

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

Eastern Region Ministry Course *including provision for Ely LLM and Norwich Diocesan Reader Training*

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Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the February-March 2019 Periodic External Review

Introduction

The Periodic External Review of ERMC and the provision for Reader training in Ely and Norwich Dioceses took place by attending meetings on a number of days, evening teaching sessions and a residential weekend during February and March 2019.

Much of the time between the publication of the report and the review of actions has been spent living with the realities of a pandemic. It is notable that ERMC staff have worked to address their action plan in response to most of the recommendations despite the limitations inflicted by Covid. It is also notable that some of ERMC's initial plans in response to the recommendations are affected by the ability of dioceses to commit to increased funding for ministry training. Therefore some of the outcomes of ERMC's intended actions are unknown at this stage, and will not be known for some time as they are outside ERMC's control.

Having said that, the follow up meeting held on Zoom on 13 November 2020 between the senior reviewer, the Principal of ERMC, the Ministry Training Officer for Ely Diocese (who leads the diocese's Reader training) and the Director of Reader Training for Norwich Diocese gave much evidence to indicate that recommendations have been taken seriously and are being responded to as positively as possible in the current circumstances.

The formal response of the TEI to the review team's recommendations, drawing on the TEI's Action Plan and progress report, together with the senior reviewer's commentary, follows below. This report sets out the original recommendations in bold, the actions identified in the Action Plan in italics and the reviewers' comments in Roman (normal) type.

Recommendation I

While recognising the existing formational focus on flexibility, adaptability, and collaboration, we recommend a refocusing of some of the Formational Aims around the dispositions, knowledge and skills needed for proactive / entrepreneurial mission and evangelism in the Future Church, across all modes of ministry, not least in 'making new disciples'.

It was planned that the Chair would initiate a discussion at the Council Away day to review formational aims. The away day was initially planned for June 2020, and took place in November 2020.

A significant response relating to this recommendation is the recent appointment of a new tutor in mission. This is a half time strategic appointment, starting January and will be the first time ERMC has had a mission specialist on team.

It is expected that this person will develop the work begun at the Away Day which took place in November having been delayed because of Covid. On the agenda was a discussion of formational aims. There is an acknowledgment that what emerges and is communicated publicly 'needs to be something that's us' not copying anywhere else. The commitment is to work towards a statement of formational aims which speaks

about holistic mission and the 5 marks of mission. This partially meets the recommendation, and continued work will be required to ensure that this work is developed and then articulated clearly and documented.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that ERMC review its publicity material with a view towards encouraging applications from a wider demographic including those of BAME heritage.

It was noted in ERMC's response to the PER's recommendations that "there are not many BAME students in the system". That is a challenge for the discernment process. There was, though, a commitment to carry out a review of the website and social media with a particular eye to potential BAME students. The timescale set for this was that the work would be completed by the end of March 2020. The work was to include consultation with a student group.

No review of publicity material has yet happened. While there are more BAME students this year, it is acknowledged that this is an incidental increase. On a positive note, the student representative on the Council is one of the BAME students.

It has been agreed that ERMC's Director of Pastoral Studies and Contextual Education and the student representative will together review publicity material with diversity in mind. ERMC acknowledge the need for 'a bit of an update' of publicity, particularly the website, and made the commitment that this will be carried out with a particular eye to diversity. This work needs to progress.

Recommendation 3

We recommend a continuation and development of the process of formalising links with partner dioceses in relation to Reader/LLM training to ensure these links are embedded in the institutional policies rather than relying on individuals to maintain relationships.

A draft Memorandum of Understanding has been completed under the leadership of the Norwich Director for Reader Training. A timetable for signing this off is still needed.

The development of these links is on ERMC's agenda. ERMC has done all it can. Dioceses are motivated to work with ERMC but Covid has made this a difficult situation within dioceses, having financially, as well as practically, changed situations. There is no further action that ERMC can take other than to ensure the MoU does not slip from the agenda.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that ERMC formulates a clear and simple method of communicating with placement supervisors which enables them to be more effectively part of the overall training pathway for supervises. This may take the form of short training sessions, a short handbook with key tasks and expectations clearly articulated and/or a more clearly communicated and realistic reporting process.

ERMC's response acknowledged that a new placement handbook is needed. it was decided to publish information on the website to make it more readily available. It was also intended that there would be a review of training agreements and reporting forms for placements, and training for those supervising placements in parish and chaplaincy.

There has been some good progress in taking forward this recommendation. All placement information is now on the public website rather than Moodle making it accessible to all involved in placements. An ongoing review of placements is underway and a new training agreement has been developed. There is now training for supervisors in training parishes, although not for placement supervisors. However, it is acknowledged that the level of working in virtual meetings and training settings developed over the past few months makes it possible to arrange accessible online training for supervisors of short placements, which is going to be considered.

Norwich Reader placements have a handbook. It is acknowledged that this needs backing up with a meeting with placement supervisors.

Recommendation 5 (LLM/Reader partner dioceses)

We would recommend all partner dioceses to consider ways in which Reader/LLM candidates might more fully access ERMC's formational components to training; particularly Summer School participation which would provide an even playing field for students' understanding of the practicalities of studying with Durham and a more integrated role in ERMC's community life.

ERMC's response to the initial report highlighted that this is mainly the responsibility of the diocesan courses, but that an action for ERMC was to ensure parity of study skills training. It was also decided to plan a residential weekend for the whole ERMC community.

Given the current circumstances, study skills training will be offered online which will increase parity. One Warden of Readers has been co-opted to ERMC's Council, amplifying the Reader voice there. These are welcome developments.

A residential weekend was being planned for 2022 with the dioceses' Reader trainees involved but the Covid situation has interrupted plans as financial decisions are dependent on diocesan appointments and out of ERMC's hands. There is therefore no further action possible from ERMC at this time except for continued alertness to the situation.

Recommendation 6

We would recommend a review of the way in which Reader/LLM students are referred to by, and given equal opportunities to participate in, the student community as a whole.

The way in which readers/LLMs are referred to has already been changed: not 'guests' but 'part of our community'. Remaining actions are to make sure reader/LLM students can access information given on community matters at residential, and to publish relevant information on Moodle

This action has been completed. Online working during this year has had the effect of increasing accessibility. Community matters are now being shared with all students via Moodle, meaning that Readers in training and independent students are now able to access this information.

Recommendation 7

The reviewers would recommend that serious consideration is given to improving the way in which the library is housed (e.g. simply putting blinds at windows would make a significant difference).

A review of library facilities is intended, including possible relocation to convent once the 'With' community has moved in.

ERMC staff and students have had no access to any libraries since March. There is a genuinely concerned acknowledgment of the need to move the library. Possibilities were being discussed pre-Covid and will progress when possible.

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that the possibility of outgrowing Belsey Bridge should be addressed openly and objectively so that a possible future for larger student numbers participating in residential components of training can be articulated before it needs to be handled as an urgent and immediate problem.

The conversation has started at staff level. Actions to be taken include:

- *Explore overflow capacity with 'With' community.*
- *Discuss who stays overnight and if additional groups, such as LLM IME2, are feasible.*
- *Speak to CCT about capacity at Belsey Bridge. The timescale set for this depends on when the With community moves into the convent.*

This is on the agenda. As with the response to Recommendation 7, conversations with the new community had begun pre-Covid. When situations are clearer they will continue. The reality being communicated by all at the follow-up meeting is that there are few realistic options, making it difficult in normal times but significantly more so with the impact of Covid. It is recognised that honest conversations are needed leading into next academic year.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that ERMC should review the handling of Common Worship liturgy within its community, with a view to extending its range of use and mindful of its status as public worship as well as being the worshipping practice of the community.

ERMC's response is to arrange a review of the worship handbook and to encourage students to be more creative, especially on Friday evening/Saturday morning.

The worship handbook has been revised and now explicitly covers worship beyond ERMC (i.e. Reader training evenings etc). More people are now involved in leading morning and evening prayer, and Reader students are more fully included when they are attending for the day on Saturday. Staff are giving verbal encouragement to explore more widely what is available to use within the offices and also to spend time considering methods of online worship as result of responding to the current situation and how it might influence practice in the future.

This reflects good progress. The reviewers would urge ongoing review, which is already part of the community's practice.

Recommendation 10

We would recommend ERMC to expand its worship handbook to include not only the worship at residential weekends, but also the evening worship before local tutorial sessions in order that all worship offered by ERMC students (ordinands and Reader/LLM candidates) is being located within the same ethos and practical guidelines in a way that articulates clearly what Norwich Tuesday evening worship is already putting into practice.

Review of worship handbook to include local centres.

As above. This action is completed.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that, with the support of ERMC as needed, Ely and Norwich Dioceses review the staffing of their LLM training function with a view to the sustainability of that training.

This is for the diocesan courses, but ERMC are happy to support this.

It was reported that the Diocese of Norwich has some sympathy with this idea, but the financial situation associated with Covid has interfered with this.

Reviews of Reader training provision are happening in the dioceses due to the nationally identified need for more lay ministry. We would urge that dioceses therefore need to keep this under review to ensure an appropriate quality of training is provided for what are likely to be lay ministries that carry significant responsibility.

Recommendation 12

Having commended the work of the chaplains, we would recommend ERMC to consider the level of supervision offered as part of the chaplaincy contract. The work is exacting, emotionally and spiritually, and supervision is essential if chaplains are to model “appropriate patterns of spirituality, continued learning and reflection on practice”.

ERMC comment that this would be desirable, but at the moment is not affordable, and are initiating conversation with chaplains about what is needed.

ERMC is aware that chaplains need to have appropriate supervision. It is considered that this cannot be part of their chaplaincy contract but should be incorporated into their wider ministry. Changes have been made to the way chaplains work, though, with the most significant change being that they are now contracted. It was said that chaplains report feeling more valued. ERMC acknowledges the need to keep levels of support for chaplains under continuous review.

Recommendation 13

Likewise, we recommend a review of the formal structures in place for staff supervision, professional review and opportunities for CPD which for academic staff should include personal research/study time.

Annual appraisals to be conducted as a matter of routine. Work with consultant to identify where we can find time for study/activity.

It was reported that an outside consultant came to work with ERMC staff at the beginning of the first Covid lockdown. This meeting led to a number of “good ideas”. There is a commitment that once we reach a ‘new normal’ there will be a review of these ideas.

In relation to PDR and CPD in particular, it was acknowledged that there is a need to define a time in the year when this will happen, and that their organization need not be the responsibility of the Principal but should be allocated to the most appropriate member of the staff team. There is a clear desire to respond positively to this recommendation although action has not yet been fully implemented.

Recommendation 14

It is recommended that a safer recruiting policy should be added to the current policies.

Intended actions: wait for new national guidelines, and academic staff to undertake safer recruitment training.

ERMC’s Principal has attended safer recruitment training and thus awareness has been raised. ERMC consider that best practice is followed. However, there was little evidence that this practice is clearly articulated and it was agreed that action would be taken to more clearly communicate this.

ERMC’s new safeguarding lead (the Norwich Director of Reader Training) was in the meeting and was able to offer a number of helpful suggestions. One such suggestion was that safer recruitment issues should be monitored jointly by Principal and Safeguarding lead.

It was also agreed that a review of the process of recruitment of associate tutors and placement supervisors will be brought to a staff team.

Recommendation 15

In a Course seeking to provide non-residential and cost-effective training for all streams of the church in its region, we recommend that careful consideration be given to how comprehensive the welcome for and engagement with the actual diversity of the church on the street are.

Intended actions: explore this with students. Use the sessions for continuing students at the beginning of summer school.

Careful consideration, and significant discussion, have been given to this issue. ERMC considers itself to be probably as diverse as it can be in relation to diversity of tutors. Discussion is planned within the EMRC community about how/where more extreme views are expressed and debated.

In order to allow expressions of diversity a 'Hot Potatoes' forum is being provided this year at residentials. Materials from this forum are to be made available to centre leaders for Reader/LLM students. This review is ongoing.

Recommendation 16

We recommend a review of worship throughout ERMC to ensure that the stated intention of diversity is being realized in practice.

Review of worship handbook. Encourage staff to coordinate their worship over the year in order to ensure diversity of styles.

The worship handbook has been rewritten and contains a section on diversity in worship. Co-ordination of worship is ongoing, and worship is under constant review.

Recommendation 17

We would recommend a system of 'Buddies' for all ERMC students – ordinands and Reader/LLM candidates - to help guide new students through the complexity of the structure of the Course.

ERMC comment that students say this should be done through A-F groups. Intended actions: to brief A-F groups before summer school, and to speak to Reader/LLM directors about actions for reader/LLM courses.

It is considered that, following student comments, ordinand voices are heard via their A-F groups. ERMC is now trialling a buddy system for Reader/LLM students training through the Wisbech centre and will potentially roll this out to other Reader/LLM groups depending on the outcome of this trial.

Recommendation 18

We recommend, particularly with the new Central Readers Council and Ministry Division emphasis on Readers as leaders in church and society, that Reader/LLM formation contains elements of teaching on role-specific leadership qualities and skills.

Both diocesan courses have responded positively. Ely Diocese's IME2 for Readers/LLMs has been improved and now includes training on 2nd chair leadership. It is considered that the training of LLMs alongside ordinands gives the opportunity to 'catch' what is not 'taught' in respect of the expectation that LLMs will be leaders alongside clergy.

The follow up from Norwich Diocese is that its Reader training refers to the CRC's new three main emphases in formation groups, and had done so even before they were officially formulated. Its provision for IME2 includes leadership content and is being reviewed more widely. More of this recommendation will be addressed in IME2 than in IME1 but it has been accounted for.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that consideration is given to ways in which feedback relating to teaching sessions and overall modules is gathered in order to raise return rates and thereby increase the effectiveness of the feedback and any staff support that might be offered as a consequence.

ERMC's action includes providing a 'you said/we did' feedback on feedback at community matters. It plans also to make this information available to reader/LLM students.

ERMC report that shorter, more regular feedback questionnaires are being instituted, which has resulted in an improvement of feedback rates; and that including mid-module feedback also allows for changes to be made as the module progresses. These are positive steps.