

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

South West Ministry Training Course

February 2021

Published 2021 by the National Ministry Team of the Archbishops' Council
Copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2021

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ

Switchboard: +44(0)20 7898 1000 Email: ministry@churchofengland.org Website: www.churchofengland.org

The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England is a registered charity

Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the January-April 2019 Periodic External Review

Introduction

Periodic External Review of SWMTC and Truro Diocesan Reader Training Course

The Periodic External Review (PER) of the South West Ministry Training Course (SWMTC) took place mainly during 8-13 January 2019, when reviewers appointed by the National Ministry Team met staff, students and other stakeholders of both the SWMTC and the Truro Diocesan Reader Training Course, plans for the full incorporation of the two from autumn 2019 being then in hand. In addition, reviewers representing Durham University's Common Awards Team held a day of meetings with SWMTC on 3 April 2019 (rescheduled from an earlier date due to illness) to review the delivery of academic programmes.

During their January and April visits, the reviewers interviewed a range of individuals within the institution, including the co-principals and leadership team, other teaching, management and support staff, and Trustees. They talked with representative students from various pathways, attended daily worship, sat in on lectures and seminars, and joined students and staff for meals. They received evidence from written consultations with bishops and DDOs from the sponsoring dioceses, training incumbents and former students; as well as substantial briefing documentation prepared by the SWMTC and Truro programme leaders.

The reviewers' PER report on SWMTC and the Truro course was published, after some delay, in December 2019. It expressed a positive outcome of Confidence with Qualifications in both courses, with Confidence for SWMTC in a majority of categories. It included a good number of commendations, particularly noting the excellence of SWMTC's community life and pastoral care, well integrated reflective practices and strong ethos of teaching and support for adult learners; and the breadth of the Truro course's placements programme and the range and quality of its liturgical provision.

As is always the case, the PER report also included recommendations for SWMTC (with its Truro partners) to address, and SWMTC was asked to produce an action plan setting out its proposals for doing so and the intended timeline. That action plan was submitted in April 2020 and, with subsequent updates and a conversation this month between the Senior Reviewer and the new SWMTC principal to assess progress, it forms the starting point for this Follow-up Report.

PER Follow-up Review

The Follow-up Review meeting took place online on 2 February 2021, when I spoke with the new Principal of SWMTC, the Revd Dr Mark Butchers (appointed autumn 2020). SWMTC now fully incorporates Reader training for Truro as well as Exeter Diocese, and IME for ordained ministry for both. A broader foundation programme is offered for a wide range of learners, and SWMTC contributes to curacy training in Exeter Diocese. It is also good that SWMTC has now changed its constitution and become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

I am grateful for Mark's time and care in talking through SWMTC's recent steps and future plans, and I am encouraged by the good work that is clearly being done despite all the challenges of the last year. Particularly to be commended are the full consolidation of two courses into one and their pooling of resources and energy; a robust approach to safeguarding training, practice and communication; and SWMTC's engagement with its

two sponsoring dioceses in terms of what it might offer in training, discipleship and lifelong learning. We would, if anything, encourage SWMTC to be still more proactive in its conversations with both dioceses.

The following report attends, in turn, to each of the recommendations made by the National Ministry Team-appointed review team and the action taken by SWMTC in response. The University of Durham additionally follows its own process for the review of PER recommendations made by its Common Awards team of reviewers – which, in this case, relates only to Recommendations 10 and 11 - and any necessary further documentation will be issued separately.

The PER recommendations are listed below in **bold**; SWMTC's response drawn from its PER Action plan and from subsequent updates is printed in *italics*, and these are followed in regular type by my comments, based on our discussion at the 2nd February online meeting.

In summary, and on behalf of the Review team, I believe that SWMTC's responses reflect thorough consideration and positive action with every recommendation, and that the steps that have been taken or are in hand are commendable and will serve its learning community and partner dioceses well for the future.

The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Robinson, Senior Reviewer
February 2021

Note: the impact of the coronavirus lockdown included the suspension of residential contact for the rest of the 2019/20 academic year. Hence some of the actions that it was hoped might be implemented in that year, noted in the text in italics below, are now receiving attention in 2020/21.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that SWMTC continues confidently to embrace opportunities for innovation in its range and delivery of training programmes.

Action: We need to embed our new curriculum, including our online delivery & Reflective Practice Seminars (RPS). In 2020, we gained approval from the National Ministry Team and Durham for a new 180 credit certificate, and an ordinand started on this programme in September 2020. Foundations in Christian Ministry (FiCM) has now been introduced by the Diocese of Truro. We will be drawing up a new pathway for Level 6 in the coming months to enable more Ordinands/Curates to finish the BA; will think further about more imaginative placements; and will continue to explore increased collaboration with Sarum College & St Mellitus (SW).

The PER team in 2019 were impressed by the plans for SWMTC's new curriculum, to be framed by the Lord's Prayer, Creeds and Magnificat and by the values of 'adventurous faith', 'missional hope' and 'grounded love'; and it was encouraging to hear of the success of its implementation, and of the continuing work to embed reflective practice including through the use of Reflective Practice Seminars. The input of new colleagues and adjustments to assignments and timetabling were also benefiting the delivery of training – for instance, by taking advantage of Zoom-format sessions to lighten the Saturday programmes. It would be good to review progress after the current academic year.

It was encouraging to hear that the Foundations (FiCM) programme now had good take-up in both dioceses. We discussed further opportunities to explore the possibility of new programmes, such as offering training for pioneer, chaplaincy or focal ministries, or further input into curacy training. It was good that these conversations were happening with the dioceses, and that SWMTC is in dialogue with St Mellitus South West through the recently established South West Training Partnership Board.

All of these actions are very positive. We would encourage SWMTC to be proactive in keeping conversations with its sponsoring dioceses about new ministry training needs and opportunities on the agenda.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that SWMTC and its Trustees continue to work further with sponsoring dioceses to develop strategies aimed at increasing diversity in the student intake.

Action: In the 2019-20 FiCM intake, which is an important 'feeder programme' for SWMTC's other offerings, there is significant social, educational and ecumenical diversity. This is a recommendation that can only be fulfilled in partnership with dioceses, who wish to take the lead in this area. A staff development session on diversity is planned for autumn 2020. We have begun to make connections with the national BAME vocations officer and the Exeter diocese BAME champion. We need to be more visible in the public domain and we are planning a re-branding and marketing (including social media) campaign which will include an emphasis upon diversity. We will collaborate with both dioceses to promote diversity more widely.

SWMTC's actions in this area are positive, and it clearly recognises the breadth of what is meant by diversity, including in terms of social and financial exclusion as well as ethnicity and cultural heritage. The Vice Principal now has the additional role of Inclusion Officer. In terms of branding and public profile – which can have an impact on attraction and hence diversity of student intake – SWMTC was currently exploring with trustees the possibility of a 'college' rather than 'course' identity.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that SWMTC take additional steps to communicate its safeguarding policy and procedures effectively.

Action: SWMTC comment that one of the key vehicles for communication within SWMTC is Moodle and students need to be inducted into its use right from the beginning of their involvement with the course. Communication of important information concerning safeguarding needs to be continuous, to the point that students become bored with it – only then can we be confident that the messages have been properly received. Discussion at Management Committee has highlighted the need to communicate something many more times than SWMTC had anticipated (8 times, not just the 4 ways we used in 2019). This has been recognised and accepted by staff and students. The following has been actioned since receipt of the PER report:

- *Email to all students with names of Safeguarding Officers*
- *Email to all ordinands with a reminder re. the need to complete safeguarding prior to placements in the Spring Term.*
- *Safeguarding Policy reviewed by Board January 2020 and updated version posted on Moodle and website.*
- *Names of Safeguarding Officers mentioned to students at the start of nearly every teaching session at residential weekend; rationale for this explained.*

Moodle Induction to form part of very first student contact with SWMTC. Continued mention of Safeguarding Policy, how to access it and names of Safeguarding Officers at nearly every teaching session in which students participate - already implemented. Exploration of how to include safeguarding information into the student experience so that students need to know it (e.g. for an assignment). Put Safeguarding Officers' names onto students' name badges.

Safeguarding was an area of some concern for the PER team in 2019 as there were signs that key contacts and policy were insufficiently known within the student community despite SWMTC's best efforts at communication and its good practice in policy review and training. The steps now taken appear admirable and comprehensive. Added to those noted above, two new safeguarding officers have been appointed; the lead safeguarding role on the governing body will shortly pass to a trustee who would bring the safeguarding expertise of working in a university community; connections are made between safeguarding and theological reflection in the curriculum; and hence safeguarding is becoming more fully embedded in the life and learning of the SWMTC community.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that SWMTC explore further the scope to assist students in sustaining the balance of their training and home life, including through the supporting role of home incumbents.

Action: Staff Tutors visit the Home Incumbent and student before the academic year begins. Home Ministers received their student's timetable & deadlines, as requested during the September 2019 meeting for HMs & Journal Tutors. It is good to invite HMs to Induction Day but lateness of BAPs means notification is too short for busy HMs. Staff tutors keep student workload and training-home life balance under review at home visits as well as encouraging contact with

HMs. An annual Induction Day for Home Incumbents is planned. Other proposals to enhance the involvement of HMs: Staff Tutor to phone HM mid-year; provide a template chart of the timetable for an academic year. We are putting up a big screen TV in the library for purposes of staff/student inclusion in lessons/meetings who are geographically on the fringes of our dioceses, which will reduce travel time for these students.

It is good to see SWMTC's thinking around this area. Subsequent to the action plan, the last year's adaptations around Covid and lockdown had in some ways eased the issue, with residential and gathered events currently taking place online and less of a squeeze on the Saturday timetable as a result. This had also resulted in cost-savings; but in formational terms there was also a loss in not conducting residentials and reflective practice seminars face to face. Longer-term it will be important to keep the balance of online and gathered teaching under review.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that SWMTC continue to review its accommodation for residential and educational purposes.

Action: Change of venue for the Lent/Easter School 2020: moved for ease of access. As a result of poor food at the residential weekend venue, we have moved the evening meal on Saturday to the Future Inns, which has been good. Planning Lent School at Blundell's School, Tiverton. We will continue formally to monitor student feedback regarding accommodation for residential and educational purposes and respond appropriately.

Understandably, much of this has been on hold in the last year but SWMTC will return to it as circumstances permit.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that SWMTC explore further the range of traditions and practice used in its corporate worship.

Action: We recognise that the worship viewed by the Inspectors was 'middle of the road'. We already encourage students to experience other forms of worship (from outside their own context). We are also attentive to the need for worship to be authentic and not simply a spectacle. The Worship Policy was revised in 2018 and needs to be reviewed again. We have had in the past all types of worship in the Saturday pm slot – led by the students. This can be very creative worship but needs setting up time which we no longer have in the timetable. Critical mass is needed so that worship 'works'. We already explore different styles of Eucharist at our Lent/Easter School e.g. Australian, BCP, CW etc. We now keep written record of worship at residentials (Powerpoints, order of service). Still to do: Review Worship Policy and take necessary action.

Again, Covid and lockdown have had an impact, and there is a 'sameness' about what is currently able to be offered via zoom. Sunday worship is necessarily a Service of the Word at present, and there is perhaps less scope for exploring creativity (prayer stations for example) than in real space. Guidance on leading morning prayer and compline has recently been redrafted. It remains SWMTC's aim to review the range of worship and training in the context of the corporate worshipping life and the skills development that it is aiming for, and we understand staff are fully on board with being part of this. We encourage SWMTC to progress this work when possible.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the decision to have Joint Principals is continually reviewed, recognising that future developments and thinking in each diocese might mean a significant change in the risk register.

Action: The Board has kept this under review and decided at its January 2020 meeting to seek a new Principal to lead SWMTC. The Joint-Principals resigned in the summer; recruitment followed, and the new Principal took up the role early in autumn 2020.

Our concern at the time of the review in no way reflected on the Joint Principals' collegueship or effectiveness, which seemed admirable, but on the fact that their status and funding as diocesan employees were not recognised in SWMTC's statement of costs and represented a hidden financial commitment on the part of both dioceses, arguably putting SWMTC's funding on a less secure footing than was ideal – a point reflected at that time in its risk register. It is encouraging to hear of the process that SWMTC had undertaken to make the new appointment. Finance is now more transparent – and the most recent year showed a small surplus, thanks partly to a reduction in residential activity. Both former Joint Principals now serve as trustees, while the new Principal (formerly a trustee) continues in attendance but without trustee status.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the business plan is continually reviewed and is developed to include a three-year indicative budget with the associated risks articulated.

Action: The Business Plan has been reviewed each year and as part of the discussions regarding the Principalship, and is currently being updated with a 3 year indicative budget. The Risk Register in the Business Plan is being updated for review by the Board. SWMTC will continue to review the Business Plan at regular (at least 6 monthly) intervals.

These are positive steps. The text of the business plan itself, at the time of the review was good: clear and comprehensive; but it had lacked an indicative 3-year budget, so it is good that this has been added.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the Worship Policy be reviewed with consideration given to recommending that all sessions open/close with prayer and that feedback on leading worship be both written and verbal.

Action: The Worship Policy is reviewed before the start of each academic year. Prayer is offered before & after sessions now. But we have not got feedback re leading worship sorted under the new curriculum; this needs staff discussion to agree an effective process for feedback. [A process for feedback has now been agreed and implemented.] We will review the Policy before the end of this academic year with particular reference to the issues that have been identified by the reviewers. Guidance for students re Worship/Feedback is in the process of being developed to bring more clarity for both Staff and Students in the leading of Worship.

As we note at Recommendation 6, we look forward to further progress with this when circumstances allow.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the TEI develops a systematic approach to staff development.

Action: Staff development does happen, and our approach could be codified in a similar way as it is for sabbaticals. Some staff are completing the Durham run HE qualification this year. We are planning a staff day on diversity for autumn 2020. We will discuss and agree a plan for staff development, probably based upon a diocesan policy.

This recommendation, like no. 11, was led by Durham Common Awards colleagues on the review team, and they will follow it up appropriately. But it was good to hear from the Principal that a staff development policy was now in place, including provision for inset days, sabbaticals and a modest personal allowance for training; and that he had begun to establish regular one-to-one meetings with SWMTC staff in which development matters were discussed and which staff found valuable.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the TEI considers articulating, in writing, its bespoke approach to adult education to enhance the existing offering.

Action: Some of this is already in the staff curriculum manual, but there is a need to ‘sell’ it to those outside SWMTC. We plan to produce an account of what we have done over the last 3 years by the end of 2020.

As a further response, SWMTC have commissioned from theologian Tim Gibson a reflection and rationale statement for their approach to adult theological education, entitled ‘Memory and Becoming’, and have highlighted this on their website at [The South West Ministry training course \(swmtc.org.uk\)](http://The South West Ministry training course (swmtc.org.uk)). Its reflections on ‘meeting learners where they are’, ‘learning together’ and ‘embracing vulnerability’ in the context of the learning journey seem excellent and thought-provoking.

Truro Diocesan Reader Training Course

Most of the following recommendations have been overtaken by the Truro Diocesan Reader Training Course’s full amalgamation into SWMTC, so we need comment only briefly:

Recommendation 12

We recommend that:

- i) the lack of appropriate publicity and information regarding recruitment and training of Readers should be addressed urgently;**
- ii) steps should be taken to ensure that the redesigned diocesan website gives access to this information, either directly or via appropriate links; and**
- iii) in reshaping its content a broader view of vocations should be taken, and information given about a range of ordained and lay roles.**

Action: Link through to Reader training page on website. Programme details on SWMTC website. FiCM course now feeds into Reader training; significant publicity connected to FiCM and Vocations work now available. Information about Reader programme updated. Publicity to be reviewed in 2020, including links on diocesan website.

Reader training publicity for Truro as for Exeter is now incorporated into that of SWMTC. More broadly, we noted in conversation with the Principal that Truro Reader trainee numbers are relatively low at present, perhaps because the use of the FiCM programme as a feeder route and foundation year for the Reader

training programme is less established in Truro than in Exeter. There are pointers here for SWMTC's further conversations with the dioceses about course publicity and breadth of vocations.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that, in liaison with SWMTC, research is undertaken into the possibility of developing partnerships with other faith groups. This could include making contact with Chaplaincy services at Falmouth University at Penryn.

Action: Incorporate study day in the third year of Reader training (post-licensing).

We understand that such contacts and partnerships are being explored, and that post-licensing Reader study days are being further developed to take advantage of them.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that consideration should be given to the ways in which the corporate life of the student body can be developed when there are no weekly meetings.

Action: We have a corporate life in SWMTC that includes fortnightly meetings and online fora. Both ordinands and Readers from both years meet on the same night and have both prayerful and social interaction; the same chaplain is available for both classes. Reader Management Group to monitor the success of this arrangement at the end of the academic year.

SWMTC's new training pattern fully includes Reader trainees in its corporate life, including through its reflective practice seminars.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the accommodation in Truro for residential and educational purposes, and its provision for those with mobility or other additional support needs, be reviewed under the new shared programme arrangements.

Action: The Old Cathedral School, where all Truro based teaching takes place, is entirely accessible.

As noted at Recommendation 5, physical accommodation matters will be for later review.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the Reader Training Management Group establish clear terms of reference and areas of responsibility.

Action: Terms of Reference to be developed and agreed: Reader Management Group June 2020.

No further action needed.

Recommendation 17

We recommend that the Reader Training Management Group identify clear goals for the Reader Training Course from September 2019, in line with the formation criteria for Readers, and including course length and the arrangement of placements.

Action: Formational aims of SWMTC's programme are as per national guidelines. Reader Management Group goals for Truro Reader training to be inserted into the next edition of the Truro Reader Handbook.

With incorporation into SWMTC's programme, no further action is needed.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that the Reader Training Management Group invite at least one representative from SWMTC to attend its meetings.

Action: Joint-Principal attending meetings. When there is a single Principal for SWMTC, they will be invited to attend; the Director of Ministry will become an SWMTC trustee and will attend the Reader Management Group.

Actions carried through as noted above.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that students be taught a method of theological reflection that encourages critical engagement with one's own responses, e.g. the pastoral cycle, and have prompt feedback on their reflections to enable them to improve before the next one is due.

Action: Ongoing and covered by the new curriculum. Methods of theological reflection are systematically taught at the appropriate level as part of the new curriculum and embedded in students' theological praxis through Reflective Practice Seminars and Reflective journaling. They include the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and, at higher levels, the Pastoral Cycle. Reader Management Group to review students' experience of reflective practice. The post-licensing programme will also contain elements of reflective practice.

In conversation the Principal expanded on the ways that theological reflection is embedded in the new curriculum, and that Truro (and Exeter) Reader trainees are fully part of this including through reflective practice seminars and, for Truro, additional content in the post-licensing year. As noted under Recommendation 1, there is scope for SWMTC to work proactively with the dioceses on this.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that feedback sheets for sermons and worship leading are re-designed to elicit responses which will enable students to address development needs.

Action: Feedback from leading worship during SWMTC residential is as per the course's Worship Policy on Moodle. Completed as part of new curriculum.

No further action needed.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that the course introduce one or two opportunities for structured and assessed group work by students.

Action: Approach to the assessment regime is being reviewed in 2019/20. Preparation and delivery of worship at residential is undertaken in groups and commented upon by students and assessed by staff. Review assessment during 2020.

In conversation the Principal noted that there was further to go with this recommendation. It was not easy to know how to accommodate this further element into an already full programme – Saturdays or the midweek reflective practice seminars might be options. SWMTC will reflect further on this.

Recommendation 22

We recommend that methods are established to track students' development and learning needs in terms of the Church of England's Formation Criteria for Readers.

Action: This is now part of what we do, and pathways have been approved by the National Ministry Team as part of the SWMTC course. Structure of annual reports for Warden of Readers to be reviewed in 2020.

No further action needed to meet this recommendation. The Principal noted, however, that some new students require significant support (for example with essay-writing skills) in making the transition from FiCM courses to the SWMTC programme, and hence that SWMTC will need to continue to give attention to its support for students' learning and development.

Recommendation 23

We recommend that the course's system of Personal Tutors be strengthened, or that there be the introduction of local sub-chaplains.

Action: completed: we have Truro Reader Chaplains who attend SWMTC residentials.

No further action needed.

Recommendation 24

We recommend that:

- i) the current approach to placements for Truro Reader trainees should continue after the transition to SWMTC;**
- ii) there should be a formal placement agreement so that all parties involved know what is expected of them, with learning outcomes for each placement clearly defined; and**
- iii) placement journals should be formally assessed with appropriate feedback, in line with the formational criteria and learning outcomes.**

Action: placement ongoing, protocols in place, assessed placement journals are part of one of the modules. Completed.

No further action needed to meet this recommendation.