the Connexion. This was both to help the Foundation find better ways of meeting the expressed needs of the connexion; and to provide a place where those providing training could make an appropriate input to help inform and shape those needs. Church structures are often not good at articulating and discussing larger theological issues – in this case those around formation for ministry. The Ministries Committee is the structural place within Methodism where such discussions can take place, but the committee needs good quality briefing to do its work well. Since 2014 both formal and informal lines of communication have been strengthened. The new partnership agreement between Queen's and the Methodist Council addresses this issue, but is too recent for the review team to comment upon its practical effect. The **Appendix** provides more details of the background to the partnership agreement. **Recommendation 2** seeks to support the new agreement and encourage those charged with its implementation.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that both the Officers of the Connexional Team and the Leadership Team of the Queen's Foundation ensure that the lines of communication between the Foundation and the Methodist Church as set out in the Partnership Agreement are fully implemented and adequately serviced.

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

16. The home page of the website communicates to would-be students what the Foundation is trying to be. The first of the characteristics is

'Ecumenical and inclusive: where we cherish our ecumenical commitment and our desire to be inclusive of a range of traditions within as well as between churches. Our aim is to create safe spaces in which Christians of many traditions learn from and with each other, becoming more confident in their own traditions without defensiveness or fear of those who think or believe differently.'

17. Traditionally Queen's has been known for its liberalism but there is now a conscious attempt to be respectful of, and hospitable to, a range of theological viewpoints. This is a necessity for Methodist students as the Foundation is currently the sole provider of initial ministerial education. But we also met non-Methodist staff and students from a range of theological traditions and worship practices. We witnessed teaching that was, for instance, highly sensitive to the potential challenges of biblical criticism to more conservative students.

18. Comments we received from neighbouring dioceses included:

Queens' strength is its diversity. At its best it represents the best of a range of traditions.

Queen's seems good at helping students 'get out of their territorial boxes' and learn from a variety of traditions. We think that the ecumenical nature of the Queen's community helps, but there is also something particularly effective about the character of the community.'

In general Queen's Curates have shown themselves to be collaborative in their approach to ministry. However, there is scope to develop a greater critical awareness of their own pre-commitments to liberal protestant perspectives in theology and ecclesiology so that they are more open to work constructively with colleagues who are from different theological traditions represented in the CofE – e.g. conservative Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics, and those committed to theological perspectives rooted in "classic theology".

19. We heard student representatives speak of the staff as representing a diversity working together and who are willing to challenge and be challenged (and learn). They spoke of a spirituality session where two staff members spoke of their very different approaches with great mutual respect.
20. The communication strategy has a well-articulated ethos that is made evident by the ministers it forms and by strong personal relationships with stakeholders. It is supported by an excellent website that is clear, informative and well laid out. The Principal made clear his disinclination to spend scarce resources on glossy brochures or a prospectus. While admirable in its way, this may be something to be revisited by his successor. We see good arguments either way. Perhaps more importantly we were surprised by how few responses there were from Anglicans to our invitation

to provide written comments and submissions. We noted the thin representation from neighbouring dioceses on the governing body and therefore wonder whether more attention needs to be given to building up the sense of partnership and ‘ownership’ of the ministerial formation that the Foundation provides on their behalf (see section C). This is acknowledged in the Foundation’s own SWOT analysis:

While our relationships with some regional dioceses are strong others are not.

21. The comments we did receive from neighbouring dioceses were largely positive.

Queen’s has been very generous and flexible in negotiating bespoke pathways required for some of our ordinands. This has been done with the minimum of fuss and with great grace and kindness.

Ordinands generally return to the Diocese happy with their time at Queen’s.

22. In PER 1.b.iv the Foundation comments:

For the Methodist Church we pay particular attention to connexional priorities, re-focused on ‘Our Calling’ and on the most recent priorities for evangelism and apologetics. We are actively involved in the work of the Faith and Order committee of the church as it considers changing patterns of ministry, and with the Ministries Committee as both consider the challenges of decline.’

23. We saw evidence of this, especially in the current discussions concerning co-operation between the Foundation and the connexional team in planning for the appointment of a specialist teacher in Evangelism (see **Recommendation I**).

24. The adoption by the Methodist Conference in 2012 of the Report 'The Fruitful Field' and the subsequent implementation of some of its recommendations has been discussed earlier. All that needs to concern us here is that the process and its implementation were highly contentious within the Methodist Church, and have led to ongoing discussion at various levels of the Church as to the proper way forward. In all of this the Queen's Foundation is a major player, and the results of the continuing deliberations within the Methodist Church will have a considerable impact on the future direction of ministerial training within the Foundation. The Foundation acknowledges this as a threat in its PER analysis:

[Threat] 7. Pressure in the Methodist Church for different patterns of training (especially for more localised or specialised ministries) that fragment the cohorts of students or the resources available to Queen’s, weakening Methodist identity and presence here.

25. An earlier PER comment (Weakness 5) noted that the Foundation is not good at publicity and in countering perceptions held within the sponsoring Churches. In this context Methodist feedback suggests that there is indeed much useful work that should be undertaken to engage with these perceptions.

The review team has Confidence 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 and community organisations to enhance students' formational opportunities.

26. With the decline of Regional Training Partnerships, and the closure of the Selly Oak colleges, Queen's has lost partners but gained a pre-eminent position in the area providing theological education for ministry. They have a national significance for both sponsoring churches and a more regional one for Church of England part-time training. They have made use of their locality to develop relationships with Black majority churches both to provide theological education to their members and leaders and also to foster another dimension of ecumenism that broadens the diversity of the Foundation's community. The Foundation has also absorbed the international dimension of the Selly Oak colleges and has exchange and visiting research programmes with churches and seminaries in the global south. They are a principal partner of Citizens UK, which gives students experience and expertise in community organising. There are strong links with Jewish and Muslim communities and organisations that give rich opportunities for inter-faith engagement.
27. There is a large range of placements (see also F4), including chaplaincies, and each student is required to have a 'link church' where they would normally worship and participate on Sundays and during the week. We met a group of placement supervisors. Most also hosted (or had hosted) students as the minister of their link church – when they were more at arm's length from the college so as to provide an independent, supportive environment. The supervisors clearly enjoyed their role, were stimulated (as were their congregations) by the theological acuity of the students and felt supported in their role by the Foundation (with helpful supervisors' days).
28. Some particularly Methodist issues emerged in this area. We were lucky to receive a large amount of feedback from the different Methodist constituencies who were canvassed for comment which included several recent students and a number of receiving Circuit Superintendents, placement supervisors and District Probation Secretaries. Many of the comments noted a lack of preparedness on the part of new Probationer Ministers for the practicalities of the life of a Circuit Minister. We note elsewhere that Methodist Probationer Ministers must be equipped to take on far more responsibility from the first day of their appointment than the Anglican curates alongside whom they have trained. Similar comments, however, have commonly been made in the past about those entering public ministry. In part they represent a suspicion of theological training within all our Churches and the – surely misplaced – desire on the part of some to give priority to practical training at the expense of theological equipping.
29. On the other hand, shorter courses do inevitably imply less time for practicalities. We note that the introduction of compulsory Ministerial Supervision for all Methodist ministers in the active work seems to have had a positive impact on the supervision of Probationers by Superintendents; such close supervision in the early months of public ministry was always expected but often absent.
30. We do have three areas of concern which we raise here and address in later Recommendations:
 - i. Several respondents note the lack of familiarity of some new Probationer ministers both with the ethos of the Methodist Church and its normative patterns of worship. **Recommendation 4** on worship AT Section B4 will be helpful here. In an ecumenical situation it is always important to present the reality of church life as well as the ecumenical ideal.

- ii. Both staff and students noted the difficulty in finding suitable Methodist placements for students. Some attributed this to increased pressure and stress felt by many ministers and Circuits faced with the problems of institutional decline and the shortage of Methodist ministers. Some Circuits feel that they simply do not have the capacity to offer placements to students. Other respondents comment that the concentration of students and resources in Birmingham means that local Circuits are particularly over-stretched. This could be an area of conversation between the Foundation staff and the connexional team.
- iii. Link Church attachments are organised differently for Methodist and Anglican students. Anglicans often remain attached to their home/sending church, whilst Methodists never do and are usually encouraged to find a suitable Link in a different Circuit to their home church. Students themselves organise these attachments, they are encouraged to spend time in their first half-term visiting different churches and then to make a definite attachment for the remainder of their initial training. This needs to be approved by their tutor, and is occasionally changed by the Foundation. Several students noted to us the amount of time which arranging this link takes; this eats into the time available for observing a new place of worship and – again of particular importance for Methodists – beginning to learn to lead worship in a new role. This is probably reflected in the fact that one student respondent saw the Link Church as a weak point in the training programme, where others believed that it could provide an appropriate place to begin acquiring the necessary practical skills of ministry. There is scope here for a tightening of the process so that more students have a more fulfilling experience of their Link Church.

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

- 31. In addressing this Criterion the reviewers asked for and were given access to the following policies and procedures: Policy statement re Safeguarding children, young people and adults who are vulnerable; Harassment and Bullying Policy; Code of Conduct (students); Equal Opportunities Policy and Strategy. All were up to date. We have also had sight of the Practice Guidance on Carrying out Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks issued by the Methodist Church in 2018 and followed by the Foundation. Staff have also been provided with Safeguarding training; the reviewers have seen the booklets issued for both the Foundation/Refresher Module and also the Advanced Module.
- 32. In discussion with the Safeguarding Officer and the Director of Operations about the frequency of the safeguarding training provided, it became clear this may not happen as frequently as the reviewers feel it should (at least once every three years). Both the Safeguarding Officer and her assistant attend external meetings about safeguarding matters on a regular basis to keep up to date with national developments.
- 33. Currently no record is kept concerning the safeguarding status of Trustees. This is a gap which needs to be remedied, and we recommend below that Trustees should be included in the safeguarding training provided for staff members.
- 34. The Wellbeing and Safeguarding Officer is available for students and members of their families if required. The officer works alongside other colleagues in their roles as personal tutors, the Centre Directors and the Principal (especially around safeguarding matters). This collaborative approach is multi-layered and ensures accountability as well as the encouragement for appropriate personal

responsibility to be taken. In conversation it was clear that the variety of issues for which support is offered is very wide. Reports are provided to the Board of Governors.

35. An All Age Eucharistic Worship service takes place once a term on a Wednesday evening where everyone is welcome – students and their families. It is a popular service and often involves the children leading prayers. In addition, the Centre for Black Theology based at Queen's hosts a forum once a month for anybody (i.e. not just students) who wishes to attend to discuss black theology. These are examples of how 'community' is encouraged by the Foundation, to include families. As one tutor told the reviewers during a discussion 'we work really hard to support our families.'
36. For Lichfield Reader trainees, safeguarding is completed through their sending churches. There is also a Module on Safeguarding in the course they follow.
37. Lichfield Reader trainees feel very well supported and stated that if they had any concerns they would immediately go to the Ministry Training Enabler for the diocese, who is very supportive, resolving any concerns they may have.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the frequency of Safeguarding Training for the staff is reviewed and increased to at least once every three years, and that training is extended to include Trustees.

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

38. The Strategic Development Plan 2019-2022 states that the campus is based close to the centre of Birmingham and boasts excellent local amenities and services. 'The main site is leased from Calthorpe Estates at a peppercorn rent, which is due for renewal in 2062. The Campus was added to in 2016 with a new 32 bed accommodation and teaching facility.' This site is leased from the Methodist church and the terms of the lease restrict the use of the site to Queen's students.
39. Work to improve the more aged Handsworth flats has been a priority for Queen's, as stated in the Strategic Development Plan. We understand from the Principal that there have been several phases of refurbishment of the flats over the last 20 years and the most recent work to renew and replace the heating and hot water was completed before the PER visit, along with refurbishment of the flooring and decoration.
40. Frances Young House (the new accommodation) accommodates all permanent residents and weekly commuters. Those who use it speak very highly of it. Accommodation on the main site is used for students staying at the weekend, overnight and also weekend accommodation for part time students.
41. The recent appointment (April 2019) of a new Business Manager has already had a positive impact on the planned cyclical maintenance of the buildings. The development of good partnerships with local contractors is a priority for the maintenance team and is being actively practised. In conversation with the new Business Manager it became clear that with the new focus on planning, it is hoped that 'firefighting' will become a thing of the past.
42. The Foundation is very disability conscious from the need to support those with Learning Disabilities in their studies to supporting those living with physical disabilities. Wheelchair access to different buildings (lecture rooms, restaurant, chapel and accommodation) is provided. There is also a stair-lift

in some of the accommodation on site to facilitate access to bedrooms on the first floor. That said, in the chapel itself there was limited space for wheelchairs during worship. This may be a matter for further consideration.

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

43. Corporate worship is at the heart of community life, both for midweek and weekend students. The placement supervisors and curacy incumbent we met were impressed with the rootedness of the students in 'spiritual practices'. Both Anglican and Methodist consultees, however, had reservations about how well students were prepared to lead worship confidently in their respective traditions. Our observation was that the student-led worship tended to be non-denominational (sometimes lowest common denominator), perhaps reflecting the larger influence of non-denominational networks or styles (e.g. Spring Harvest, Iona, Greenbelt).
44. Whilst that may not be a bad thing, we did feel (and hear from others) the anxiety that students were not moving on from Queen's with a strong rootedness and familiarity with patterns and traditions of worship that are more normative in their denominations.
45. The weekly pattern of worship involves a daily service at 12.30 or 12.45pm (which all are expected to attend) and one at 5pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (sometimes Communion; all are expected to attend one of these). This pattern has been stable for many years, and has not changed since the last Review, where it was commended. We could see the advantage of having the core daily prayer at lunchtime. In the mornings a good number of the community travel in, often after having dropped off children at school. An early morning service would not be inclusive or family-friendly. A difficulty however, particularly from an Anglican point of view, is that there is no substantial traditional form of worship for that time of day.
46. The comparatively small number of corporate services is supplemented by optional student-organised worship, including regular Morning Prayer, Night Prayer and Taizé worship.
47. For Anglican purposes this has considerable merits. Whilst not overburdening the central acts of worship with specifically Anglican habits and disciplines, it does give ordinands the opportunity of developing a habit of using the daily office that is expected by Canon C26. It also balances the 'official' worship, where there are good practices of review and feedback, with occasions which do not bear that pressure. For similar reasons, presumably, members of staff do not attend Morning Prayer (though some do attend late evening services) – a custom which is perhaps too rigid and does not allow the staff to model disciplines of prayer or to help advise students about good habits in leading and participating in the daily office.
48. Residential weekends have a more traditional pattern of worship (Friday night, Saturday morning and evening, Sunday morning early and late) and those of us who attended thought that the quality was high and its rhythm appropriate.
49. The chapel is a traditional rectangular building, refurnished with chairs and with a restyled semicircular platform and round Communion Table. In the main body the chairs face inwards towards each other (chapel-style); others are in circular arcs behind the Table. The chapel is not large enough to contain the whole community (on a Tuesday evening for instance, hence the option of Wednesday evening) but it provides a suitable environment for the regular worship.

50. A worship handbook sets out the ethos and practices for worship. This is supplemented by extra resource sheets on matters such as copyright law and the use of psalms. Guidance is given in the handbook about using inclusive language and other principles of public worship. During our time the Book of Common Prayer was not used but we gather it does feature from time to time in the overall diet.
51. Students are encouraged to work out their own patterns of prayer and worship (subject to the expectations stated above) and this is included in their Learning & Formation Agreement. These forms are seen by the respective Director of Anglican/Methodist Formation who will pick up concerns with personal tutors.
52. This policy - of having expectations rather than making things compulsory, and of encouraging and enabling students to work out their own disciplines in consultation with their tutors – seemed to be vindicated by a low level of infantilization revealed in our conversations with students: ‘I am treated as a proper grown up’. There appears to be a healthy balance of corporate commitments and individual responsibility.
53. As alluded to earlier, feedback from the sponsoring denominations does reveal a certain unease with the lack of groundedness in the student’s own denominational traditions of worship:

Students do not always emerge as confident and comfortable leaders of formal/straightforward Anglican liturgy that we would expect.

Queen’s need to foster in its ordinands:

- *Stronger capacity to lead formal Anglican liturgy and to inhabit mainstream CofE practice with greater assurance.*
- *Deeper and more integrated Christian spirituality rooted in a discipline of daily prayer which has a corporate dimension.*

54. In the light of this we would make the following recommendation (which could well wait until the arrival and settling in of the new principal).

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Foundation reviews its pattern and practices of corporate worship in the light of the concern that it is not preparing its students fully enough for leading regular and mainstream worship within the sponsoring denominations.

B5 Staff model appropriate patterns of spirituality, learning and reflection.

55. Our meeting with student representatives demonstrated a high degree of confidence in the staff. As already mentioned, they spoke of a spirituality session where two staff members spoke of their very different approaches with great mutual respect; they spoke of the staff giving of themselves generously (including in teaching) but maintaining good boundaries (‘they model how to use their own stories appropriately’); they spoke of the staff being willing to challenge and be challenged (and learn) and of their capacity to ‘make you think outside the box’. On a number of occasions we were told of how the staff look after each other (e.g. dragging each other off to coffee).

56. We observed a community where staff and students were at ease with one another in corporate settings, and where staff as well as students were open to learning and accustomed to receiving feedback.
57. The Foundation's own paperwork in preparation for the PER acknowledged that the staff are liable to overwork:

We seek to model what it is to balance our various vocations – to work, discipleship and ministry, to our families/friends, to life at Queen's and to engagement with causes and movements beyond the Church. We recognise that at times we can be examples of overwork, of finding it difficult to say no, of struggling to know how to prioritise tasks among complex and conflicting demands. We try to be honest about these realities and tensions to help our students also be honest about them.

58. We would add the observation that the Leadership team were insistent that decisions that might lead to overwork are taken corporately. This mutual sense of responsibility, together with the mutual care referred to above, at least mitigates the impact of overwork, and is a good model of collegiality for the students.
59. It was also clear to us that staff engage in many church and other commitments beyond the Foundation and find time to research and publish (albeit that sabbaticals can be squeezed by college pressures).

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

SECTION C: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

C1 The TEI has clear and effective governance structures.

60. In addressing this criterion the reviewers were able to evidence that there exist clear and effective governance structures through a series of one to one discussions with various individuals as well as attendance at appropriate meetings.
61. The reviewers were provided with a flowchart which clearly described both Organisational information and the structure of the committees involved at Queen's. The Principal and the Audit Committee (newly formed in 2018-19) both report to the Governing Body (which, at the time of the review consisted of eleven governors) as well as liaising with the Leadership Team (also new since the last PER) and other groups – both of staff and students. Other groups include the Staff Student Community Forum and the Academic Management Group and individuals include the Director of Finance and the Director of Operations. Through discussions with staff and attendance at meetings of the Leadership Team and the Audit Committee the reviewers were able to verify that the process of communication works well at the Foundation. This is reinforced by the presence of a student representative in part of the Governors meeting once a term.
62. In addition to the Governors meetings there are meetings of the Operations Team. The reviewers have seen the terms of reference for this meeting, membership of which includes *inter alia* the Principal, Director of Operations, Director of Finance and the College Business Manager. There are standing Agenda items as well as some items which are addressed once a year (e.g. annual budgetary review) and the Planned Preventative Maintenance plan. Meetings take place weekly during term time and at least twice per month outside of term time or as and when needed.
63. The Audit Committee (a sub-committee of the Governing Board) meets quarterly. The reviewers who attended this meeting felt that there was not adequate representation from West Midlands Bishops on the Governing Body. This view was echoed by some on the Audit Committee who saw this as a sadness.
64. Reports on the progress made by the Foundation in various areas are produced by the Principal and others which the reviewers have seen; these include the Principal's Report to the Audit Committee 2019, the Business Manager's Report (Nov 2019) , as well as financial information provided by the Audit Committee. The reviewers also have had sight of the Management Accounts 2018/2019 which showed a positive result for the year. An external firm of Auditors are employed to scrutinise the accounts monthly and to prepare management accounts on a termly basis. The implementation of a new software accounting package will improve the information provided to the Governors and also the Office for Students.
65. Administrative support is well-provided and we saw evidence of good systems of communication and planning which those involved are constantly seeking to improve. The way in which the Foundation has already begun to act on its Strategic Development Plan for 2019-2022 following the successful registration as an Approved Provider for the Office of Students in January 2019 is ample evidence of the strength of leadership and business management of the Foundation.

Commendation 2

We commend Queen's for its clear and effective internal governance structures and its communication and planning.

C2 The TEI has effective leadership.

66. In considering this Criterion we sought evidence as to how well the Principal worked with both the Leadership Team and the governing body. Through discussions and observation in meetings which we attended it was clear that mutual respect was a key factor in the success of this. The Director of Operations spoke highly of the way in which the Principal has increasingly sought the points of view of his colleagues in leading the Foundation forward, not least in the successful registration as an Approved Provider for the Office for Students.
67. It was clear to the reviewers that there is indeed a widely owned vision for excellence as well as a good motivational climate which encourages the learning and growth of the students. When we spoke with individual students as well as attending the staff student community forum this perception was reinforced. That students feel empowered to raise any concerns they may have and recognise that their input is also valued cannot be in any doubt.
68. Minutes of meetings as well as our own direct observations indicate that the governance body does work effectively. Feedback is generated from issues raised at one meeting which is shared at the following meeting (Minutes document this) reflecting good communication between the different bodies (students / staff / directors) and actions resulting therefrom. This impression was consolidated through discussions with both staff and students on many different occasions throughout the visit.

Commendation 3

We commend Queen's for its clear modelling of mutual respect and inclusivity within its learning community.

C3 Trustees are appropriately recruited, supported and developed.

69. As part of the review of this criterion request was made for sight of the CVs of the Trustees and also teaching staff. A brief discussion at the Audit Committee provided reassurance that trustees are appropriately recruited by virtue of their skills and experience.
70. Having reviewed the Recruitment Policy as well as other interconnecting ones (Equal Opportunities Policy and Strategy, Safeguarding etc) it is clear that both trustees and all teaching staff are appropriately recruited, supported (supervisions) and offered the opportunity for continual professional development. The Director of Operations took great pride in stating that, having undertaken a benchmarking review in different areas, Queen's is able to call itself a 'Real Living Wage employer'.

C4 The TEI has effective business planning and fundraising.

71. There is a requirement for financial transparency vis-à-vis the accounts. The Director of Operations was able to confirm that the Foundation is working towards compliance in 2019-20 with the Public Sector Equality Duty and demonstrates transparency so those who wish to do so can verify where public funds are being spent. The reviewers confirmed this through attendance at the Audit Committee Meeting on 23rd October 2019.

72. Evidence was requested and obtained to satisfy the reviewers that the TEI does have a business and strategic plan (the Strategic Development Plan 2019-2022) which covers resources needed. In discussion we were able to seek clarification of potential commercial and financial threats as well as opportunities. We have had sight of financial accounts the contents of which reinforce the reassurance given by Durham University that Queen's is financially stable.

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

73. As stated above we have had sight of the financial planning of Queen's through budgets, audited accounts and we are aware that both financial and risk matters are included on the Agendas of the Operations Team meeting and Audit Committee meeting (which reviewers attended). In discussion we were able to confirm that the accounts are backed up on computers regularly. Financial reporting is completed in a timely fashion and is concordant with Diocesan and others' requirements.

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

SECTION D: STUDENT OUTCOMES

Tutorial Formation

74. We make a general comment concerning tutorial formation at the start of this section.
75. When we expressed concern about the way in which formational and worship issues were monitored we received the confident reply from staff and student alike that such issues belonged within the tutorial system. Rather than compulsory attendance at many events, students must take responsibility for much of their learning and formation; and they will be accompanied in this by their tutor. A full time ministerial student has two tutorials each term, others less, but we were assured – again by both staff and students – that this was a minimum and that there were often more tutorials and in addition many other more informal opportunities for tutorial intervention.
76. When discussing formation with different parts of the community during our visit we received very positive affirmations of the process and were given good examples of the location of formation outside any narrow channels. We were told about and observed good examples of formation in the classroom and over coffee or meals. Many other informal opportunities exist.
77. We are all well aware that much of formation has always taken place in ways that are outside any formal process; through spiritual direction and cell or peer groups to give only two obvious examples. Properly, these things can never be part of any formal process, but ensuring that formation is taking place appropriately must always be part of the formal work of theological education and part of the church review process. The problem with a minimalist approach to either ministerial formation or development of worship skills (i.e. appropriate participation in and leadership of worship) is that it is difficult for the reviewers to observe and assess the full range of what really happens: for example, does everyone avail themselves of the 'extras' on offer, can students slip through the cracks, and how is this monitored?
78. In the case of Queen's the process is centred around the Learning and Formation Agreement. It is important to be clear that this Agreement is part of a process; to quote one of the staff:
- Students complete the form prior to the first tutorial they have with their personal tutor. The document is then discussed with the tutor at the tutorial, and where appropriate, notes may be added to the document as a result of the discussion. It is therefore both the document and the way in which it is worked through in tutorial conversation that is significant [emphasis original].*
79. We requested examples of the Agreement and are grateful to students for giving their permission for us to see a sample of anonymised Agreements. The form itself is an impressive document which seeks to map comprehensively each student's needs and aspirations. If a student takes the process seriously the form provides a detailed and demanding map for the student to follow with sections headed:
- *Belonging and Attendance*
 - *Spirituality, Prayer and Worship*
 - *Vocation and Preparation for Ministry*
 - *Worship Portfolio*
 - *Theological Learning*
 - *Developing Leadership in Mission*

- *Life Balance*
- *Personal Tutorials*

80. Inevitably the examples we saw were varied in both content and thoroughness. Some students use Section One (Belonging and Commitments) very well and from the way in which they complete the forms it is possible to get a feel for their whole life during their time at Queens; others do little more than list their academic modules. Similarly some students had meticulously completed the column headed 'Notes, action, commitments, etc. after discussion'; others made few notes in this column. We have no doubt that such differences form part of the tutorial conversation.
81. In other parts of the Review we discuss in more detail the move to student centred learning, and in the words of the Leadership Team from 'asking permission' to 'being accountable for'. In a situation where much of belonging and learning is 'voluntary' it is inevitable that the tutorial process will bear much of the weight of monitoring that a student's progress and ministerial formation is taking place at a proper pace, and – importantly – is leading towards outcomes that are acceptable to the sponsoring churches. Feedback from both sponsoring churches notes weaknesses here.
82. Shorter courses present their own problems with Churches having often unrealistic expectations of the amount of formational change which can occur in a short time. There are formal mechanisms in both denominations to assess whether outcomes at the end of initial training are acceptable, but everyone wants to notice and attempt to correct serious problems before this decisive point.
83. Can the Learning and Formation Agreement and the tutorial system bear the weight that is put upon them? Simply listing the very important issues covered by the Agreement (and within these categories is included discussion of role of placements and Link Churches) suggests the sheer amount of material that needs to be addressed in a few meetings.
84. It may be that the tutorial system has been given additional tasks over the years which mean that at least the formally required part of the process is now overloaded and cannot fully bear the weight.
85. Everything we have observed suggests that both students and staff value this part of their learning. Nonetheless we suggest that the time is right for a review by Queen's of the tutorial process with the intention of making clear more realistic normative demands and expectations.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the staff team conduct a review of the tutorial process and the Learning and Formation Agreements with the intention of making clear more realistic normative demands and expectations.

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

86. There are a wide range of modules on offer, which is reflected in the timetable, the number of pathways available, the lists of modules provided by the students in their Learning and Formation Agreements, and the comments from the External Examiner (2017-18)

'The general quality of students' work (the knowledge and skills demonstrated) is satisfactory. There is also a good range and scope of assessment appropriate to the curriculum and intended learning outcomes being examined'.

87. During a formal meeting with the students, one spoke of the diversity of modules and, as the course and their experience developed, how they were beginning to understand the importance of learning about the breadth of theological thought and how different theological disciplines related to each other.
88. Sessions attended on preaching were impressive, especially as this was an interdenominational group with a wide range of preaching experience. A number of students were spoken with between and following, the sessions. All the feedback was positive including one student who said: 'I've been stretched and made to think in ways I had not before'. For the student concerned this was a positive experience.
89. During teaching sessions on preaching there was an obvious respect for the different traditions represented in the class. Both in small groups and in plenary sessions, the students were asked to share what happened in their different denominations. The tutor took care to draw out the positive aspects of each tradition and modelled respect for the contributions that were made.
90. The Queen's PER document celebrates diversity but does not discuss how this celebration of different views relates to those who hold a more exclusive position. It would be good to see this explicitly discussed. This is a real issue: staff and students agreed that some Methodists were put off or being discouraged from entering training because of a perceived Queen's ethos. One Anglican diocesan response makes a very similar point. Similarly several students articulated concerns about whether their 'conservative' positions were acceptable to staff, and whether it was always possible to express their point of view in lectures. As we have noted staff are often at pains to make space for as wide a range of views as possible. It is clear, however, that this breadth is not always felt by students.
91. When asked, 'are there areas where you would have valued further or different training', one of the former students replied:
- I am aware ... we were not formally 'taught' the approach of writing a theological reflection and that this has been addressed in the current curriculum.'*
92. The evidence suggests changes have been made as theological reflection now appears on the timetable of taught modules, as well as references made to the importance of this approach during teaching sessions. One Anglican diocesan response notes: 'Though ordinands have studied theological reflection, we find that they are never that proficient in actually doing it...'
93. We don't make a recommendation concerning our observations in section D.I, but hope that our comments will be discussed by the Leadership Team and all tutors.

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

94. The External Examiner (2017 – 18) gave the following comments:

'I was very impressed with the range of modules offered to students, with an eye to more contemporary issues,' and, 'I also found that the curriculum for the modules and programs under consideration remain current, valid and relevant'.

95. Confirmation of these comments is given by a Methodist Supervisor who had been working with a student on the Circuit Based Learning Programme (CBLP). He was positive this type of ministerial training was very effective and fulfilled its aims, which state:

'[It was to] combine long-term observation, supervised practice and reflection in a Circuit context with continued reflection, community engagement and learning.'

96. His conclusion was that this was 'immensely helpful in preparing the student for presbyteral ministry'.

97. Another supervisor, who has hosted a number of students on placement, was generally positive about the ecumenical approach found at Queens and the ongoing formation and peer support made possible through probation studies, but concern was expressed that the emphasis on academic studies 'may sometimes be considered more important than the need to be practically equipped for ministry'. This supervisor shared experiences of two students who, for pastoral reasons, had fallen behind. Plans were put in place to ensure academic work was submitted to a new set of deadlines, but not for practical work missed. This supervisor commented:

'If students are to be equipped for ministry there needs to be a more realistic balance and greater effort to ensure that the practical experience of training relates to what may be the expectations when they enter Circuit.'

98. The Supervisor did balance this critique with the acknowledgment that on leaving college a probationary period continued the training process.

99. Some of these concerns were echoed during the meeting held with supervisors: most felt the students 'should have been further on'. It was reported by both Anglican and Methodist supervisors that there are students who are unaware of the liturgical traditions and practices of their own church. An Anglican supervisor reported some of the students he had encountered were uncomfortable leading worship. All of the Methodist student presbyters would have been accredited Local Preachers before entering college, and so would have had some training and experience, but some concern was expressed by presbyteral colleagues regarding a student's preparedness for leading Methodist Covenant and Baptism services, where such services are not a part of that student's tradition. Some supervisors hesitantly questioned whether Methodist students were ready to take on the responsibilities of a Probationer. This was echoed by some of the feedback we received from those who held supervisory roles for Probationer ministers. They saw gaps, sometimes significant, in the Probationers' preparation for Circuit ministry. This may be a question of building confidence in the local context, rather than what can realistically be expected of Queen's, especially in view of the brevity of initial training. Otherwise students have been well prepared.

100. Questions had been posed to a small number of alumni and generally responses affirmed the experiences they had had at Queens. One was very positive about having learned about inter-faith issues, and the emphasis on social justice, and how these related to the contemporary context. There was, though, a feeling that Asian theology was neglected and she commented she felt 'marginalised within the marginalised'. She would have appreciated bibliographies and the opportunity to learn about and explore this field of theology. In a meeting with current students, whilst work done on black theology was appreciated, they regretted the absence of Asian theology and they saw this as being important in relation to our contemporary context.

101. Alongside the statements by the alumni which highlighted certain issues there was also very positive feedback saying Queens had helped them grow as individuals, helped them to grow spiritually and academically¹ and, within certain modules,² had provided an introduction to liturgy, the sacraments and some specific occasional offices. Whilst the feedback spoke positively about being prepared for ministry, the feeling was expressed that two years is not long enough, from an academic, practical and formational perspective – a view shared during a meeting with the staff. The view was expressed that the Common Awards programme did not cover some of the initial training vital for the exercise of ministry, and which could easily be covered, for instance in a 'professional degree' style programme.
102. This also resonates with the Centre for Ministerial Formation Personal Tutors' meeting in which they were clear that the amount of time given to training is not long enough. This was reinforced by personal conversations with students. During an informal conversation one student explained she had had her training extended and was doing a third year. She spoke of the pastoral sensitivity with which that was handled but also how necessary this was for her own formation. She had spoken with a deacon who was saying she wished she could have done a third year as she had initially felt very unprepared. The student is now pleased and thankful for the gift of the extra time.
103. During a meeting with the staff they too were presenting the case for three years' training for formational reasons. There are, therefore, strong indications from staff, students and those receiving probationer ministers and curates that currently the shorter forms of training are not able to provide particularly the practical and formational aspects of training which the churches might hope for.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Queen's Foundation uses the appropriate formal channels to raise with the sponsoring denominations the question of the length of initial training, and difficulty of equipping ministers for public ministry in the short time available to train many students.

104. Each ministerial student is affiliated to a link church. Whilst feedback from both placement supervisors and former students suggested some students benefited from this association and tended to commit more than the suggested allocated time, others had not taken the link seriously enough.
105. One placement supervisor recommended that there needs to be a greater awareness of what is expected in relation to the Link Church to ensure that realistic targets and training are achieved.
106. The feedback from one of the previous students stated they would have appreciated spending more time on aspects of mission and evangelism.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the tutorial staff review the choice and/or allocation of students to Link Churches, so that their engagement with the Link Church is more clearly defined and there is

¹ Though one thought the course too academic and would have found more practical training helpful

² Denominational and Bridging into Ministry

an expectation that there will be more practical involvement, designed according to the student's previous experiences and gaps in learning.

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

- I07. All students are required to produce a worship Portfolio which is to include feedback on 5 different acts of worship throughout the year. Each student is part of an ecumenical group which together prepares and leads worship. Feedback is then given by a tutor.
- I08. The anonymised Learning and Formation Agreements we saw all indicated that students were following a variety of different approaches to private prayer, ranging from extemporaneous conversations to using set liturgies (both Anglican and Methodist). They also indicated attendance at a range of public worship and some mentioned attendance at student-run morning and evening prayers.
- I09. The range of student-initiated worship is impressive and varied. As we have discussed elsewhere (see D1) the Foundation values diversity and similarly encourages students to take responsibility for their own choices (from 'asking permission' to 'accounting for'). Both staff and students commended this attitude to us as seeking to move away from educational infantilisation towards students taking proper adult responsibility for their learning and formation. This however raises a difficult question. Whilst some, perhaps many, students will grasp enthusiastically the possibilities offered to expand their horizons, some will not. In the context of worship can a plethora of voluntary services challenge a student to examine and re-imagine their own practice?
- I10. This brings us back to the discussion and **Recommendations 4 and 5** in sections B4 and D.

D4 Students' personality, character and relationships.

- I11. Our contact with students, both formally and informally suggests to us that Queen's provides a healthy community within which students have many different opportunities to learn from and respect others and to grow into ministry. The phrase 'looking out for each other' was often used; it seemed to us with good reason. Many members would prefer to speak of a set of linked communities and we had a number of discussions where the concepts of different ways of belonging to Queen's and the importance of seeing belonging to Queen's as one among a number of important places to belong were explained to us.
- I12. There was much talk of overlapping circles of belonging. The Leadership Team articulated their feeling that attempting to gather the circles around any central point would be negative and likely to privilege certain groups (e.g. full-time and residential students). Against this it was suggested that there is a 'rhythm' to everyone's life at Queen's (though different for different groups), including a variety of gathering points. The pattern of Chapel followed by a meal was commended. It was suggested on several occasions that some communal meals were the most significant gathering point. All agreed that it was important that some of these places of belonging would lie outside Queen's.
- I13. Everyone also agreed, therefore, that the Queen's Foundation is a complicated institution which at first confuses newcomers but within which they normally find an appropriate niche. The experience of the Review Team mirrors this. Without exception students and staff were helpful in bringing us to understand the complexity of the place and almost always in sharing their appreciation of how the institution was aiding their learning and growth.

- I14. Our formal meeting with students introduced us to a large variety of ways in which students belonged to, were supported by, and grew within Queen's. By definition those available to meet us in the middle of the day and week were not a cross-section of the community but what they described seemed robust enough to be workable in other parts of the Foundation (and this was evidenced to those of us who met students at weekends). Students described an interlocking set of mostly informal points of belonging: accidental or 'opportunistic' groups (both staff and students noted the importance of long coffee breaks!); groups defined by type of residence; by denomination. They also valued belonging to groups where membership was allocated by staff: cell groups and worship teams. The students explained to us the great variety of worship that was student-led (including Morning Prayer and Compline) and voluntary but which they felt provided a rich diet.
- I15. The staff saw belonging to the community as primarily through the internal Centres. Each student's learning and academic courses mainly happened through these Centres and tutors were part of these. Our conversation with the students did not mention this as one of the points of belonging, but they may have taken it as read.
- I16. It will be clear that much of the belonging, worship and community life described above is voluntary. We pressed hard about whether such voluntary belonging was adequate in the context of ministerial formation, and whether it might be dangerous in that some students might accidentally or deliberately fall through gaps here. The students' response was that 'the community' was small enough for everyone to be noticed; they thought that those training for ministry probably generally did have good pastoral antennae, and that there were enough fixed points – the tutorial system and membership of cell groups, for example - to make this unlikely.
- I17. For our response to this see sections B4, D1 and D3.

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

- I18. In many ways Queen's self-understanding as a set of interlocking communities without any prioritised centre can only work if most or all members of the community (or set of communities, which is often Queen's preferred description) both understand and practise collaboration, shared leadership and mutual hospitality. On a practical level we saw many examples of this occurring in daily life, common meals and worship. A member of staff described Queen's as being a *diaconal* community. Much of the richness of the life of the community, and much that is vital for ministerial formation occurs in the *ad hoc* groups which are a major feature of student life.
- I19. Such an ideal is strongly promoted in the Queen's PER documents, and is there expanded to include groups beyond any narrow definition of the communities which make up the Foundation. Conversations with the Principal and staff shared Queen's continued commitment to keep pushing this expansive and hospitable model of community. So, for example, PER document b.ii lists groups with which new partnerships are emerging including Citizens UK, churches of the global south and the historic Black Majority Churches.
- I20. Although outside our strict remit the work of the Centre for Black Theology exemplifies this commitment and provides an accessible model for students for ordained ministry learning alongside the Centre.

121. The formation in 2012 of the Leadership Team and the continuing consolidation of its importance within the management and life of the Foundation provides a good model for collaboration and shared leadership. We commend this work and hope that the Leadership Team will continue to develop and expand its role.

Commendation 4

We commend the formation and continuing development of the Leadership Team as a vital part of the management and life of the Foundation.

122. Conversations with staff, students and members of the governing body suggested that all were alert to the dynamics noted in iii above and that staff tried to alert students to the importance of such issues.
123. On a less positive note Methodist feedback suggests that those entering public ministry do not always bring this experience of shared leadership and collaboration into their first appointment. The lack of Anglican response here may be a reflection that Methodist Probationers have significantly greater responsibility than Anglican curates from the start. One thoughtful response from a Circuit Superintendent who has also supervised students on placement notes how difficult it is for new Probationers to uphold a collaborative ideal and asks for more training in this area. The short length of most initial training is doubly relevant here: there is a minimal amount of time for students to absorb the ideals of collaborative leadership and little teaching time available in an already overcrowded curriculum.

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

124. In 2020 Queen's will celebrate fifty years as an ecumenical foundation. By definition a fully ecumenical shared institution cannot completely model the denominational churches which its students will be sent out to serve. Queen's own PER documentation acknowledges this (PER document 1.a Weakness 5; Threat 2), even if only in terms of external *misperception*. The feedback clearly demonstrates how difficult it is for an ecumenical institution to be seen as fully Anglican or Methodist.
125. The Leadership Team suggested that students related to the Foundation through the Centre to which they belong, and that for pre-ordination students this was through the denominational sections of the Centre for Ministerial Formation, and therefore was guided by denominational tutors from within each grouping. It is certainly the case that both tutors and students highly value the tutorial process and the Learning and Formation Agreements which guide it. As this is such an important part of the formation of ordained ministers we discuss it elsewhere (section D1).
126. Clearly worship will also form a key part of this denominational formation and we discuss this in section B4 and D3.
127. Similarly the student's Link Churches provide important contact with their sponsoring denominations, and for Methodist students can be an important component of their preparation to begin public ministry.
128. There is something of a mixed picture here. Some feedback suggests that students are not fully prepared for the realities of denominational church life, whereas most staff and students assert strongly that they value the ecumenical ideal held up through Queen's. At the same time, through

significant denominational courses, placements and the Link Church students are enabled (in their final year) to become sufficiently familiar with denominational life to minister effectively within it.

129. We make no specific recommendations under this heading, believing that recommendations elsewhere will be effective in reviewing denominational formation.

D7 Pioneer ministry training

130. Queen's does not formally offer training for pioneer ministry although one diocesan response suggests that such a development would be welcomed.

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

131. We have noted earlier that the Queen's PER response discusses how the Foundation keeps its learning outcomes in line with the expectations of the sponsoring denominations. This has become an increasingly complex task as the denominations move away from the earlier ecumenically agreed set of expectations. Methodism has adopted new competencies which now form a related set of expectations from acceptance as a student minister right through to suitability for senior leadership. The Church of England is expected to revise its competencies in the next few years. Methodist Students leaving Queen's in 2020 will be assessed by the college according to the old competences but assessed through their probationary period and approved for ordination according to the new competences. The new competencies will then apply to all groups. The Methodist tutors are aware of this difficulty and are making plans to brief students fully where there are any significant differences.
132. Methodist students are formally assessed in their suitability for ministry by the college oversight committee. Each student meets a member of the committee (an accompanist) several times each year and the committee itself receives reports from the accompanist and the student's tutor. If there are particular concerns then a student will be asked to meet a panel of the committee and at this stage the relevant competencies are used to assess the student's progress. In the final instance a student may be recommended for discontinuance in training according to how far they meet, or fall short of, the expected competencies. We saw evidence that this process is taken seriously by the committee, and that the competencies are useful in this (rare) formal process. Members of the committee commented that the new criteria were more practical in places and therefore easier to apply. There is a formal appeal process from this local committee to the national body, MCPOC (the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee). Members of the local committee feel that this national structure may not represent the present reality where all students for ordination train at Queen's, and a meeting has been convened between the interested parties to discuss whether changes are needed and whether the process can be simplified.
133. We saw evidence of good general discussion at an Oversight meeting, and several members of the committee commented that this provided helpful continuing training. We concur with this view. There is no student representation on the committee. This is obviously not possible during confidential business but is possible at open business, including any training discussions. The committee should consider whether student representation might help to build trust and confidence

in its work. At least students could helpfully be invited to the training discussions. At the session we witnessed their input would have been helpful in providing another point of view.

134. Arguments from silence are always foolhardy, but the extensive Methodist feedback does not reflect any criticism of the oversight process. From past experience this is pleasantly unexpected and probably implies that the system is in general working efficiently.
135. We have discussed elsewhere the perception both that students can arrive in circuit too closely focused on their own needs and also with not enough practical knowledge of a circuit's practical requirements of its ministers. These issues are central to both old and new versions of the competences, but the question of why there is this gap between student's perceptions and those of the Church is wider than any simple change to the curriculum or Learning Outcomes. Our recommendations are intended to explore whether practical work needs to be undertaken to help students fulfil the competences.
136. From the Anglican side we examined a selection of the reports sent to Bishops. They were comprehensive and contained suggestions for ongoing learning.
137. We saw samples of reporting from all years and pathways. These were properly related to the denomination's learning outcomes and demonstrated input from placement/link churches and their supervisors. Areas for development raised during the selection process and training are restated and referred to (together with how they have been addressed).

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.

138. Each student is required to complete a Learning & Formation Agreement (LFA) at the beginning of their first year. This is discussed - and revised - with their tutor and the agreed document is passed on to the relevant (denominational) Co-Director to be reviewed. The LFA includes sections on participation in the community (included modules to be undertaken), and spiritual, personal, ministerial, theological and missional growth. The staff assured us that the tutorial interview was significant in shaping the document - and the sample documents we saw showed evidence of additions and revisions at that stage. Curiously the LFA does not include areas for development identified during the selection process - although these are included in the annual reports (see above, section D8).
139. Our interviews with staff and students gave good evidence that the LFAs are well embedded in the culture and help to frame the students' learning and formation.
140. The examples of final year reports that we saw were comprehensive and framed by the learning outcomes for each denomination. Areas for further development are given but perhaps these could be more focussed and also summarised at the end to give the receiving denomination greater clarity. We received feedback from one diocese in this regard.
141. Most Methodist students continue with their academic programme into Probation. The continuity this offers is valued, as is the increased rigour which continuing on an academic path brings. Against this there is some criticism of an over-academic approach but we are not persuaded that this is a serious concern. There is good communication between Queen's and receiving circuits and superintendents. The newly appointed co-director of the Centre for Continuing Ministerial

Development is exploring the links between Queen's and District Probation Secretaries to see if these need to be strengthened.

- I42. We have discussed elsewhere the false perception in the feedback that academic requirements are over-rigid and occur at difficult times in the Church Year. As we have noted these deadlines are, in fact, imposed by the needs of Methodist District Probationers Committees. We have also suggested a possible mechanism to enable discussion by all interested parties which might resolve the very real problem here.

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

- I43. Queen's recent registration with the Office for Students (OfS) means that the Foundation is required to provide detailed data and statistics to the OfS which are available for analysis by Queen's. This standardised information does not always provide an intelligible picture of the Foundation's students as it is designed for much more general Higher Education requirements. However, the new databases should mean that Queen's has the ability to interrogate the data and understand the profile and progression of its students. The overall process is worryingly time-consuming but ought to have useful consequences beyond the narrow regulatory requirements. The administrative staff have done well to absorb this considerable additional burden.
- I44. Queen's PER documents emphasise responsiveness to student needs. As we have noted this can sometimes seem to be in competition with the needs of the sponsoring Churches. Nonetheless in terms of this specific section we are content that Queen's is properly responsive to the placement and progression of its students.
- I45. Methodist feedback suggests that students' voices are heard in this respect.

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

SECTION E: PARTNERSHIP WITH UNIVERSITY

E1 Quality control and assurance procedures governing the partnership are robust

146. The overall quality control and assurance procedures governing the partnership were confirmed through the initial validation process.

Management and oversight

147. The Queen's Foundation has a successful track record of managing academic quality and standards. Queen's is subject to regular external quality reviews from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Recent QAA annual monitoring reports confirm that the TEI has appropriate policies and procedures for managing its provision in line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Queen's underwent its QAA Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) in March 2016. The TEI was deemed to have made commendable progress with implementing their action plan from the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) in 2019.
148. The Governing Body of the Queen's Foundation is the responsible and accountable body for the operation of the Foundation and its financial and strategic commitments. It is the ultimate decision-making body for matters of institutional strategy, for compliance with company and charity law, for financial matters and for particular areas such as the appointment of the Principal. An Audit Committee, new from 2018-19, has been constituted at the Foundation and is a sub-committee to the Governing Body. This Committee undertakes detailed scrutiny of proposals prior to consideration at the Governing Body. The Academic Management Group (see paragraphs below) does not feed directly into the Governing Body; however, cross membership between the two committees ensures that academic matters (including those related to Common Awards) are appropriately considered by the Governors. A student representative from the membership of the Staff Student Community Forum (SSCF) attends the meetings of the Governing Body (see paragraphs 164 onwards).
149. The Academic Management Group maintains oversight of all quality assurance procedures at the TEI and across all its partnership arrangements; the Academic Management Group operates in line with the Terms of Reference for the Management Committee under the Common Awards Framework. The Academic Management Group is considered the senior academic committee and includes staff and student representatives across all programmes offered by the Foundation. Sub-committees of the Academic Management Group undertake detailed work for the Foundation. The Academic Quality and Standards Group (AQSG) meets regularly to monitor and review the quality and standards of teaching and learning. The Academic Planning Group (APG) takes responsibility for the planning of the curriculum, timetable, and teaching responsibilities across the Foundation, as well as the implementation of admission policies for each validating university. The Library and Resources Committee maintains oversight of its physical and electronic learning resources. Additional groups and committees are in place to further support the work of the TEI and which report into the sub-committees of the Academic Management Group, as required. Terms of Reference are in place for all committees and groups at the TEI and the operation of each is well understood by staff.
150. A Foundation Staff Group Meeting provides a helpful forum to discuss matters which affect academic staff at the Foundation. The Group meets twice half-termly and ensures that time is dedicated to staff development and research-focused matters.

151. Throughout the review, it was clear that the TEI undertakes regular and detailed reviews of its activity to ensure the continual enhancement of its provision.

Commendation 5

We commend the TEI for its proactive approach to self-assessment and continuous review.

Engagement with the University

152. The review team noted that Queen's engagement with the University has been positive. Queen's highlighted that there had been communications issues in the past but that these had been resolved in past few years. The TEI found having a named contact in the University Liaison Officer role a great benefit. The TEI would welcome greater clarity on when communications from the Common Awards team (such as emails or TEI Bulletins) had been shared with the Principal – in addition to the Key Contact – to ensure that information was not duplicated unnecessarily within the Foundation.
153. The TEI noted that the distance between themselves and the University was somewhat of a disadvantage, particularly as colleagues at Queen's valued the opportunity to discuss matters face-to-face. For instance, under a different validation arrangement at Queen's, the Annual Self-Evaluation process is undertaken in partnership with the awarding body, with colleagues from both institutions coming together to review the previous academic year. Notwithstanding this, the TEI felt that the Common Awards team could be easily contacted when required.
154. The Foundation would welcome the annual University Liaison Officer report earlier than it is currently circulated. The report was very helpful to share with the QAA and OfS and its receipt did not always align with the timescales for submission to these bodies.
155. It was recognised that the TEI had registered with the Office for Students (OfS) and as a result was subject to additional external scrutiny and regulation. There was a sense from Queen's colleagues that there were additional demands placed on alternative providers and that it would be very helpful for the Common Awards team to be cognisant of these differences. In light of this, the Common Awards team would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Foundation to ensure that it best supported TEIs registered with the OfS and were grateful to Queen's for extending this invitation.
156. The Foundation also raised that it was grateful to the Common Awards team for its appreciation of adult learning and the flexibility permitted within the assessment parameters.

Applications and admissions

157. Queen's has a clear policy and process by which students' applications are received and considered. Staff who are involved in the selection and admissions process are provided with appropriate and specific induction and training. The Academic Planning Group maintains oversight of the operation of the admissions policy and acts as the admissions panel for the TEI. APL applications are also considered by this Group.
158. All new undergraduate students are admitted onto the Certificate of Higher Education in Theology, Ministry and Mission (120) programme in the first instance, even if candidates are expected to go onto complete a higher award; this is a strategic decision taken by the TEI. Applicants for

postgraduate study are assessed based on the admissions criteria of the relevant academic programme.

Accredited Prior Learning

159. The review team reviewed a sample of APL requests considered by the Queen's Foundation and confirmed that the process for considering and approving APL requests was operating effectively, and in line with the University's policy and processes.

Concessions

160. The review team reviewed a sample of concessions requests considered by the Queen's Foundation and confirmed that the process for considering and approving concession requests was operating effectively, and in line with the University's policy and processes.

Assessment

161. Queen's has effective internal processes and practices for managing assessment. All marking and moderation are carried out in line with regulations and guidance is provided to academic members of staff on the policy and process to be followed. Tutors are trained before undertaking assessment processes such as marking and moderation. Marking is usually undertaken by the co-ordinating module tutor. Moderators are required to review the consistency of marks and comment on the quality of feedback provided. Directors of Studies monitor the feedback provided by moderators. The review team confirms that the TEI has effective internal procedures in place to maintain the security of assessment. Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) is used for all assignment submissions. Students must sign in to their personal Moodle site in order to submit their assessed work and sign a declaration to confirm that they have read and understood the policy on assessment irregularities. Marking and moderation processes allow for any assessment irregularities to be identified. The TEI provides training to students to understand and identify academic misconduct, which includes information and guidance at induction and a video on Moodle.
162. Students with whom the review team met were generally positive about their experiences with assessment. Students confirmed that they were aware of the assessment criteria, and knew where the criteria were published. Students were broadly confident that they understood what was expected of them with regards to different types of assessment.
163. The TEI-level Board of Examiners confirms module marks and considers progression decisions for all students on Common Awards programmes. Queen's confirmed that this process is working well and has been improved since the introduction of Moodle. A good working relationship has been developed with the University to ensure that the required data and meeting documents are generally provided on time for the TEI's completing students to be considered by the overarching Common Awards Board of Examiners. Moodle has been developed in collaboration with Ministry Division to enable the TEI to provide the data in the required format directly from the system. The use of Moodle has also enabled the TEI to more effectively prepare meeting papers and student profiles for the TEI-level Board of Examiners meeting.

Student Engagement

164. The TEI uses a wide range of formal and informal mechanisms to gather and respond to student feedback and to involve students in the review and enhancement of academic provision. Formal

student representation and consultation is embedded within the academic committee structure, including attendance at meetings of the Governing Body and via the termly meetings of the Staff Student Community Forum (SSCF). Student representation structures, and the opportunity to be involved, are detailed in the academic handbook. The results of the Common Awards Student Survey (2018) confirmed that 70% of students felt they had appropriate opportunities to provide feedback on their programme, which was broadly in line with the average of all TEIs (79%, 2018).

165. Other formal mechanisms include module evaluations (MEQs), membership of working groups and regular meetings or forums between students and staff. The results of MEQs are incorporated into reports authored by module tutors and discussed by the Academic Quality and Standards Group (AQSG). While this process works well, and has a positive impact on the number of responses, the review team noted that the TEI's approach to gathering student feedback via MEQs is unusual within the sector. Module surveys take place in the classroom, rather than online, and feature a set of standard written questions and a discussion forum, where students record impressions anonymously - albeit known within their peer group – that are subsequently reviewed in class discussions with the lecturer. The process generates both quantitative and qualitative information, and enables students to review the module in class, both with and without staff presence. Tutor responses to the student feedback collected via this mechanism are also provided on Moodle. Every module handbook includes a summary on how the module has been developed following student feedback in the previous year.
166. The students with whom the review team met acknowledged that this approach was not without risk and particularly noted that students could be influenced by their peer group in providing their feedback, or could be deterred from providing critical feedback for fear of repercussions; those students who were absent from the teaching session would also be excluded from providing their feedback.
167. The review team was informed by the TEI that the approach had been established and implemented in partnership with students over the past two academic years. The Academic Management Group had deliberated at length and concluded that it was a critical tool for student learning, partly for module enhancement and delivery, but also personally for individual students as it provided a key opportunity for the practice of giving and receiving critical feedback (a skill which will be essential for students in public ministerial roles). The TEI also felt that this approach benefited from encouraging students to listen to each other's feedback and perceptions of the module, and thus to reflect on their own learning and feedback accordingly.
168. It was confirmed to the review team that there was no alternative mechanism for students to provide anonymous student feedback on module teaching and delivery. Whilst the review team appreciated the considered approach taken by the TEI, in consultation with students, the review team would encourage the TEI to reflect on the potential risks identified above.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the TEI consider

- a) opportunities for all students to provide anonymous feedback on teaching
- b) reviewing the approach to student feedback

to ensure that any potential influence on students is mitigated.

Conclusion

169. The review team considers that quality control and assurance procedures governing the partnership are in place.

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

170. The adequacy of overall provision for academic and pastoral support and guidance was confirmed through the initial validation process.
171. The integrated academic and pastoral support for all students, which is highly responsive and facilitates their development and achievement, has been identified as good practice by the QAA (Higher Education Report, 2016).

Induction

172. The Foundation provides induction events for all new students. The events are tailored to meet the particular needs of different groups of students, and to nurture a sense of belonging to a cohort and to the TEI as a whole. Alongside some joint events (via the 'Admissions Day'), separate events are held for ministerial students, independent students, international students, and taught postgraduate students. During induction, students receive training in areas such as information library provision, Moodle, plagiarism and academic practice.
173. Students with whom the review team met commented positively about the various forms of academic and pastoral support they received during induction. They particularly valued the way that the induction period fostered the feeling of belonging to the larger community of the Queen's Foundation. Students confirmed that the information provided at induction was accurate and very comprehensive but that the amount of documentation provided was sometimes overwhelming and could dilute the key information needed at the start of their programme.

Recommendation 9

The review team recommends that the TEI review the amount of information provided to students at induction to avoid overload.

Programme information

174. Information for current students regarding their programmes is mainly provided through academic and module handbooks which are available via Moodle. Students are alerted to which awarding body regulations apply to them. There is a standardised template for each academic and module handbook and guidance is provided to module leaders on the content of module outlines, which should include module learning outcomes, formative and summative assessment, and teaching methods. Queen's undertakes annual updates of handbooks to ensure their accuracy. The Academic Dean has responsibility for ensuring the currency and accuracy of academic handbooks issued to students.

175. In response to student feedback, the TEI has adopted a standardised approach to the configuration of information provided on Moodle. In the review team's observations of Moodle, it was noted that all versions of the academic handbook were available to students. Whilst it was recognised that it was appropriate to enable students to access academic handbooks from different years of study (and particularly in light of the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority), there was a potential risk that the current configuration of this information on Moodle would result in students referring to regulations pertaining to previous academic years.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that programme information on Moodle is routinely archived when required and that the TEI consider taking additional steps to indicate to students when items on Moodle are historic items available for reference rather than current documentation.

176. A new database, centrally managed, enables the TEI to monitor student pathways, amongst other things, such as assessment deadlines and patterns of assessment.
177. Students are granted access to Moodle in advance of starting their programme, which was well received by students.

Study Skills Support

178. Advice and guidance on study skills is provided at induction and reinforced via academic skills sessions offered throughout the academic year and information contained within handbooks. The review team heard that the provision and accessibility of study skills materials has improved in recent years with additional guidance and materials made available on Moodle. These skills sessions cover a variety of topics such as note taking, speed reading, assessment preparation and database searching, as well as introducing students to the different learning resources that are available to them. Students were generally happy with the provision of study skills but did comment that where this was delivered by external speakers it was not always fully reflective of the assessments undertaken at Queens. Some students reported frustration at the timing of the ongoing study skills sessions, citing multiple examples where the relevant study skills sessions had taken place after the submission of assessments.

Recommendation 11

The review team recommends that the TEI review the content (particularly when external speakers are used) and timing of continuous study skills provision to ensure that it is accessible to all students and in time for scheduled assessments.

179. Students receive guidance on how to interpret the Turnitin report and are able to review this before final submission. As part of core study skills sessions available to all students there is a dedicated session on plagiarism (and how to avoid it) using worked examples. This guidance is also available on Moodle and in an online video.

Tutorial and Pastoral Support

180. Each student is allocated a personal tutor who acts as the first point of contact for matters relating to personal development, academic progress and student welfare. A student's commitment to their studies is primarily established, monitored and reviewed through their personal Learning and Formation Agreement (LFA), a document agreed with their Personal Tutor that lays out key learning goals, establishes mutual expectations, and sets personal and professional priorities. Personal tutors are allocated to students and remain with them throughout their studies, even when academic colleagues may be on research or study leave. Additional forms of academic and pastoral support include module tutors, a Chaplain, Directors of Studies and a Wellbeing Officer.
181. The Ministerial Formation Staff team meet regularly (three or four times a term) to discuss students and identify any issues which may be arising. The Wellbeing Officer supports academic and professional support staff, as well as students. Training has recently been provided to staff at the Foundation on supporting mental health.
182. The students whom the visit team met confirmed that they valued the opportunity to meet with their tutors and particularly to reflect on their academic and formational development in an integrated way. Students were able to provide examples where additional welfare support was made available (for instance in response to particularly challenging teaching content). The Common Awards Student Survey (2018) confirmed that 83% of students felt that they were able to contact their tutors when needed and were 78% satisfied with the support provided.
183. In discussions with students it was discovered that the awareness of the Serious Adverse Circumstances processes was very low.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the TEI enhances its methods for communicating the existence and use of Serious Adverse Circumstances processes.

Complaints and Appeals

184. The TEI maintains a student complaints policy; this is available to students and staff via Moodle and is detailed in the Academic Handbook. The TEI encourages complaints to be dealt with informally in the first instance. Notwithstanding this, the policy outlines the formal mechanisms for raising a complaint, the timescales for its consideration, and the stages involved. Queen's complaints process has three stages. The first is informal resolution at TEI-level, the second stage seeks formal resolution at TEI-level, and the third and final stage is referral to the University. Students with whom the review team met were clear about the process for submitting a complaint, but commented that they felt that the majority of issues could be dealt with informally. Students also recognised the role of student representatives for seeking resolution, where appropriate.

Support for Students with Additional Needs

185. The TEI is dedicated to supporting a wide range of additional needs and information on its support mechanisms is regularly communicated to students and potential applicants. The Foundation's admissions process identifies students who have additional needs so that this might be discussed further and support put in place. During induction and study skills sessions, members of staff raise awareness of the support available and of how students may identify additional needs themselves; a

needs assessment tool is available on Moodle and students are encouraged to complete this during induction. Students are encouraged to speak with their Personal Tutor when they believe they may require additional support. A specific policy provides advice and guidance to students regarding the provision of additional learning or physical resources required to support their studies. Individual Learning Plans may also be devised for students who have particular learning needs (e.g. dyslexia).

186. Queen's Foundation has been successfully awarded a grant from the OfS for use during 2019/20. The Higher Education Students Early Statistics grant will be used by the TEI to support the academic progression of those students with additional needs. A Widening Access Group at the TEI will be reconstituted to help manage and distribute the funds.
187. The students whom the visit team met spoke positively about the support for students with additional needs and could identify specific examples where reasonable adjustments had been made (e.g. hearing loops, use of coloured paper) and an example where students had been invited to a staff development session and internal meetings to provide details of the specific requirements needed. However students commented that sometimes support measures did not appear to be consistently maintained. There was a sense that reasonable adjustments were successfully in place at the start of the academic year but that the accessibility measures were not always made available throughout the full academic year.

Recommendation 13

The review team recommends that the TEI review its process for maintaining oversight of any reasonable adjustments and accessibility measures to ensure that these are continuously implemented throughout students' studies.

Feedback on assessed work

188. A template proforma is used to provide feedback on assessments to ensure a consistent level of feedback to students, and training is scheduled prior to any members of staff undertaking this responsibility for the first time at the TEI. The quality of feedback is also monitored by the internal moderators who are asked to comment on the quality of feedback provided. A traffic light system is also in place to help the TEI monitor turnaround times. Students with whom the review team met were broadly happy with the provision of feedback but felt that feedback on formative assessment was lacking. Feedback on formative assessment is generally provided to the whole class rather than individually which students did not feel was sufficient.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the TEI review its approach to formative feedback to ensure that it is helpful to students in preparing for their summative assessments.

189. The TEI aims to return feedback and a provisional mark to students within 4 weeks of the handing-in date (or 5 weeks if the module class is made up of more than 25 students, or if the marking period includes a holiday period). Students confirmed that they were informed if delays were to be expected. The new database (paragraph 176) enables the TEI to monitor turnaround times.

Attendance Monitoring

190. Student attendance is formally monitored by the TEI. The Foundation requires students to attend at least 70% of a taught module in order to gain credit for that module. The policy advises that students should ask to meet with the Director of Studies to discuss what options may be available for “regaining those credits, for retaking the module at a future point, or for completing the summative assessment and submitting a mitigation form to request evidenced exemption from the attendance rule”. The review team was made aware that this had been the practice at The Queen’s Foundation since initial validation, and that, understandably, the Foundation had been operating on the understanding that this practice had been approved by the University as part of its validation processes. The review team understood that the implications of the University’s Core Regulations in this area may not have been communicated clearly during initial validation, but felt it was important to ensure that such a policy now aligned to what was permissible within the University’s Core Regulations. This view was shared with colleagues at the Queen’s Foundation as it was clarified they had no desire to be unintentionally operating outside of the University’s Core Regulations.

Condition I

The review team requires that the TEI liaise with the Common Awards Team regarding the current attendance policy to clarify its links with the University’s Core Regulations.

191. The review team advised the TEI that work was currently being undertaken on an Academic Progress Notice procedure that would be applicable to TEIs and Common Awards programmes.

Graduate destinations

192. Graduate employability and destinations are monitored closely by Queen’s; the TEI is required to return this data to HESA (and in the future as part of Data Futures). Queen’s is also aware that the QAA and the Teaching Excellence Framework pay close attention to graduate employability.

Conclusion

193. The review team considers that the provision for academic and pastoral support and guidance is adequate.

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

194. Through the initial validation process the TEI had confirmed the adequacy of its learning resources for its students.
195. The comprehensive library provision, which is managed and enhanced effectively and provides an extensive and responsive service to students, has been identified as good practice by the QAA (Higher Education Report, 2016).

Library and Electronic Resources

196. The students whom the visit team met spoke very positively about the learning resources and the ability to access the library 24/7. The students confirmed that the resources were easy to access, and that the librarian was responsive to requests for new or alternative resources. Students were aware of the electronic journals and e-books provided and considered them to be very useful. Students also welcomed the resources available via the Common Awards Hub.

197. The library at the Queen's Foundation has a stock of nearly 50,000 books and 60 current journal subscriptions, plus access to over 500 online journals and 5000 e-books. The library is open 24/7 to staff and students. It operates a self-service borrowing system, printing and photocopying facilities. Students also have access to the library at Birmingham University. New students are offered a library induction and information skills training which is incorporated into part of the wider study skills provision organised by the TEI.
198. The Library and Resources Committee oversees the provision of physical and electronic resources to support students' learning and the results of a Library Survey are regularly reviewed by this committee to ensure student input. The results of this survey are also considered by the Academic Management Group.

Moodle

199. The TEI currently makes good use of the Moodle virtual learning environment, which is a particularly important resource for students when undertaking blended learning. Queen's Moodle houses programme documentation (such as handbooks), relevant policies, and software for online submission of assessed work (Turnitin). Students with whom the visit team met spoke positively about the importance of Moodle as a repository for key information and learning materials. The TEI has published a 'Guide to Using Moodle' which students have found useful.

Teaching venues, Study Space and IT

200. Students with whom the review team met confirmed that that teaching venues were appropriate and were used effectively for both lectures and seminars. Students confirmed that appropriate spaces were available for independent study and group work. Queen's has invested in its IT infrastructure with the view to reducing the risk around potential failure.

Equality and Diversity

201. The TEI is committed to supporting equality and diversity. The review team found evidence of this commitment at every level within the TEI and within its teaching. Both staff and students spoke enthusiastically about the institution's strong commitment to continually addressing matters of equality and diversity. Diversity is reflected in the student and staff body at Queen's and teaching staff ensure that a diversity of voices is reflected in bibliographies; staff training and development has been organised to support the latter. A number of staff have research interests in areas related to equality and diversity and their expertise is valued and utilised effectively. The Principal reports to the Governing Body on all academic staff appointments, with a full account of how the equal opportunities policy has been observed; The Director of Operations undertakes the same reporting for professional support staff appointments. An equal opportunities group appointed by the Governors meets regularly to review current practices and action plans at Queen's and reports areas of development and of concern to the Governors. Students and staff at Queen's have contributed to the discussions on equality, diversity and inclusion at the partnership level, firstly attending, and then becoming members of the Common Awards Management Board.

Commendation 6

We commend Queen's for its strategic, structural and pedagogical commitment to equality and diversity across the TEI and in learning and teaching.

Conclusion

202. The review team was satisfied that the overall learning support and infrastructure were adequate.

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

203. The adequacy of the overall staffing was confirmed through the initial validation process.

Teaching staff

204. A 'Staff CV Summary' (T9) document was provided with the PER documentation, and reviewed in light of the academic programmes delivered by the TEI. At the time of the PER, the TEI employed a core team of 20 members of teaching staff. They also employed 8 associate tutors. The employed academic staff team of 20 people (16 fte) includes two professors, 13 with doctorates, and two currently undertaking doctoral research. Over half of the tutorial team are engaged in the supervision of doctoral students (with the TEI's other validating partner). The review team found that the research culture of the Foundation is enhanced by the involvement of three international research consultants and 20 honorary research fellows (see paragraph 210, and Section F5 and **Commendation 7**). Reports from the ULO and discussions with the TEI confirm that the staffing base is appropriate. The review team concluded that members of academic staff were suitably qualified and experienced to deliver the approved programmes.

Teaching quality

205. The students with whom the review team met commented very positively on the quality of the teaching, referring to teaching as "transformational". A Teaching and Learning Strategy, which is explicitly mapped to the requirements of the UK Quality Code (2013-18), is in place and is used to enhance teaching quality. The TEI monitors and enhances teaching quality in a number of ways including: marking and moderation; an institutional-wide peer review scheme; the effective use of the External Examiner reports and ULO reports; through the Annual Self-Evaluation process; and seeking regular student feedback. Teaching observation is arranged to assess teaching quality and share best practice.

206. Students spoke positively about the way in which teaching staff request, respond to, and act on student feedback promptly and regularly throughout the year. Queen's felt that both formal and informal feedback mechanisms would be used to identify and resolve any concerns regarding teaching quality. Feedback from students is regularly requested via module evaluation questionnaires and their representation on the Academic Management Group.

Staff development

207. Queen's felt that the implementation of its Learning and Teaching strategy was supported by its staff development policy. The design of staff development events is informed by the outcome of annual monitoring, student feedback and peer observations as well as annual appraisal processes. The TEI was able to provide multiple examples where institutional-wide training opportunities had been identified, and subsequently met, via these processes.

208. All academic staff undergo a thorough induction and probationary process with respect to strategies for learning and teaching and assessment. Newly appointed staff have a designated mentor whose

role is to offer support in areas such as assessment processes (including marking and moderation), lecture preparation and guidance on the operation of the different validating institutions' regulations. In line with the staff recruitment policy at the Foundation, all staff are encouraged to work towards Fellowship of the HEA. All staff at the TEI receive a formal annual appraisal. This normally includes a review of the past year's performance, identification of priorities and development needs for the year to come.

209. All academic staff are contractually entitled to a one term period of study leave within a five year period of service and are also allocated an annual budget to enable them to attend conferences, belong to professional societies or bodies, and purchase books and other necessary resources to support their teaching. All staff attend at least 5 staff development days per annum. The TEI commented that due to the wide range of staff development activities offered in-house, there was not always opportunity for staff to attend the Common Awards Staff Conference – although it was confirmed that staff had indeed attended over the years.
210. Staff are also supported to enhance their professional development via training and research opportunities. Academic staff are research-active, which allows them to keep up to date in subject-specific scholarship. Several staff are currently undertaking doctoral research as part of their professional development and the TEI has a commitment to supporting staff to publish their research. The TEI celebrates such achievements with regular 'book launches'. **This contributes to Commendation 7 in Section F5.**

Professional Support Staff

211. An academic support staff handbook outlines the induction processes and commitment to staff development for professional support staff. A bespoke induction programme is in place for professional support staff, including scheduled meetings with colleagues, as required. Support staff undertake yearly appraisals which feed into staff development plans. Bespoke induction or training sessions are organised in light of developments in the sector (e.g. GDPR, OfS) and all support staff are guaranteed training or development days throughout the academic year. The TEI is well supported by professional support staff. In addition to the full-time librarian, a team of 9 administrative staff work alongside academic staff and share responsibilities across areas such as programme support, placement co-ordination, university registration, and administration of exam boards.

Conclusion

212. The review team was satisfied that the staffing within the TEI is appropriate to enable the requirements for the awards to be met.

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

213. The appropriateness of the mechanisms to ensure the accuracy of public information, publicity and promotional activity was confirmed through the initial validation process.
214. Queen's was aware of the need to liaise with colleagues in the Common Awards Team at Durham University to ensure that any publicity materials and promotional activity related to the partnership or its programmes were shared in advance of making use of such materials.

215. Mechanisms are in place to ensure the ensure effective oversight of published information. Overall responsibility for the creation of information lies mainly with the Senior Management Team, with the Principal granting final approval for the publication of information. The TEI maintains its own website which includes a wide range of information which also satisfies the requirements of the QAA and OfS.

Conclusion

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

Section conclusion

217. Having considered the evidence encountered before and during the visit, the review team considers that the Queen's Foundation successfully meets all the PER criteria relating to taught programmes.

Subject to the implementation of the recommendations in this section, the review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion E: Partnership with University.

SECTION F: TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

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

218. Within the overall student body, student numbers on Durham Common Awards programmes have grown since the initial validation process. In 2014/15, 70 students were registered with Queen's and in 2015/16 there were 148 students. 175 student were registered in 2016/17 and in 2017/18 this increased in 222. In 2018/19 numbers increased again to 226. Whilst the census for the 2019/20 academic year had not yet been undertaken (scheduled for 1st December 2019), early indications from the TEI suggested that the student intake for 2019/20 was a 20% increase on the previous year.
219. Notwithstanding the steady growth experienced by the TEI, future student numbers are difficult to predict. Changes to patterns for resourcing ministerial education, and the changing needs of the sponsoring dioceses, contribute to the uncertainty regarding future student numbers. The review team concluded that – should student numbers remain stable – the programmes should continue to be viable.

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

220. The aims and learning outcomes for the Common Awards programmes are defined in the relevant programme specifications. Each programme contains a 'syllabus' to define the programme structure, including credit requirements at each level of study and for each sub-discipline. The framework ensures that the structure and design of the curriculum are appropriate to the aims and learning outcomes. Through the initial validation process, the University reviewed the TEI's proposed programme regulations, module overview table, and curriculum mapping document. These documents confirmed that the structure and design of the curriculum was aligned with the programme specifications, and that the curriculum design was appropriate to the target student body.
221. The TEI has engaged with the curriculum development process to review and update its curricula in response to institutional review and student feedback. The TEI sought and received approval for each of the programme amendments, which included: the addition of new programmes, the inclusion of approved Common Awards modules, and changes to existing modules. Despite the incremental changes brought about through the curriculum development process, the TEI's programmes remain similar to those that were originally approved.

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.

222. The initial validation team had confirmed that the methods of teaching, learning and assessment would enable the learning outcomes to be achieved and that achievement to be measured.

Teaching and Learning and Assessment

223. The External Examiner has consistently confirmed that the range of assessment is appropriate to the curriculum and the intended learning outcomes. Queen's programmes are assessed by a range of methods and in accordance with the assessment patterns guidance and guidance material of the Common Awards framework.

224. The Foundation was keen to highlight the benefits and resilience of a team-teaching process, whereby several colleagues are present for the delivery of modular sessions. For the TEI this has a number of identified tangible benefits, including, but not limited to: peer accountability, increased diversity, enabling a more discursive teaching and learning style and bringing other specialisms into the modular approach. Staff saw team teaching, and then reflecting on the session afterwards, as being a part of professional development, especially as it entailed an ongoing peer observation process.
225. The TEI makes effective use of face-to-face teaching and learning via lectures and seminars, both of which incorporate small group discussion and peer-learning, as well as its blended learning approach for QCC part-time students.
226. Students felt that, on the whole, the volume of summative assessments was appropriate and supported them in their learning. Students confirmed that they were aware of the marking criteria and that these were accessible. The students whom the review team met confirmed that they perceived and experienced a marked progression throughout their programmes, with higher levels of work demanding a greater depth of engagement, providing more academic challenge, and requiring more independent learning. Students reported that they felt well supported to transition between levels of academic study.
227. In discussions with students and staff at the TEI it was noted that the Foundation appeared to deliver a higher than expected amount of teaching content to students studying across levels. The review team did not find this concerning in and of itself; this could be entirely appropriate and students had not raised any concerns with misunderstanding what was required of them in order to achieve the appropriate learning outcomes for their module of study. However, it was very unusual to deliver the same content to students who were not studying at adjacent levels of study. The review team heard of one example where students studying at Level 4 and Level 7 were in the same lectures. In light of this:

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the TEI undertakes a review of all instances where content is delivered across academic levels to ensure its appropriateness and seek approval from the University.

Learning hours

228. Students with whom the review team met reported that information on learning hours is provided to students via module handbooks at the beginning of each module and is easily accessible. The review team explored students' workload experiences and found that some students tended not to use the learning hours as a reflection of how much time or effort would be required for any given module, but instead felt that the number and type of assessments for each module gave a better indication of the workload required.

Conclusion

229. The review team concluded that the methods of teaching, learning and assessment remained appropriate to support students' learning, development, and achievement of learning outcomes.

F4 There are appropriate arrangements for placements.

230. The appropriateness of arrangements for the management and oversight of placements were confirmed as part of the initial validation process. The QAA had previously commended the Foundation for its careful and diligent delivery and monitoring of placement learning.

231. The results of the Common Awards Student Survey (2018) showed that 81% of students were satisfied that placements undertaken as part of their award had helped them to learn and develop, which was higher than the overall satisfaction rate across participating TEIs. The students whom the visit team met confirmed that they received appropriate support before, during, and after assessed placements. Students were generally very happy with their placement experience. Support to students is provided by academic tutors, placement supervisors and via a bespoke placement handbook. Students are generally only visited on placement when issues or problems occur.
232. All placements are effectively overseen by the TEI. Where placements are set up by the student, this done in consultation with, and with the support of, a dedicated tutor. Placements are managed by two dedicated tutors (working with a wider team) within the Centre for Ministerial Formation, who share responsibility for designing, assessing and evaluating the student placement experience. Each Placement Tutor is responsible for organizing placements within their own denomination (Methodist and Anglican). This ensures that particular denominational expectations continue to be met and that stakeholders (such as Diocesan Directors of Ordinands or Methodist Oversight Committees) can be appropriately briefed on a student's progress. Regular placement seminars are run alongside the placement as an opportunity both for prior preparation and also for ongoing reflection on the experience. An end-of-placement review is held with the Placement Supervisor, the student (and their Personal Tutor if required) to evaluate the experience and reflect on the placement, and identify areas for future growth and development. Students complete a Local Church (also known as a Link Church) Agreement (LCA), which is countersigned by the minister/priest, and which sets out the mutual expectations and parameters for their local ecclesial involvement in placement activity.

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

233. The validation visit process confirmed that the programmes appropriately addressed the University's Principles for the Development of the Taught Provision. Students with whom the review team met were able to provide examples of research-led teaching. For instance, students were able identify multiple instances of tutors' own research being integrated into the curriculum and shaping the design and delivery of teaching content. Students appreciate and are enthused by staff sharing their research in modules.
234. Students undertaking independent learning projects and dissertations reported that appropriate support and guidance is provided to complete the assignment. The Dissertations and Ethics Committee review student dissertation proposals and ethics forms, allocate supervisors and advise on broader ethical issues relating to students' work.
235. Queen's has an institutional commitment to research and research-led teaching, originating from the Governing Body. To embed and enhance its research culture, the TEI has a dedicated Director of Research and Research Fellows to support staff in their research activities and develop research projects (alongside supporting doctoral students). Staff are encouraged to take study leave and participate in academic and ecclesial fora, presenting and publishing where possible. Research and research-led teaching is a specific topic of discussion in annual appraisal processes and a recent meeting of the Foundation Staff Group has been dedicated to supporting additional activity in this area.

Commendation 7

We commend Queen's for its commitment to supporting research-led teaching.

F6 The programme is subject to appropriate processes for curriculum review, including mechanisms for student representation and engagement (see also E3).

236. Members of staff in the TEI are involved in the TEI's processes for curriculum monitoring, review and enhancement. Student feedback on teaching is regularly requested and responses to student evaluations are made available on Moodle. The TEI has submitted a number of curriculum development proposals since the initial validation, including the introduction of new programmes and modules, and other more minor changes to programmes and modules, such as changes to assessment options for modules.
237. Members of staff from within the TEI contribute to the Common Awards Annual Self-Evaluation (ASE) process. The TEI expressed the opinion that there was a sense that the ASE process itself favoured a focus on things that might be required to change at the TEI, rather than an opportunity to reflect on matters that are going well. The review team confirmed that the process was not intentionally designed to focus solely on making improvements to existing provision, although this was an important part of the process.
238. The TEI expressed the opinion that whilst the ASE process was helpfully designed to ensure that there was no overlap within Section A and Section B of the ASE process, the lack of a formal response to Section A of the ASE submission from Ministry Division had previously caused difficulties with its QAA reviews. The TEI confirmed that this was most acute when QAA reviews consider governance arrangements, which the TEI felt were most helpfully reflected upon in Section A. Where appropriate, the Common Awards team could offer to incorporate additional comments within the University response to the TEI's ASE submission.

Conclusion

239. The review team concluded that the programmes are subject to appropriate processes for curriculum review, including mechanisms for student representation and engagement (see also E3).

Section Conclusion

240. Having considered the evidence encountered before and during the visit, the review team considers that the Queen's Foundation successfully meets all the PER criteria relating to the partnership with the University, subject to satisfactory completion of the Recommendation in this section.

Subject to the implementation of the recommendation in this section, the review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion F: Taught Programmes.

CONCLUSION

Overall outcome:

The review team has Confidence in the Queen's Foundation in preparing candidates for ordained and licensed lay ministry.

APPENDIX

The Partnership Agreement between the Methodist Council and the Queen's Foundation.

The partnership agreement itself is not within the scope of the PER, and it is sufficient to note here that the agreement is a formal statement of the responsibilities and duties of each party and of the commitments they are making to ensure effective ways of working. The underlying intention is to enrich the relationship between Queen's and the Methodist Church. As the agreement only came into force a few weeks before the main review visit, the team were unable to observe it in operation.

The agreement makes a number of commitments to mutual formal representation (Agreement 3.1.i-v). We have explored this area with the President of the Council and representatives of the connexional team. This formal relationship must be properly embodied. So, Methodist governors have a key role in representing the interests of the Methodist Church at Queen's, and similarly it is vital that the concerns of Queen's are formally represented to the connexion at all appropriate levels. It is important to maintain the distinction between Queen's staff who provide valuable service to committees such as Faith and Order, in their individual capacities, and those who are appointed to represent Queen's to the connexion. During our visit the review team observed some continuing confusion on this issue.

Agreement 3.1.vii creates a formal meeting to discuss budgetary and strategic issues. Some feedback suggests that this meeting could in the future have a critical role to play in strengthening the church's confidence in its partnership with Queen's by becoming the place where these issues are robustly tested.

As the single group of educators responsible for the training of Methodist students for ordination the Queen's staff team are in a unique position to communicate with the connexional team, which itself holds the understanding of the perceived needs which the Church has of its ministers. Formally these are held in the decisions of the Methodist Conference. The ways in which they are implemented, however, are worked out in practice between Queen's and the connexional team. In article 3.1.ii the Agreement speaks of 'clear lines of communication, mutual and shared development and decision making.' In practice this has been worked out in the past through personal contact at Officer and Queen's Leadership Team level, and through the Oversight Committee. The new Agreement strengthens the relationship through article 3.3.iii: 'The Queen's Foundation through the Principal and Director of Methodist Formation will meet on a regular basis with the Director of Learning for Ministry and the Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries on matters of mutual concern.'

The significance of this article is to extend existing officer/staff level meeting to governance level. This should help communication between practitioners and the committees that make strategic decisions. The Ministries Committee (and other structures within the Church) will often need to take formal and strategic decisions but these need to be properly serviced and informed, and often need far more detailed discussion than can be given in busy committees. We give two examples, which are also discussed elsewhere in our Report, but which could profit from extended discussion by those most closely involved:

- i. The Methodist feedback includes many comments about whether new probationers are entering circuit with the right disposition and skills for the responsibilities they must take on from day one. This seems to us not simply a question of making sure that Queen's fully embeds the new competencies within its curriculum and that the new competencies are widely understood within the Church. It should also involve a conversation as to what is reasonable to expect from initial training when this is now shorter than in the past. It is inevitable that the connexion and circuit will need to take responsibility for

ensuring that some additional parts of training are addressed during probation. There are repeated calls for probationers to be taught 'skills' for circuit life, but with limited time available this could only be at the expense of other theological equipping. If the Church is to benefit appropriately from its new ministers, there is the need for the different constituencies (training institution and connexion) to be able to speak with a single voice and authoritatively about realistic and unrealistic expectations.

- ii. The issue of Probation studies. Much feedback (not all) is positive about the integration of probation studies with initial training and previous academic work. But many of the respondents note the problem of deadlines. All blame academic rigidity; none seem aware that the problem originates from Methodist timetables and not from academic demands, i.e. the need to prepare for District Probation Committees. The Church now has the opportunity of a single place where this real problem can be addressed and where a compromise solution could well emerge.

These are simply two (important) current issues where bringing the interested parties together as part of connexional structures could lead to significant improvements in the preparation of ministers to the advantage of both the training institution and the Church. Communications between the Methodist Church and the only institution which trains its students for ordination are vitally important. We look forward to seeing the fruits of the new structures envisaged in the agreement once they are in place.

This Appendix provides some background to our **Recommendation 2** at Section A2.

LIST OF COMMENDATIONS

Commendation 1

We commend the Foundation (and, for Reader Training, its partner dioceses) for the clarity of its vision and formational aims and for the vision/aims-led development of their programmes.

Commendation 2

We commend Queen's for its clear and effective internal governance structures and its communication and planning.

Commendation 3

We commend Queen's for its clear modelling of mutual respect and inclusivity within its learning community.

Commendation 4

We commend the formation and continuing development of the Leadership Team as a vital part of the management and life of the Foundation.

Commendation 5

We commend the TEI for its proactive approach to self-assessment and continuous review.

Commendation 6

We commend Queen's for its strategic, structural and pedagogical commitment to equality and diversity across the TEI and in learning and teaching.

Commendation 7

We commend Queen's for its commitment to supporting research-led teaching.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Foundation enhances its teaching staff with someone with the specialism of evangelism and that that this priority is made explicit in strategic and other documents (and therefore in the culture).

Recommendation 2

We recommend that both the Officers of the Connexional Team and the Leadership Team of the Queen's Foundation ensure that the lines of communication between the Foundation and the Methodist Church as set out in the Partnership Agreement are fully implemented and adequately serviced.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the frequency of Safeguarding Training for the staff is reviewed and increased to at least once every three years, and that training is extended to include Trustees.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Foundation reviews its pattern and practices of corporate worship in the light of the concern that it is not preparing its students fully enough for leading regular and mainstream worship within the sponsoring denominations.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the staff team conduct a review of the tutorial process and the Learning and Formation Agreements with the intention of making clear more realistic normative demands and expectations.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Queen's Foundation uses the appropriate formal channels to raise with the sponsoring denominations the question of the length of initial training, and difficulty of equipping ministers for public ministry in the short time available to train many students.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the tutorial staff review the choice and/or allocation of students to Link Churches, so that their engagement with the Link Church is more clearly defined and there is an expectation that there will be more practical involvement, designed according to the student's previous experiences and gaps in learning.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the TEI consider

- a) opportunities for all students to provide anonymous feedback on teaching
- b) reviewing the approach to student feedback

to ensure that any potential influence on students is mitigated.

Recommendation 9

The review team recommends that the TEI review the amount of information provided to students at induction to avoid overload.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that programme information on Moodle is routinely archived when required and that the TEI consider taking additional steps to indicate to students when items on Moodle are historic items available for reference rather than current documentation.

Recommendation 11

The review team recommends that the TEI review the content (particularly when external speakers are used) and timing of continuous study skills provision to ensure that it is accessible to all students and in time for scheduled assessments.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the TEI enhances its methods for communicating the existence and use of Serious Adverse Circumstances processes.

Recommendation 13

The review team recommends that the TEI review its process for maintaining oversight of any reasonable adjustments and accessibility measures to ensure that these are continuously implemented throughout students' studies.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the TEI review its approach to formative feedback to ensure that it is helpful to students in preparing for their summative assessments.

Condition 1

The review team requires that the TEI liaise with the Common Awards Team regarding the current attendance policy to clarify its links with the University's Core Regulations.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the TEI undertakes a review of all instances where content is delivered across academic levels to ensure its appropriateness and seek approval from the University.