

## Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Report

# Wycliffe Hall

**Conducted onsite and online, May 2021**

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## Glossary

ASE	Annual Self Evaluation
CA	Common Awards
CofE	Church of England
DDO	Diocesan Director of Ordinands
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
IME1/2	Initial Ministerial Education Phase 1/2
PER	Periodical External Review
PPH	Permanent Private Hall (of Oxford University)
SMT	Senior Management Team
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TEI	Theological Education Institution
TI	Training Incumbent
WH	Wycliffe Hall

## Reviewers

**Dr Sally Buck**, Senior Reviewer; Warden of Lay Ministry, Lincoln Diocese.

**Revd Dr James Bruce**, Transitional Rector, Cartmel Peninsula benefice, Carlisle Diocese.

**Revd Sallie Butcher**, Priest in Charge, Mamble St John the Baptist with Bayton, Rock with Heightington with Far Forest, Worcester Diocese.

**Revd Canon Dr Alwyn Pettersen**, former Canon Theologian, Worcester Cathedral.

## The Periodic External Review Framework

Periodic External Review (PER) is part of the Church of England’s quality assurance for its ministerial training institutions (‘Theological Education Institutions’ or TEIs), whereby the church conducts an external quality check of each TEI against national standards and expectations for ministerial training and formation.

On behalf of the church, review teams are asked to assess the TEI’s fitness for purpose in preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry and to make recommendations for the enhancement of its life and work. The reviewers’ report is made to the House of Bishops acting through the Ministry Council.

Church PER teams are appointed by the National Ministry Team from a pool of reviewers nominated by bishops and TEIs.

For TEIs that offer Durham-validated Common Awards programmes, representatives of Durham University’s Common Awards team will sometimes carry out their own academic quality assurance review in parallel with the church’s PER, to inform the university’s decision-making on: (i) renewal of the Common Awards partnerships with approved TEIs; and (ii) revalidation of Common Awards programmes that have been approved for delivery within TEIs.

### Recommendations and Commendations

PER reports include Recommendations which are either developmental, naming issues that the reviewers consider the TEI needs to address, or encourage the enhancement of practice that is already good. They also include Commendations, naming instances of good practice that the reviewers 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 use the following outcomes with regard to the overall report and individual criteria A-E:

#### **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 raises 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.

## Review of Wycliffe Hall

### Introduction

Wycliffe Hall (WH) has been offering theological study for those training for the Anglican ordained ministry since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and has been a Permanent Private Hall (PPH) of the University of Oxford since 1997. WH is currently training 58 ordinands for the Church of England, half studying for Oxford University awards and half on the Durham Common Awards Theology for Mission and Ministry pathway. Another 70 students are currently studying at WH as independent students. Although not yet balanced in numbers, WH has been working hard since the last review to increase the number of women training for ordination. Their stated aim is to increase ‘significantly the proportion of women ordinands in the student body towards 50%.’

WH is a TEI in the evangelical tradition. It is located in Oxford and, as a PPH, its students are embedded in the academic world of the city. Alongside a commitment to academic excellence, WH aims for its students to develop formationally in a discernible way, with its aims stated as offering a Centre for the Renewal of Prayer, Character, Preaching and Thinking. As well as ordinands from Church of England dioceses, WH has a high percentage of independent students. Its combined offer of its academic and formational aims, along with the opportunity to study towards an Oxford University award, attracts such students from overseas (particularly the United States of America) as well as the UK.

### PER Process

This team of reviewers representing the Church of England’s National Ministry Team visited during the final term of the 2020-2021 academic year.

The reviewers are grateful to Wycliffe Hall staff and students for the considerable amount of work involved in planning and taking part in a review towards the end of an academic year that has been dominated by a pandemic. We are particularly glad to have been able to carry out this review in person but need to acknowledge that the remaining restrictions as we emerged from a major lock-down did still limit the size, format and flexibility of meetings that could be arranged and took away some of the relaxed informal moments normally associated with such a review visit. Even the relaxed times had to be scrupulously planned to make them Covid safe. Nonetheless, the review team members were made very welcome by everyone involved and every effort was made to ensure that both online and in-person meetings were arranged efficiently and securely.

We were able to attend a number of meetings – some online, others in person. The week began with attendance at the art exhibition that was part of Oxford Art Weeks where it was possible for us to meet the artist in residence. Members of the team had conversations with key staff, students in both formal and informal settings, members of Hall Council, the external examiner and other stakeholders. We attended worship and were welcomed at two of the Fellowship Groups. In addition we were able to observe

teaching sessions held in the covid-safe setting of St Andrew's Church and were invited to attend an online Community Notices session.

The reviewers received almost all of the documents required by the PER in good time. This material included a bespoke self-evaluation document, module overview tables, curriculum mapping documents, staff and student handbooks, external examiner reports, statistical data, previous validation and inspection reports; and committee and council minutes. All of this was done despite the early arrival of a baby to the Senior Tutor as she was just about to upload all of the documentation. The reviewers would like to express our thanks to the team for their swift and careful handling of the changed circumstances.

## General Observations

The Reviewers were pleased to find WH generally in good heart although with the concerns of the influence of the pandemic on its ability to welcome overseas students this year and the conflicting pressures from Oxford University's validated programmes required of WH if it is to continue as a PPH and the Common Awards requirements of Ministry Council for those training for Anglican ordained ministry.

As was reported by the previous review team, on many occasions positive comments were made of the Principal and his work by support staff, ordinands and students. In addition, the senior staff team as a whole gained many comments of commendation from students and other staff alike. Reviewers would like to echo these sentiments and to draw attention to the work of the academic and reception offices and the staff who work in many ways to enhance the community spirit of WH through their dedicated service in the house and kitchens.

We are pleased to say that WH staff, under the leadership of Michael Lloyd, have worked extremely hard to build on the strengths already in evidence at the previous review and to work towards improvements in many areas of college life.

We feel that it is important to comment at this stage that many of our recommendations fall into three main categories. These identify some significant areas for improvement and development if the extremely good and positive work observed throughout is to be embedded in a way that it can carry WH into a positive long-term future.

Personalities are essential, but without the underpinning of solid, accessible, understandable policies, governance and critical review those personalities cannot securely carry out their work and grow the institution. We therefore wish to draw the attention of WH's staff team to three particularly significant themes running through the recommendations.

The first of these is that procedures requiring regular review (among others, ASE, all policies, staff reviews) should be programmed for senior staff and council meeting dates at the beginning of each academic year and duly actioned.

Another is to recommend that the many creative and energising formational opportunities available to students are considered in a more intentional way. WH staff are innovative, deeply caring of students and



the church that those to be ordained will be serving in the near, and not so near, future and provide many opportunities for students to grow and learn alongside the academic requirements of the validated taught modules. Conversations led us to conclude that, while this is very much appreciated, it can be overwhelming when assignments are due and short notice is given of events that students would very much like to be able to engage in more fully than they sometimes can due to the lack of ability to plan their time to include these events. There is much to be commended but without sufficient thought being given to communication, timetabling well in advance and review leading to development of ideas the great potential of some of the projects will be unrealisable.

Over all of these areas of recommendation sits the concern about how WH will be able to continue to offer Oxford University awards as a PPH and be considered by the national church to be fulfilling the criteria required for theological study for ordinands in the Church of England. We would ask that both WH and the national church work to make the way forward as clear as possible in the most efficient way they are able for the security of current students and the ability of WH to recruit students for the 2022-23 academic year.

## Summary of Outcomes

This report is written in relation to the PER Criteria in force for 2020-21 and available on the National Ministry Team's quality assurance pages of the Church of England website.

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>
A Formational Aims	Confidence
B Formational Context and Community	Confidence with Qualifications
C Leadership and Management	Confidence with Qualifications
D Teaching and Learning	Confidence with Qualifications
E Ministerial Formation	Confidence
<b>Overall Outcome</b>	<b>Confidence with Qualifications</b>

## Section A: Formational Aims

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

1. WH's Scene Setter document highlighted the fact that its mission aim is "to be a Centre for the Renewal of Prayer, Character, Preaching and Thinking". Student and staff conversations reflected these areas and highlighted ways in which all characteristics are addressed throughout WH's life.
2. The particular emphasis being given to renewal of character over the next five years integrates one of these aims into every aspect of WH's life beginning with a course aimed at being used by Fellowship Groups which has the intention of building resilience, integrity and faithfulness. For this, WH are seeking to draw on, and to contribute to, Oxford-based research into character development.
3. WH also states, throughout its written material and introductory sessions with students as well as in its recruitment material for new staff, its academic values and virtues. As a Christian community WH states that it is committed to the pursuit of truth wherever it may be found and wherever it may lead. Additionally there is the conviction that such a pursuit of truth will ultimately lead to Jesus Christ. This academic pursuit is expressed in a seeking after the values and virtues of truth, love, humility, service, excellence in teaching and research, community, honesty, critical rigour, freedom, openness, fearlessness and equality. These are expansive and generous concepts which we saw reflected in the life of staff and students in many ways throughout our short visit and which are clearly communicated and owned at all levels of WH's community.
4. Both public-facing and WH's student and staff literature state these aims clearly and consistently with evidence being given of how staff and student activity relates to these aims.
5. Many references were made by stakeholders, students and staff to the Principal's commitment to the flourishing of each individual ordinand. Reviewers also experienced this level of commitment from staff, academic and non-academic, throughout WH.
6. The appointment of an artist in residence would seem to be in keeping with the missional aims of the college in the sense that his role is to explore different ways of expressing formational qualities and spirituality through artistic media. In conversations, and in our visit to the art exhibition currently in place in WH, reviewers gained a sense that the work in music for worship and the visual arts is beginning to expand the understanding of what constitutes ministerial formation.

### Commendation 1

**We commend the level of commitment to, and understanding of, WH's formational aims by all members of staff, under the inspirational leadership of the Principal.**

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

7. The fact that the Principal is a member of the national church's Resourcing Ministerial Formation Review Group which is looking at funding structures and opportunities for collaboration and partnership within the training sector and of Ministry Council gives WH the opportunity to set their formational aims in the wider national context and for the Principal to contribute to relevant, and up to date, discussions about training requirements.
8. All of WH's formational aims are stated alongside the intention of developing ministers who are relational, missional and collaborative. Relational qualities are developed through Fellowship Groups, community life which includes mealtimes as well as free time and by working in teams on mission projects. Missional themes run throughout the curriculum with organised missions taking place each year. Collaboration is something which the scene-setting document states WH staff seek to model and teach through planning and leading worship, various college Common Room posts, shared living space, peer group reviews and the planning of social and sporting events.
9. The Student Learning Programme formation criteria mapping document is a very clear example of how WH intends every aspect of their ordinand programme to relate to the CofE IME1 criteria and encourages students to reflect on their own development throughout their training.
10. The last PER of WH encouraged the college to reflect on its male/female balance of ordinands. This has been done and there is a commitment over the next five years to half of the preachers and Principal's Hour speakers being women. It is assumed that this balance will have an impact on the recruitment of more women students. Principal's Hour, being a time once a week when ordinands are expected to engage with different aspects of the wider world (e.g. Post-Truth; Patriarchy; Handel; Why should we take laughter seriously?) is something the reviewers consider to be an asset to the ministerial formation of WH students. Reviewers were pleased to note the varying format of these sessions depending on the topic and the speaker, some subjects being dealt with through lectures, others through more conversation styles, but whatever format, always with time for Q&A.
11. However, there is a question about the availability of churches in which women will be able to take on senior leadership roles in the tradition within which WH trains ordinands. Reviewers asked some questions specifically of current women students and the Dean for Women's Ministry. These limitations are acknowledged, but are strongly countered by the positive work that WH is doing to encourage women's ministry within its tradition. There was a sense of realism mixed with optimism which reviewers considered to be a solid base for growth in numbers and identity.
12. Other issues of diversity are being considered (and indeed have been for a number of years) and this consideration is bearing fruit in the way WH is spoken of by stakeholders and current students as well as the perception reported to us in conversations with staff. Theological diversity has been seen in a move from purely conservative evangelicalism to a readiness to engage with and reflect the whole evangelical spectrum and beyond. More recently this has included addressing issues of race

with reference to the Black Lives Matter movement and an articulation of the theology of diversity on Oxford University's website on Oxford and Colonialism. These are examples of the seriousness with which WH is addressing issues of diversity.

13. As with many aspects of WH life, while the documents are clear and accessible, there is no evidence of a regular, formalised, review process. We would ask that, particularly as the national formation guidelines are in the process of change, this review is put in place along with others during the next academic year.

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

14. Everyone involved in leadership in WH spoke very clearly about the college's particular place within the Church of England as an Evangelical TEI with a particular relationship by means of being a PPH of Oxford University. This particular traditional positioning can limit candidates who would choose to study at WH but can also give confidence to those who do choose it while intentionally broadening outlooks and expectations through the 4-fold formational aspects of training (prayer, character, preaching and thinking).
15. External stakeholders, including former students, a DDO, IME2 officer and training incumbent spoke extremely positively about the aims and formational outcomes of WH.
16. The reviewers were aware that dioceses sending candidates to WH are predominantly from the south. There was apparently no intentionality about this. We understand from Wycliffe that there may be a reluctance on the part of some northern dioceses to allow candidates to train outside the province, but this is not a matter of national policy. We would ask WH to consider more intentionally promoting its formational aims within the Church of England's dioceses, maybe through contact with DDOs and online open days, as well as in its impressive work recruiting students from overseas, particularly the United States. This would not only potentially increase student numbers but would potentially increase student diversity.

### **Recommendation 1**

**Given that there is no national policy preventing ordinands from the northern province from training in a southern TEI, nor other compelling reason for the regional nature of WH ordinands, we would ask WH staff to consider how it promotes itself and its formational aims to a wider number of Church of England dioceses.**

**The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion A: Formational Aims.**

## Section B: Formational Context and Community

### **B1 The TEI draws on partnership with theological educators in the region and local faith and community organisations to enhance formational opportunities for students.**

17. WH has well-functioning links with both Oxford and Durham Universities, drawing on the strengths of both to cater for students appropriately to their academic abilities and calling. The wide range of input and expertise available through the strong link with Oxford University is considered a positive by stakeholders, students and staff alike. This advantage was communicated strongly and clearly to reviewers during our visit. Reviewers were informed that Oxford University is no longer willing for WH to offer both Oxford and Durham awards if it is to maintain PPH status and that a deadline of the end of the academic year 2021-22 has been set. No-one expressed the view that to lose the current status in order to continue to offer Common Awards validated modules would be an advantage. In fact, all comments made to reviewers suggested that losing this unique link would be considered a disaster, both educationally and financially. We were assured that the Oxford BTh has been developed with parity with Common Awards in mind so that the reflective nature of these awards will not be lost.
18. It is therefore the opinion of the reviewers that the tension regarding this double link with the national church's policy over Common Awards and WH's PPH status needs to be resolved to enable WH to concentrate its energies on formation over structures.
19. WH offers a wide range of placements (although these have been more limited than normal this year due to covid restrictions) and has significant links with providers of parish and sector placements. In conversations with staff, stakeholders and students this aspect of WH life was clearly valued. In addition, wide-reaching partnerships in such a city as Oxford expose students to a breadth of experience ranging from Science for Seminaries allowing students to shadow a scientist in the University, with visits to laboratories, observation and learning from scientists in their places of work. In addition there are links with the Centre for Muslim Christian Studies and the Oxford Centre for Missional Studies bringing scholars from the developing world, furnishing WH with speakers from the global church and helping to redress any western bias in its ordinands' perception and thinking.
20. All of this is in addition to the value gained by being a constituent part of the University of Oxford offering institutional, intellectual, cultural, pastoral, sporting and community-facing opportunities to all WH students.
21. While there are many inter faith opportunities in Oxford, placements are limited to those provided by churches and Christian organisations. Reviewers concluded that at least some opportunity for students to experience a placement with other faith groups' organisations would be a beneficial addition to the existing possibilities.

## Recommendation 2

We are aware that this is a recommendation that is not fully in WH's power to act upon but we would strongly recommend that the tension regarding the double link with the national church's current policy over Common Awards and WH's status as an Oxford University PPH needs to be resolved as quickly as possible if WH is to be assured of its future as a PPH and therefore to be able to confidently continue to develop and grow as a provider of IME1 for Anglican ministry students. We would equally strongly recommend WH to do all that is in their power to further the development of the BTh pathway for ordinands so that it satisfies national church requirements.

## Recommendation 3

Given the very rich opportunities available in Oxford, reviewers recommend that consideration is given to how more creative use of links with inter-faith organisations may be developed to offer placements that immerse students in other faith cultures and give a perspective other than those available from Church-based interfaith projects. This could be achieved by, for example, working with other faith agencies, and not just churches set in areas with large numbers of people from other faiths.

## **B2 There are well understood and embedded practices of corporate life so as to enhance students' formation.**

22. Reviewers were glad to note what seemed to be a sound structure for pastoral support, based on fellowship groups and the ongoing relationship with the Tutor who leads the FG. This structure is backed up by the Director of Formation and Pastoral Care, and the Safeguarding and Student Welfare Lead. In addition, informal but significant support is offered by the Admissions Officer, whose office is next to Hall pigeon holes, and the Receptionist, whose office is at the major crossroads of the Old Building by the entrance to the Dining Hall. We were deeply impressed by the prayerful commitment staff members have to listening to, and praying for, students (and other staff). Being staff members at WH seems not to be a job, but a lifestyle.
23. However, as in a number of aspects of WH's life, this commendable practice does not transfer into the policies and communications of the college which would serve to enable students to access care more effectively and mitigate against the potential for excellent pastoral care to be personality dependent rather than embedded in reviewed WH policies and owned at every level of Hall membership, from the newest of students to the longest serving staff and Council members.
24. With this in mind we note that WH's safeguarding policy states that it is due for review in September 2019. There is no evidence that this has been done. In addition, the excellent Welfare Policy states on its final page that it is due for review in Trinity term 2019. We acknowledge that WH are waiting for TEI specific safeguarding guidelines which are being produced by the Church of England. Nevertheless we would have expected an interim policy review to take place.
25. The fact that both of these significant documents have not been formally reviewed through the governance structures of WH is of concern and the reviewers would ask that serious consideration

is given to making students more aware of how they can access information relating to safeguarding and welfare at short notice and 24 hours a day at times of crisis. As recent experiences have highlighted, it is these times when instant access to key routes of referral and support are most needed. We are concerned that the excellent intentions for pastoral care and safeguarding of all WH members could be undermined without attention being paid to this.

26. The student handbook has a relatively full section on health and wellbeing but no separate entry for safeguarding. The emergency information included relates to fire, medical and security emergencies with no reference to safeguarding emergencies. While there is a link in the student handbook to the safeguarding policy, this is not an electronic link and simply names but does not locate the policies.
27. However, the Welfare (fitness to study and train) Policy does include very clear guidelines for reporting welfare issues with first points of contact clearly listed along with a process for escalating concern in stages. This is a very clear document with much to be commended about it, but the reviewers would question whether students are sufficiently aware of its existence, particularly during this past year when covid restrictions have made physical access to tutors and to documents and notices giving guidance about safeguarding issues very difficult.
28. The reviewers acknowledge that covid restrictions have played a part in limiting communications but would ask WH staff to consider that covid has only highlighted gaps in communication about safeguarding. It has not caused those gaps. The suggestion by the Principal in a conversation with a reviewer that Community Notices and Tutors' Meetings should be places where policies are reviewed and explained in a way that makes them living documents rather than institutional requirements is considered to be a helpful one and we would recommend that this idea is developed and acted upon.
29. Although not obvious from a number of agendas we had access to, WH assured us that safeguarding is, in fact, on the agenda for all meetings of the Hall Council and SMT. We would encourage clear itemising of agenda items and minute keeping to make this clear to all who receive meeting documents.
30. WH's SWOT document identifies one of the strengths of WH as being its rich community life.
31. A number of students, and past students, spoke of the sense of community that is formed in many ways for those studying at WH. This community includes staff and is perceived as being supportive and to be integrated with daily worship and a rhythm of life.
32. This noticeably warm and strong community is, in part, helped by the long-term involvement in WH and prayerful approach of a number of staff. One commented that through the difficulties of the early 2000s, the community 'dug-in, prayed, and supported one another'. This has been evident even in the Covid situation. Mutual support extends beyond Hall premises to informal chats, meals with groups of students in staff homes, etc.



33. We were interested to find out how this sense of community has been maintained during these difficult, covid-restricted months. We discovered that students who have not known WH in any other year are very aware of the community spirit that exists and that, while there is recognition that many elements of community life have been restricted, there is still a real sense of being part of a creative and supporting community. In particular the senior staff team were commended for their openness, accessibility and motivation to create a formative environment in which to study and to live.
34. The Ministry and Formation Handbook states that WH seeks to be a family friendly community. Much thought is given to how families might be part of community life and conversations with students evidenced a thriving spouse's support network.
35. On the other hand Covid restrictions have raised some unusually challenging issues for pastoral care. A particular issue highlighted in a number of conversations was the loneliness experienced by some single students living in and having to isolate. With teaching online and very little physical interaction permitted this has been a difficult time for many single students (both ordinands and independent students). The provision of healthy community for single students in their late 20's-30's is important, perhaps finding a way to allow some flexibility over catering on occasion.
36. These observations highlight that there are a number of fairly distinct groups of students at WH, aside from the many academic pathways being followed. Some students are resident and others living off site. Each of these groups has its own particular needs (younger and older single men and single women living alongside one another on site, young families living at a distance from college, established couples and families with pressures of work and school. Many of these sets of people are also on ministry and independent tracks). Continuing the significant work already taking place to monitor ways in which all groups have a voice within the structures of WH is essential.

## Commendation 2

**The wholehearted engagement with establishing community life amongst all WH students is to be commended. Reviewers heard over and over again how senior staff work to create this sense of community but we wish to commend all staff and students for taking this element of WH life seriously and working together for its flourishing.**

## Recommendation 4

- a. **We recommend an overhaul of safeguarding and welfare policies ensuring that they are updated now with regular reviews actioned appropriately and policies situated on a designated section of the website for ease of access for all students regardless of how much access they have to the main college buildings.**
- b. **With reference to paragraph 29, as part of the above we urge clear ownership of these matters by staff and council.**



- c. In addition, we would recommend that the suggestion that Community Notices and Tutors' Meetings should be places where policies are reviewed and explained in a way that makes them living documents rather than institutional requirements is acted upon.**

**B3 The provision of public social and private living accommodation is satisfactory.**

37. Accommodation was identified in the last PER as needing updating. It is still noted on the SWOT document as being a weakness. Due to covid restrictions in place at the time of our visit, reviewers were not able to see residential areas of WH. We understand that some improvements have been made since the last PER and we heard no direct complaints from students. However, there was a general sense that WH's built assets would benefit from some attention.
38. Particular emphasis is placed on the need to upgrade, and provide further, accommodation for married students. Some comments received from students suggest that accommodation for single students is not always considered to be the best, sometimes living on mixed-sex and mixed-age landings with shared bathroom facilities. As accommodation is developed we would recommend a review of accommodation policies with student input to that discussion.
39. Reviewers were not able to observe the buildings in full use due to the pandemic. However, we did have concerns about how students with any physical limitations would cope with the multi-level layout of rooms and corridors. We were told that arrangements can be made but it was acknowledged that the building does not easily lend itself to physical accessibility.
40. Reviewers were unable to experience WH chapel as a worship space. We did, however have access to chapel during our visit. One observation would be of being presented with rows of forward facing shallow pews in a rather colourless, stark room with very little flexibility possible; a contemporary keyboard, microphones, music stands, modern audio equipment and projection screen being the principal visual draws. It was undoubtedly a 'prayed-in' space, but gave very little hint of what it was for, barring the communion table with its lace edging standing somewhat forlorn against the east wall.
41. Again, we acknowledge that this space had not been in regular use due to covid restrictions, but we offer our impressions as more normal routines open up by way of an outside impression of a space that may be able to be improved or to have some kind of visual beauty incorporated – maybe through the work of the Artist in Residence.
42. During our visit, worship took place in St Andrew's Church, affording light, space and flexibility for all services attended, with the slight disadvantages of acoustics of a large space particularly for teaching purposes (not helped by the requisite wearing of masks at this time).

**Recommendation 5**

**As plans to develop and improve accommodation progress, we would recommend that all accommodation policies are reviewed with input from students who have experienced the realities**

**of mixed-sex, mixed-age single accommodation as well as from married students currently having to live off site.**

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

43. WH's Academic Values and Virtues document states that "Being a worshipping community nourishes us as an academic community and fosters an attitude of epistemological humility - an attitude that we seek to express positively as prayerful dependence on the Spirit of Truth."
44. The Student Learning document which tracks formation criteria to the course gives a number of study-related examples of how these aims are met but although it does refer to the worshipping life of the college community this is much less prominent and more difficult to find. The reviewers would urge that the tracking document's wording equally emphasises personal spiritual and corporate worship opportunities for growth as well as opportunities available through the validated pathway.
45. Canonical expectations of morning and evening prayer by clergy in parishes is cited as one reason for establishing such a pattern at the heart of college community life, evidencing WH's desire to incorporate students into the wider traditions of the Church of England from the start of their training.
46. The expectation to attend college services regularly extends to all tutorial staff, including the Principal, exemplifying collaborative leadership and accountability of all.
47. In addition, the Ministry and Formation Handbook, 2020 states "We have a stylistically varied pattern of worship". Reviewers observed, and experienced, services that were creatively led even within the covid restrictions in place. Music and liturgy were led well and the pattern of worship clearly understood and inhabited by all who took part. More informal times of worship and prayer were evident through Fellowship Groups. We would have liked to be able to observe more informal daytime or evening worship but this was not possible due to both the timing of our visit and the pandemic restrictions.

**B5 Staff model an appropriate pattern of spirituality, continued learning and reflection on practice.**

48. Stakeholders, past students and current students report significant value gained from the experiences of the staff, particularly those with parish commitments. They are seen to set a good example of personal spirituality, patterns of work and wider life, continued learning and reflection.
49. It is made explicit in the Ministry and Formation Handbook that Fellowship Group tutors are to model handling relationships well, being faithful in discipleship, leadership and team work etc. Student experience of Fellowship Groups and their tutors was generally positive. This year has

made face-to-face contact almost impossible so relationships have been established remotely. Fellowship Group tutors are to be commended for the work they have put in to keeping their groups together and supporting all students in WH.

### **Commendation 3**

**Reviewers wish to commend Fellowship Group tutors for the additional commitment to maintaining group contact and support during a year when very few in-person meetings have been possible.**

**The review team has Confidence with Qualifications with regard to Criterion B: Formational Context and Community.**

## Section C: Leadership and Management

### **C1 The TEI has clear and effective governance structures.**

50. WH has a board of Trustees, known as the Hall Council. They are trustees from the point of view of the Charity Commission and Directors and Members of the charitable company from the point of view of Companies House. In addition, Wycliffe Hall Services Limited operates as a trading subsidiary and is responsible for the conference and hospitality arm of WH, and Wycliffe Hall Developments Ltd which is registered for VAT.
51. There is an up-to-date Governance Manual that clearly lays out how WH is governed. It contains details of the roles and responsibilities of the trustees and the operation of its subcommittees. It operates with six subcommittees – Governance and Nominations, Finance, Education, Remuneration, Development, Patronage and Staff Committees which mainly consist of the Senior Management Team and the Fellowship Group Tutors meeting. The Governance Manual defines the membership, remit, frequency and reporting of the committees.
52. The sub-committee chairs meet prior to each Council meeting and the minutes of the sub-committees are presented at the Council meetings, ensuring that everyone is kept fully informed. Every Council member should normally serve on at least one committee. The Chair of Council is normally a diocesan Bishop, and is an ex officio member of all the committees. The Principal is also invited to all committees, as are other members of SMT to committees relevant to their role.
53. It is a requirement within the PPH licence that members of the student body are involved with the decision-making processes of the Hall. The Student President and President-elect should attend all Council meetings. In addition, if neither of these two people are independent students, there will also be an independent student representative; and if neither are ordinands, there will also be an ordinand representative.
54. The Governance Manual states that no student should be appointed as a Director/Trustee of the Hall. Therefore, they do not have voting rights on the Council, but they submit written reports to the Council and may speak to the report, answer questions and contribute in any other way. It is evident from the minutes of the Council that this works well and the students are able to be an integral part of the decision making role of the Council.

### **C2 The TEI has effective team leadership.**

55. The make-up of the Senior Management Team (SMT) at WH is laid down in the Governance Manual and consists of the Principal, Vice-Principal, Bursar, Academic Dean and Dean for Women, but other members may be agreed. They meet fortnightly throughout the year.

56. They are responsible for the day-to day business of the Hall and implement the Council's policies. They present papers, policies and proposals to the Council to enable them to fulfil their overall strategy. The Governance Manual lays down the focus for the SMT's work which includes the management of both financial and human resources. Safeguarding is a standing item on every SMT agenda.
57. From the interactions observed, the Principal, SMT and Council work quite well together. Their aim, as described in their scene-setting overview document submitted as part of the PER, is to model collaborative leadership. Everyone spoke positively about the leadership of the Principal and the review of WH carried out by the Permanent Hall Supervisory Committee from the University of Oxford in 2019, commended him for the impact of his leadership.
58. The PPH Review, however, went on to say that the reporting lines for SMT members should be more clearly articulated and that the Principal should aim to have greater familiarity with the Hall's financial affairs. They also recommended that the Bursar and Development Director should work more closely together. Since there has been a change in Bursar and a change in reporting processes partly as a result of a recommendation in the PPH review, both of these situations seem to have improved. Both the Bursar and Development Director spoke of better use of information and improved processes although they were aware that the follow through of accountability generally needed to be improved.
59. We met online with some council members. This meeting was limited as a result of technology and sound issues. However, based on the evidence gathered at this meeting, and that of minutes that were provided, although the general feeling amongst the Council members and members of the SMT is that they work well together, there is scope for a more robust relationship. The Council are responsible for the vision and strategic direction for WH and they delegate the day-to-day management to the Principal and SMT. The Council should still be monitoring progress with implementing any strategic plans and need to continually review the appropriateness of those plans. As mentioned elsewhere in this document Council did not seem to be aware of the Annual Self Evaluation required, and had not kept the Risk Register up to date. In addition, at our meeting, there was no mention from them of the serious financial challenges that WH are facing although we have since been assured that Council meetings have addressed these issues and all are aware of the situation, as the Hall Council minutes would also indicate – but see our comment at paragraph 69
60. The Council, working together with the Principal and SMT, need to be more vigorous in reviewing the performance of WH and their own performance. Reviewers could find no evidence of agenda items, minutes or action points for some significant items which we found concerning. The various strategic plans, reports and reviews e.g. PPH Review, PER Report, ASE, Risk Register, need to be more regularly considered together as they will help provide a more complete picture of how WH are currently performing against their own targets and will help shape any necessary actions.

61. WH seems to have operated very well during the challenges that have arisen since the beginning of the pandemic. A Covid Task Group was created, including staff and students, and they have met weekly to deal with all of the issues created. Although there seem to have initially been a few problems for students living on site, these were dealt with and members of the Task Group have shown good leadership. Students living on site generally described feeling safe. Space, and technology, was used creatively to provide a positive learning environment despite the necessary restrictions.

#### **Commendation 4**

**The Reviewers wish to commend the Covid Task Group for the way they have operated and shown good leadership and creativity under very difficult circumstances.**

#### **Recommendation 6**

**It is recommended that Council adopts a more vigorous approach to overseeing the actions of WH and regularly considers its own, and others', reviews of its performance.**

### **C3 Trustees are appropriately recruited, supported and developed.**

62. The Governance Manual contains a clear description of the role of Hall Council Members and this aligns well with the Hall's mission, ethos and purpose. The Council consists of between 12 and 15 members who are elected for 5-year terms, which may be renewed once at the direction of the Council, but may be extended further in exceptional circumstances. The Governance Nominations Committee is responsible for recommending new members of the Council but the election is the responsibility of the Council as a whole. It is this committee's responsibility to regularly carry out a 'skills audit' to identify any gaps in the skills and gifts of the existing trustees so that this can be addressed when appointing new members. There are also nominees from Ridley Hall and General Synod.
63. The Council members are offered an induction process, which is laid down in the Governance Manual. They are encouraged to undertake any necessary training and the Bursar assists in seeking out appropriate courses.
64. As already mentioned in section C1, there is student representation on the Hall Council and academic staff representation, required within the PPH licence, is covered by the Principal and SMT attending Council meetings but not as Director/Trustees and therefore with no voting rights.
65. From the current list of Council membership supplied to us, it seems that quite a few members are coming to the end of their terms during 2021 (six out of twelve) and three of those have already served two terms. At such a crucial time for WH it is important that suitable replacements be found as soon as possible. In the past they have used the option to extend a term past a second 5 years on a number of occasions, but it is important to keep introducing new people, with new skills and experiences to keep a committee fresh.

## Recommendation 7

**Reviewers recommend that the Governance Nominations Committee actively seeks new members for the Council and ensures that it has a rolling list of names for consideration.**

### **C4 The TEI has effective business planning, fundraising, risk management and reporting.**

66. Even before the beginning of the pandemic WH was facing a financial challenge. The PPH Review reported “significant concerns about the Hall’s precarious financial position and a lack of strategic planning.” This was because “the Hall is vulnerable to fluctuations in student numbers and is heavily dependent upon income from Visiting Students.”
67. A new strategic plan was drawn up in 2017 and, although this should have been regularly reviewed in meetings of the Council and the SMT, the Hall was still encountering financial difficulties. Oxford University’s requirement to stop taking in independent students recommended to WH by the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics’ (OCCA) parent organisation led to a reduction in student numbers which had a negative financial impact on the Hall. The Hall’s small size remains a strength but makes it very vulnerable to this sort of action.
68. In January 2020 a strategic review was begun by the Strategic Working Group which was made up of selected Council members, SMT members and some staff. Their brief was to examine WH’s strategy and operations, and specifically to ‘recommend preferred strategic options that will mitigate the financial threat.’ At the core of the negotiations still to be taken forward by WH is how, having decided that they intend to maintain their status as an Oxford PPH, they can continue to offer training options for ordinands not following the Oxford BA and higher degree pathways. This will require continued dialogue between WH and the national church.
69. The Working Group produced an initial report at the end of February 2020 and then a further report in May 2020 with interim recommendations. This report was presented to Council in June and September 2020 and the minutes of both meetings indicate that considerable time was given to discussion. They do not, however – perhaps simply for reasons of brevity – give a strong sense of Council members’ grip on the issues or strategic direction of the discussion or of matters being followed up, other than that the SWG work was passed onto the SMT for implementation. This was a vital and time critical review for WH, due to the time restrictions imposed upon it both by Oxford University and the Church of England, and although the pandemic was probably at the forefront of people’s minds, this should have been more considered by Council due their strategic role. For the reviewers, this reinforces the point we make at paragraph 59 and Recommendation 6 about the need for a more robust Council-staff working relationship.
70. The Formational Scene-setting Overview, submitted as part of the PER, identifies that the current Church of England RMF Review will produce changes in the whole TEI sector and that WH, in common with all TEIs, is preparing itself to work with is the resulting proposals. They identify that they need to get themselves onto a sustainable basis for the medium to long term.



71. In addition to the type of courses that WH provide in the future, the other area that will have a significant effect on their finances is the state of their buildings, and the quality of their accommodation. Although some work has already been undertaken there is the recognition that there is still much to be completed and this will require further capital spending, as will be recommended by the quinquennial review taking place at the time of writing this report.
72. The Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2020 clearly stated the challenging situation that WH found themselves in showing an overall unrestricted deficit of £83K. Due to the pandemic there had been a significant drop in income from conferences and B&B and despite a decline in the number of overseas students as well, income only fell by £27k. A significant part of this was due to the impact of donations and legacies. The Director of Development had run a variety of campaigns that had raised money for specific capital items e.g. a new boiler, for specific expenditure e.g. appointment of a Senior Research Fellow, and for general day to day expenditure. It is encouraging to see the quality of these campaigns and that even more money has been raised for the year 20/21. This could be increasingly important to fund specific items of both capital expenditure, e.g. improvement to the buildings, and for specific projects e.g. 'Science for Seminaries'.
73. There are quarterly Finance Committee meetings and the Bursar produces regular financial reports and budgetary figures for both the SMT and Council. Due to the effects of the pandemic they are currently producing a number of forecasts based on best, worst and most likely scenarios. They have received a Covid Support Loan of £315k from the Government which will need to be paid back over 5 years and they have made use of the furlough scheme for some staff. They are only just breaking even at the moment but are hoping to start generating conference and B&B income as soon as possible. They are currently predicting making a similar loss to last year mainly due to the loss of overseas students and conference income. Their various predictions demonstrate that the recruitment of just a few overseas students can completely transform their finances.
74. WH are lucky to have some substantial properties in and around Oxford and this could provide them with some useful disposable income. They are currently looking carefully and strategically at how to best use these properties. As described in the Strategic Working Group report, they are looking to 'sweat' their property assets.
75. Although the Annual Report states that there is a risk register that is updated and reviewed each year the last one produced in 2019 seemed quite sparse and didn't really consider the most significant risk to WH, its finances, at all. A new version for 2021 is currently being produced, and the current draft is a dramatic improvement on its predecessor. It is vital that this be completed as soon as possible and adopted by Council. This then needs to be a 'living' document that is seen as part of the decision-making processes of WH.



76. All TEI's are required to complete an Annual Self Evaluation (ASE) identifying actions to be completed over the following year. The next year's ASE should then summarise the progress against those actions and then again identify actions for the following year. WH produced an ASE in 2016 and 2017 which appeared to have no relationship to each other. An ASE was then not produced until 2020 and again this had no relationship to that of 2017. When this was discussed with Council they were not even aware that an ASE should be completed. It is essential that an ASE is produced each year and that it reports on progress from the previous year. It is also important that the Council discuss its findings and use it constructively to aid its strategic thinking and planning.

**Commendation 5**

**We commend the work of the Development Director and the opportunities that this could open up and enable.**

**Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that the Risk Register be completed and adopted by the Council as soon as possible and becomes part of the regular reviewing by Council of the operations of WH.**

**Recommendation 9**

**Reviewers strongly recommend that an ASE be produced each year, reporting on progress from the previous year, and that it be adopted by Council.**

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

## Section D: Teaching and Learning

### D1 The TEI offers programmes appropriate to the sponsoring church's ministerial training needs.

77. Through both Oxford University's BA, BTh and MTh and Durham University's Common Awards [C.A] courses, WH offers approved curricula for the Church of England's [CofE] ordinands' learning and formation. In the case of Oxford University's BA, which is an intensive two-year course of study, formation is mainly, although not exclusively, attended to in year 3. In years 1 and 2 these students are, however, required to attend chapel, Fellowship Groups, Integrated Study Weeks and modules on Equality and Diversity, Foundations for Ministry and Worship and Safeguarding. In the case of the other Oxford University degree courses and CA courses, academic learning and formation are spread across all years.
78. This variety of courses makes WH very accessible to students with a wide range of academic experiences and differing backgrounds, as does the fact that the teaching on all these courses has appropriate depth and suitable challenge for the varying individual abilities of students.
79. The TEI's aims are clearly stated, namely, to enable its students to study to the highest possible level, in the context of a believing, worshipping, missional, evangelical community, the community's desire being to be a place where truth is pursued in the service of the church and for the sake of the world. To that end, alongside lectures and seminars, the TEI runs the weekly Principal's Hour, referred to earlier. Through external funding the TEI will run Science for Seminaries, a project which will begin in September 2021, will provide the content for three sessions each term at the Principal's Hour, and will aim to enable ordinands more knowledgeably to approach the interface of Christianity and science. Through *ad hominem* funding [w.e.f. 2020-2021, for three years] the TEI has appointed someone who, while completing a two-year part-time theology course [2020-2021 and 2021-2022], will also help, over the three-year funded period, to develop WH's offering in music and worship-leading and be an Artist-in-Residence.
80. With the Artist-in-residence's encouragement, WH took part, for the first time, in the 2021 Oxfordshire Arts Week, exhibiting art work by alumni, staff and students. That is to be commended, as especially is the fact that without the Artist-in-Residence's encouragement, at least one student would not have even contemplated participating. Regrettably, in May 2021, towards the end of the first of the three years' *ad hominem* funding, the Artist-in-Residence still does not have a usable studio. Whilst recognising the limitations imposed during the months of pandemic, ensuring that he has a space in which to work on site in the coming academic year will enable the artist to engage with students more easily, allowing them to see him working rather than just to see any finished work he chooses to show them.
81. The CofE's review regime enquires after the TEI's programmes being 'world engaging' [sic]. WH meanwhile speaks of its programmes being 'world facing' [sic]. This difference in wording may be

but a matter of semantics. Even if that is the case, it is recommended that the Hall continue to deepen its commitment to being ‘world engaging’ by, for example, further broadening, as requested by its students, its reading lists, and by considering the possibility of student placements in, for example, Muslim agencies, and not just churches set in substantially Muslim areas such as East Oxford, or the Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies. In making this suggestion we are wanting to affirm the work WH is already undertaking and suggest one way in which this engagement with the world might be moved from good to better.

### **Commendation 6**

**Reviewers wish to commend the decision to appoint an Artist-in-Residence and the work that has taken place so far.**

### **Recommendation 10**

**If the Hall wishes to realise its hope that its ordinands will engage more creatively with the arts and be better equipped to support and encourage the creative members of the livings to which they will be ordained, it is recommended that the Artist-in-Residence be given, as soon as possible, a working studio within the Hall where he may model such creative engagement in the arts.**

### **Recommendation 11**

**It is recommended that WH deepens its already considerable commitment to being ‘world engaging’, rather than simply ‘world facing’, by further broadening its reading lists as well as responding to Recommendation 3 above.**

## **D2 The TEI’s taught programmes are appropriately resourced, developed and quality assured.**

82. The staff at WH are appropriately qualified; all academic staff are associate members of Oxford University’s Faculty of Theology and Religion; and many contribute regularly to Oxford University’s submission for the Research Excellence Framework. WH also benefits much from Professor N.T. Wright being a Senior Research Fellow there.
83. Teaching staff are encouraged, although not required, to take advantage of staff development opportunities available through both Oxford and Durham universities. Whether or not teaching staff avail themselves of these universities’ offers, mandatory annual staff appraisal, which both takes into account student feedback on teaching and includes the structured addressing of any issues arising, is in place.
84. Teaching staff are eligible for significant book and conference grants and one term’s sabbatical every three years. It is reported that, during the time of Covid 19, 1.0fte teaching staff were probably working the equivalent of 1.3fte. It is therefore recommended, lest teaching and learning suffer in the longer term, that appropriate care of these staff be put in place.

85. All students have access to WH's library, with its holding of c.25,000 books, but without any holdings in e-journals and e-books. All students also have access to Oxford University library resources enhancing what would otherwise be leaner Common Awards offerings of Common Awards stock.
86. Students also have access to the resources of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and of the Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies. Student feedback to the reviewers reported that their specific needs in terms of Library and IT resources, teaching facilities and attention to any specific learning needs were being adequately met. An area of particular concern would arise *if* WH could no longer matriculate students onto Oxford University courses. Therefore it is essential that the conversations with the national church referred to in paragraph 68 reach a successful conclusion.
87. WH's provision for research students is to be commended. Individual, not shared, study spaces are provided. A fortnightly, in-term time Research Seminar, with speakers from across the university included, and whose theological stances often differ from the evangelical tradition of WH, is held. Training in research skills and in teaching is offered. Students are encouraged to attend and read papers at conferences, grants for attending which are available. Subject to WH's library's agreement, budgetary capacities, and any books purchased becoming part of the library's holding, student recommendations for books for their research are welcomed.
88. Curriculum review and development are effected through student satisfaction surveys, WH's Education Committee, the Common Awards management Committee, on both of which there is student representation, and the Annual Self-Evaluation [ASE], when this last occurs. As highlighted in paragraph 76 and recommendation 10 above, ASE's have not been carried out annually. They did occur in 2016, 2017 and, at the time of the review, the 2020 ASE was in the process of being completed. WH was reviewed by Durham University in May 2018. The report on that review was received in August 2019. In the intervening time, the Senior Management Team [SMT] of WH decided, in consultation with Durham University, to forgo the *Annual* Self-Evaluation whilst waiting for Durham's latest recommendations and to depend upon internal procedures. These internal processes relied on a sense that WH engaged in reviewing and developing its curriculum 'all the time' [sic] through such practices as circulated student questionnaires on each individual module, and that its Council noted WH's satisfactory progress in the area of Quality Assurance. It is, however, worth noting that those of the Council whom the reviewers met, one of whom is the chair of WH's Education Committee, were completely unaware of the existence of the requirement that there should be an ASE. While we recognize the good intentions of WH to reflect and improve on practice as an ongoing process, we did not see sufficient evidence to suggest that this reflection takes into consideration goals set and reviewed in the way that a more formal ASE or equivalent formal process would have required.
89. WH also benefits from Oxford University's Conference of Colleges' Academic Provision Undergraduate and graduate Questionnaire and Oxford University's Permanent Private Halls'

Supervisory Committee’s annual and quinquennial Review of Wycliffe Hall [the quinquennial review being last reviewed in May 2019].

### **Commendation 7**

**Reviewers commend the provision made by WH for those ordinands who are research students.**

### **Recommendation 12**

**In the light of awareness raised with us of the additional load being carried by teaching staff as a result of changes in working patterns due to covid restrictions, we recommend that additional levels of care are put in place to ensure teaching and learning does not suffer any longer-term effects of the pandemic.**

### **D3 There is a good mix of teaching and learning styles and assessment methods, and students are engaged.**

90. Lectures, as well as being delivered simultaneously live and on-line, are recorded for later reference and reflection. Seminars and group work are used, at the time of the review and as a result of Covid 19 regulations, generally on-line. The on-line provision does have the advantage of enabling *all* students, even in ‘lock-down’, to access teaching, the content of which was good. Simultaneously, the ‘on-line’ provision did have certain disadvantages. It tended, for example, to ‘formalise’ matters. Involvement in on-line webinars, where many participants were but icons with initials at the foot of a computer screen, also was rendered more challenging, especially when screens ‘froze’ or web connection was lost. Covid 19 regulations also meant that those attending ‘in person’ were physically distanced from one another, with the result that conversations, Q & A sessions etc. were not so easy. Further, lectures came across as more didactic in style than lecturers no doubt planned. At least one observed lecture, whilst not being devoid of theological reflection nor precluding it, was not as conjoined academically, theologically and formationally as might befit a TEI committed to integrated academic, spiritual and ministerial training. It is recommended that, when WH comes out of Covid 19 restrictions, it reviews its pedagogy, especially in regard to the place of reflection in academic modules. No Principal’s Hour occurred during the days of the Inspection; but by all student reports, its different speakers delivered their presentations through a wide variety of styles [e.g. straight lectures; very interactive sessions].
91. One comment shared with a reviewer about the change from CA to BTh was that the person speaking hoped the more reflective theological style of content in the CA suite of awards would not be lost in the transition to BTh. As we note at paragraph 17 in B1, WH consider the two programmes to have similar reflective strengths.
92. Guidance in Study Skills is appropriately offered. The Education Committee, which includes student representation, monitors where appropriate support is necessary and offers it to those students who on occasion find that they value help in adjusting to Oxford University’s mode of

teaching and learning and, in particular, to the expectation that study will be largely self-driven. Assessment schedules are published in full at the beginning of each academic year. Communication, however, about such matters as timetabling changes and the issuing of reading lists was acknowledged still at times to be an issue, to some extent a corollary of the Hall's flexibility of courses and its generous extra-curricular offerings.

93. A member of the TEI's SMT reflected that WH was 'overreaching itself' in its level of optionality in courses, so contributing to the challenge of accurate and timely communication; a senior officer of the Common Room Committee reported that 'communication is still an issue; but we have worked on it and things are now better'; and an Oxford University BA student, hoping to get ahead with reading for the next term, and who had asked at the beginning of the vacation for the next term's reading lists, received a reply to their request at the end of the vacation, just before the next term was to begin. Like the stories about painting of the Firth of Forth rail bridge, communication needs continuous attention, if for no other reason that that WH is financially dependent upon independent students who, paying substantial fees, are increasingly seeing themselves as consumers concerned with 'value for money'.

#### **Recommendation 13**

**It is recommended that, when WH comes out of Covid 19 restrictions and is planning its potential transition from CA to the Oxford BTh, it reviews its pedagogy, especially in regard to the place of reflection in academic modules.**

#### **Recommendation 14**

**We recommend that a significant review of timing of communication, particularly of releasing of timetables and reading lists, takes place to allow students greater agency in their own planning of academic work but also of how to include extra-curricular formational events into their training.**

#### **D4 There is provision for students' progression and development over the course of the learning programmes.**

94. WH's ordinands' progression and development in learning is fostered through their respective, academically appropriate courses. Feedback is given, but not always evenly. Some students reflected that they had received timely feedback, but that what they received consisted of but a sentence or two. Others agreed that their feedback was timely, and reported that their feedback amounted to a couple of paragraphs. There was also unevenness in the provision of feedback specifically aimed at facilitating further possible improvement. In short, while all received comments on what they had written, not all received what, in submitted pieces of student work which required feedback, is titled 'suggestions for improvement' on the Durham University marking and feedback *pro forma*.

95. To reviewers' positive assessment of the courses which provide progression and development in learning must be added similarly positive responses to the extra-curricular offerings such as the Principal's Hour, opportunities for third year Oxford University B.A. students to attend the fortnightly post-graduate seminar, and the Science for Seminaries which w.e.f. 2021-22 will fund the employment of a scientist [0.2 fte], a philosopher of Science [0.2 fte], and a week-long Science and Religion Conference, to be held in the summer of 2022.

**D5 Students are helped to integrate their academic learning and ministerial development.**

96. Through lecture courses on, for example, preaching, seminars on Christian ethics, students being introduced to the practice of journaling, Integrated Study Weeks, where theory and praxis are especially brought together and where such issues as sex, gender, and equality and diversity are addressed, a range of supervised placements – though some, such as hospital placements, because of Covid 19 restrictions, could not be offered in 2021-22 – an annual exchange week with St Stephen's house, and, the modelling, for example, of women in leadership through the use of suitable placements, student academic learning, ministerial skill sets and ministerial formation are brought to bear, each on the others.
97. That said, perhaps, as remarked earlier, a greater integration in lectures of the academic with reflective and formative, could be effected. Further, perhaps greater attention needs to be paid to what individuals and WH as an organisation model. For example:
- a. When asked about the ASE, it became clear that the member of SMT who answered was, to all intents and purposes, WH's 'private memory' in that area. When members of the Council were asked about the College's involvement in the ASE, they admitted that they did not know about any ASE's.
  - b. When asked about what theological teaching was currently being delivered in and through WH which undergirded and would help undergird, respectively, WH's and the benefices' where ordinands would serve their titles addressing the CofE's commitment to being Carbon neutral by 2030, a significant member of staff replied that they were 'not familiar with what others are doing' in this area. Despite the fact that WH has established a Sustainability Group which is doing significant work, we would have expected to see greater input on the subject across the life and teaching of WH.
  - c. Although both the Academic Complaints and Academic Discipline policies had endnotes giving both the month in the year, the year and the name of the person by whom WH was annually to sign off these policies, showing that WH had checked annually whether there had been any legislative and / or University policy changes that are relevant to WH and its students, the last recorded checks for the two policies were, respectively, 02.11.2018 and 14.02.2019. While reviewers acknowledge that checks may have been made during staff meetings or other gatherings, these have not been formally placed on agendas and minuted to allow accurate follow-up at future meetings. For proper accountability, and the security of processes,



especially in the fields of complaints and discipline, that such annual checks have been done needs to be seen to have been done.

98. To at least the casual eye the cumulative effect of the above may be to model for ordinands that teamwork, robust and enduring shared corporate memory, and good, timely oversight and governance are optional. Advocating good leadership and governance in teaching modules needs also to be modelled in the TEI's institutional life if ordinands are to be formed securely for ministry in a church where both the ministry of all and mutual accountability are held to be of the nature of God's church.
99. Some stakeholders did remark that, once ordained, they found themselves less well equipped for ministerial practice than they might have wished. This may be the result of ordinands not fully appreciating what training should and will be delivered via IME 1 and what via IME 2.
100. For all that, integration does occur, even if it could be better. Students do learn to live respectfully with diversity of opinion and practice, so suggesting that when WH ordinands will be ordained into multi-parish benefices and shall work in deaneries with a wide cross-section of beliefs and practices, they will both hold their own and yet be appreciative of the breadth of the twenty-first century CofE.

#### **Recommendation 15**

**In line with recommendations in other sections of this report, the reviewers ask WH SMT to take seriously the impact on ordination training of a lack of careful scrutiny within the structures of the organisation. Advocating good leadership and governance in teaching modules needs also to be modelled in the TEI's institutional life if ordinands are to be formed securely for ministry in a church where both the ministry of all and mutual accountability are held to be of the nature of God's church.**

**The review team has Confidence with Qualifications with regard to Criterion D: Teaching and Learning.**



## Section E: Ministerial Formation

### **E1 The TEI's programme of ministerial formation enables students to grow into the ministerial qualities and competencies sought by the sponsoring church.**

101. WH is a college that identifies itself with the evangelical tradition of the Church of England. The reviewers were keen to find out to what extent students not only knew of, but had a generous respect for, the Church of England's breadth and diversity of belief and practice. During the visit students spoke of placements in many different traditions with renewed understanding of, if not desire to minister for ever in, practices very different from their own. Generally, generous respect for the breadth and diversity of belief and practice within the CofE and other Christian denominations was evident in numerous conversations.
102. A particular tension for Wycliffe has been the approach to women's ordination. Some more conservative ordinands hold a complementarian position, but reviewers observed the respect with which those who so identified treated women ordinands in the Hall. This is a difficult tension to negotiate, but one that seems to be negotiated sensitively in today's WH. 'People have largely stopped mentioning women's recruitment as an issue now.' Currently 19/60 (32%) of ordinands are women.
103. WH's student Learning Programme document identifies collaborative working with supervisors and Fellowship Group Tutors as being key to the process of growth in ministerial qualities. During our visit Reviewers were able to observe these relationships to some extent and were pleased to find that the qualities of these relationships were generally very strong, providing safe spaces in which to explore growth and change in understanding of ministerial identity.
104. Reviewers were given evidence from a DDO, a TI and curates which confirms that WH is enabling ordinands to develop in ways consistent with the church's desire for ministers who are relational, missional, collaborative, diverse and adaptive. It seems that many ordinands come out of Wycliffe with a firm foundation and grasp of Biblical Christian faith which gives them a secure foundation for respectful dialogue with other Christian traditions and faiths, and with an increasingly secular world. It was suggested to us that (and we met in a number of candidates) ordinands choosing WH who are undefended, rigorous, serious Christians who want to develop skills and understanding in evangelism. Their commitment to the CofE was evident in conversations and acts of worship. They vary in theological stance and find they are supported. WH is strong in teaching the Bible, Apologetics, Discipleship, Systematics and Ethics.
105. It is evident from stakeholder feedback that ordinands grow in their learning and knowledge of Christian tradition, faith and life. A stakeholder said of WH clergy: 'They are not worried about labels and can operate in non-evangelical churches'.

106. It was evident from submitted pieces of ordinand work, and comments from a DDO, TI, and curates that WH actively develops the habit and skills of theological reflection and reflective practice which is ongoing into IME2 and incumbency. Stakeholders commented that WH trained curates ‘know who they are... they have great capacity to integrate theology and gospel... coming from a honed, coherent, clear sense of the ‘deposit’ they are entrusted to guard and pass on...’

### Commendation 8

**We wish to commend WH on the way in which they have encouraged increasing numbers of women ordinands to study in this community and for the open way in which ‘difficult conversations’ have been encouraged and facilitated.**

#### **E2 Students have a desire and growing ability to share in mission, evangelism and discipleship.**

107. WH has as its stated motto, ‘Via, Veritas, Vita – the Way, the Truth and the Life.’ Their Vision is ‘To see the nations transformed by the gospel’; and their stated Mission: ‘By renewing Christian leaders in prayer, character, preaching and thinking.’ The pursuit of truth wherever it leads is an academic as well as a formative aim, and this is evidenced in the quality of community life and individual character of ordinands (and other students) and staff we met, in the written work we read, and in the statements from DDO and TIs. They are on an outward facing mission to transform church and world.
108. In normal times, WH students engage in mission via summer placements around the country, sharing in evangelistic as well as social mission. The SWOT document highlights the emphasis on evangelism as a strength and something that is attractive to students from an evangelical background.
109. A stakeholder drew our attention to the missional teams that students belong to under the guidance of an experienced missionary as being of great value.
110. In addition, we were presented with evidence that WH students and graduates have a desire and ability to see and help others grow as Christians. The Mission statement is backed up in practice as students engage in placements and as IME2 curates, and evidently through their ministries. The foundation given at WH in IME1 is intentional in forming ministers with a heart for teaching the faith, and leading churches in its practice in the community.
111. However, our attention was also drawn to the need for WH to pay attention to training ordinands for a ministry that will enable them to have world- and workplace facing ministries as well as to have roles in the church. Maybe topics for development for Principal’s Hours?
112. WH offers a generous and hospitable welcome, as we found on our visit. Many students at WH are not Anglican ordinands but are studying theology for different vocational reasons. We would like to point out that we were aware of the welcome extended to all students and the formational

opportunities open to all who study at WH regardless of whether they will be ordained in the Anglican Church. Conversations with all students offered examples of formation in the areas of mission, evangelism and discipleship for those students whose vocational path made these valuable parts of their student life.

### **E3 Pioneer ministry training - not applicable**

113. No pioneer ministry students were identified at the time of the review.

### **E4 Students are growing in personal spirituality and engagement with public worship.**

114. Students are involved in preparing and leading worship, including public prayer, which we saw in action; and in preaching on placements. They appear to receive appropriate support and feedback both from tutors and colleagues. A DDO commented that the style is 'classic' which we took to mean distinctly Anglican in style, which was our experience of worship during our visit.

115. Whilst there is evidence of students' engagement in public worship, stakeholders' opinions on the robustness of training for practical aspects of ministry, such as leadership, compared with other ministerial qualities and skills varied. There were no particular areas of concern to raise here but we would ask WH staff to be vigilant due to the lack of in-parish experience gained and placement opportunities this year due to covid restrictions.

116. Students' personal spiritual growth is supported through Fellowship Groups, parish placements and many other opportunities throughout the life of WH. Fellowship Groups offer a level of accountability as do parish, placement and spiritual direction relationships.

117. Reviewers were pleased to hear, via the community notices, that regular quiet days are organised for students, encouraging personal spiritual development. In addition, reviewers were pleased to discover that personal spiritual development is encouraged through regular quiet days, retreats, weeks on spiritual formation and the encouragement of prayer triplets.

### **E5 Students' personality, character and relationships**

118. WH's scene setting document speaks of the five-year plan to develop what's offered in which one of the areas under consideration is that of character. It is intended to develop a programme for use in Fellowship Groups aimed at building resilience, integrity and faithfulness. There is also a plan to draw on, and to contribute to, Oxford-based research into character development.

119. A TI commented in the stakeholder feedback that students they have hosted have been well rounded and of sound character.

120. One former student felt that more emphasis could be placed on training in pastoral care and listening skills. This is an area that we were told has faltered, understandably, this year as pastoral skills teaching requiring in-person tuition has been impossible and the usual modelling of pastoral skills by Fellowship Group tutors has been limited to online contact. As a result of this we would

ask that all such training is reviewed and intentionally emphasised as we come out of the restrictions of this past year.

121. Stakeholders told us that WH produces ‘strong curates’ who are ‘able to turn churches around’. They come from an inherited culture that has a sense of its very deep roots back to the New Testament, and its own Hebrew Bible foundation. They are ‘firm in conviction; flexible, get on with the job.’
122. The PER scene-setting document drew reviewers’ attention to recent safeguarding developments that are particularly acknowledging, and focusing on, safeguarding issues within the evangelical tradition, by stating “We make our Safeguarding training a serious priority. And the Principal will be addressing next term the questions raised by recent revelations regarding Ravi Zacharias, Jonathan Fletcher and John Smyth. He will be trying to answer the question of what it is about evangelical culture that enables this pattern to keep repeating itself, and that stops such behaviour from being reported and believed earlier.”

#### **E6 Students are developing in the dispositions and skills of leadership, collaboration and ability to work in community.**

123. The PER scene setting document made it clear that these qualities are at the heart of what WH aims to develop in its ordinands. Some of these have been more difficult to concentrate on in this past year of pandemic. Student and staff comments suggest that the dispositions of leadership, collaboration and community focus are still very strong despite the lack of face-to-face teaching and meeting this year. A TI commented on the excellent spirit of collaboration evident from all WH students he has been involved with.
124. One stakeholder’s comments emphasised the need for WH to develop a more robust leadership programme to enable ordinands to be prepared for the everyday leadership and ethical issues arising in parish ministry. Another felt that greater input on how to be Christ-like leaders would be beneficial.
125. Involvement in a number of disciplines outside of theological study was mentioned as a strength of WH by a number of stakeholders. The scene setting document highlights this collaboration across disciplines by drawing attention to the ongoing work of the Science for Seminaries award and the appointment of an Artist in Residence. The document optimistically suggests that this short-term appointment holds the potential for such thinking to become self-generating. The reviewers wondered what plans are in place to help this sustainability given the turnover of students and the need for such values to be integrated into the heart of the college if they are to continue beyond a single generation.
126. One observation coming in various stakeholder submissions is the level of understanding of the difference between IME1 and 2 styles of training. Some ordinands seem to expect that by the end of IME1 they will be fully prepared to act as fully fledged ministers, and regret the lack of hands on

practice in IME1. It would be good for sending dioceses to explain more carefully how the two-stage training works, and for the TEI to do so again as students enrol. Perhaps an overview schedule of how and when various elements of the training were going to happen would help student orientation and understanding, enabling them to benefit more fully from the different natures of the two stages.

### **Recommendation 16**

**While not all parish leadership skills can be taught during IME1 the fact that this was mentioned on more than one occasion leads us to recommend that WH reviews its policy on leadership teaching with a view to creating space for the teaching of parish leadership skills to be further developed, particularly taking into consideration the changing nature of the churches receiving stipendiary clergy these days and the need for greater skills of oversight earlier in ministry.**

#### **E7 Students' sense of calling to ministry within the sponsoring church is growing, realistic and informed.**

- 127. All conversations with students that were held during our visit would suggest that this is true.
- 128. End of year, and end of training, reporting is in place and students say that this reporting is helpful and timely, giving opportunity for growth and development in any areas requiring attention.

#### **E8 The TEI has sound procedures for the interim and end of training assessment of students' knowledge, skills and dispositions, reporting on their achievement and identifying further learning needs for the next stages of training and ministry.**

- 129. The role of the Fellowship Group Tutor in the pre-licensing reporting process is clearly set out in the Ministry and Formation Handbook, pointing to a wide range of material being taken into consideration in the formulating of these reports.
- 130. Students are aware of the reporting process and find it supportive. Stakeholders were also satisfied with the levels of reporting offered by WH. In conversation with members of staff and students we were assured of the timely nature of these assessments and their value.

**The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion E: Ministerial Formation.**

## **Conclusion**

**The review team has Confidence with Qualifications in Wycliffe Hall in preparing students for Ordained Ministry in the Church of England.**

## Summary of Commendations

### Commendation 1

We commend the level of commitment to, and understanding of, WH's formational aims by all members of staff, under the inspirational leadership of the Principal.

### Commendation 2

The wholehearted engagement with establishing community life amongst all WH students is to be commended. Reviewers heard over and over again how senior staff work to create this sense of community but we wish to commend all staff and students for taking this element of WH life seriously and working together for its flourishing.

### Commendation 3

Reviewers wish to commend Fellowship Group tutors for the additional commitment to maintaining group contact and support during a year when very few in-person meetings have been possible.

### Commendation 4

The Reviewers wish to commend the Covid Task Group for the way they have operated and shown good leadership and creativity under very difficult circumstances.

### Commendation 5

We commend the work of the Development Director and the opportunities that this could open up and enable.

### Commendation 6

Reviewers wish to commend the decision to appoint an Artist-in-Residence and the work that has taken place so far.

### Commendation 7

Reviewers commend the provision made by WH for those ordinands who are research students.

### Commendation 8

We wish to commend WH on the way in which they have encouraged increasing numbers of women ordinands to study in this community and for the open way in which 'difficult conversations' have been encouraged and facilitated.

## Summary of Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

Given that there is no national policy preventing ordinands from the northern province from training in a southern TEI, nor other compelling reason for the regional nature of WH ordinands, we would ask WH staff to consider how it promotes itself and its formational aims to a wider number of Church of England dioceses.

### Recommendation 2

We are aware that this is a recommendation that is not fully in WH's power to act upon but we would strongly recommend that the tension regarding the double link with the national church's current policy over Common Awards and WH's status as an Oxford University PPH needs to be resolved as quickly as possible if WH is to be assured of its future as a PPH and therefore to be able to confidently continue to develop and grow as a provider of IME1 for Anglican ministry students. We would equally strongly recommend WH to do all that is in their power to further the development of the BTh pathway for ordinands so that it satisfies national church requirements.

### Recommendation 3

Given the very rich opportunities available in Oxford, reviewers recommend that consideration is given to how more creative use of links with inter-faith organisations may be developed to offer placements that immerse students in other faith cultures and give a perspective other than those available from Church-based interfaith projects. This could be achieved by, for example, working with other faith agencies, and not just churches set in areas with large numbers of people from other faiths.

### Recommendation 4

- a. We recommend an overhaul of safeguarding and welfare policies ensuring that they are updated now with regular reviews actioned appropriately and policies situated on a designated section of the website for ease of access for all students regardless of how much access they have to the main college buildings.
- b. With reference to paragraph 29, as part of the above we urge clear ownership of these matters by staff and council.
  - a. In addition, we would recommend that the suggestion that staff meetings and Principal's Hour should be places where policies are reviewed and explained in a way that makes them living documents rather than institutional requirements is acted upon.

### Recommendation 5

As plans to develop and improve accommodation progress, we would recommend that all accommodation policies are reviewed with input from students who have experienced the realities of mixed-sex, mixed-age single accommodation as well as from married students currently having to live off site.



### **Recommendation 6**

It is recommended that Council adopts a more vigorous approach to overseeing the actions of WH and regularly considers its own, and others', reviews of its performance

### **Recommendation 7**

Reviewers recommend that the Governance Nominations Committee actively seeks new members for the Council and ensures that it has a rolling list of names for consideration.

### **Recommendation 8**

We recommend that the Risk Register be completed and adopted by the Council as soon as possible and becomes part of the regular reviewing by Council of the operations of WH.

### **Recommendation 9**

Reviewers strongly recommend that an ASE be produced each year, reporting on progress from the previous year, and that it be adopted by Council.

### **Recommendation 10**

If the Hall wishes to realise its hope that its ordinands will engage more creatively with the arts and be better equipped to support and encourage the creative members of the livings to which they will be ordained, it is recommended that the Artist-in-Residence be given, as soon as possible, a working studio within the Hall where he may model such creative engagement in the arts.

### **Recommendation 11**

It is recommended that WH deepens its commitment to being 'world engaging', rather than simply 'world facing', by further broadening its reading lists as well as responding to Recommendation 3 above.

### **Recommendation 12**

In the light of awareness raised with us of the additional load being carried by teaching staff as a result of changes in working patterns due to covid restrictions, we recommend that additional levels of care are put in place to ensure teaching and learning does not suffer any longer-term effects of the pandemic.

### **Recommendation 13**

It is recommended that, when WH comes out of Covid 19 restrictions and is planning its potential transition from CA to the Oxford BTh, it reviews its pedagogy, especially in regard to the place of reflection in academic modules.

### **Recommendation 14**

We recommend that a significant review of timing of communication, particularly of releasing of timetables and reading lists, takes place to allow students greater agency in their own planning of academic work but also of how to include extra-curricular formational events into their training.



### **Recommendation 15**

In line with recommendations in other sections of this report, the reviewers ask WH SMT to take seriously the impact on ordination training of a lack of careful scrutiny within the structures of the organisation. Advocating good leadership and governance in teaching modules needs also to be modelled in the TEI's institutional life if ordinands are to be formed securely for ministry in a church where both the ministry of all and mutual accountability are held to be of the nature of God's church.

### **Recommendation 16**

While we realise not all parish leadership skills can be taught during IME1 the fact that this was mentioned on more than one occasion leads us to recommend that WH reviews its policy on leadership teaching with a view to creating space for the teaching of parish leadership skills to be further developed, particularly taking into consideration the changing nature of the churches receiving stipendiary clergy these days and the need for greater skills of oversight earlier in ministry.