

**GENERAL SYNOD****Resourcing Ministerial Formation: A Review****Summary**

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The work reported here – known as “Resourcing Ministerial Formation” (RMF) – reviews the structure and funding arrangements for initial ministerial formation in order to strengthen the theological education of the whole people of God.

This review aims to establish a long-lasting framework within which other issues can be subject to more regular review. RMF is working to overcome weaknesses identified in the current financial arrangements, introduced after a previous review known as “Resourcing Ministerial Education” (RME), including their limitation to ordained ministry, while preserving the flexibility and financial accountability currently given to dioceses. Key foci include:

- more explicit alignment to the Vision and Strategy work,
  - more consistent payments for training providers (TEIs) from year to year for their core work training ordinands,
  - central payments to avoid the build up of unspent surplus funds in dioceses,
  - an innovation fund to enable initiatives and enhancement of provision (particularly in response to the Vision and Strategy),
  - a Service Level Agreement between each TEI and the wider church, affirming the value placed on the TEI and its work while equally setting a clear framework of expectations against which it can be assessed,
  - reviewing the ordinand maintenance system to make it more transparent while still supporting candidates’ needs,
  - specific funding to enable diocesan-supported initiatives to improve and expand lay ministry training and for supporting the training of ministers with disabilities.
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**The Resourcing Ministerial Formation Review**

1. The Resourcing Ministerial Formation (RMF) Review was established by the Ministry Council in 2019 to review the funding arrangements introduced in 2017 as part of the Resourcing Ministerial Education (RME) review. Ministry Council had committed to reviewing RME after three years and reporting to Synod. We were clear, however, that we needed to give strategic consideration to the structure and funding arrangements for ministerial formation that would best serve the church’s needs in the longer term, rather than simply a narrow review of RME. The purpose of theological education is to equip the whole people of God. In the course of the work, the development of the Church’s Vision and Strategy has offered further clarity around the church’s needs over the next decade, and therefore what the expectations and requirements will be for theological education for both ordained and lay ministries.
2. Our task is to nurture a framework of relationships and expectations within which the funding of theological education can adapt and adjust to serve the church in the longer

term. We are drawing on the experience not just of RME, but of a variety of previous funding models, seeking to develop robust and sustainable models for the church and for the theological education institutions.

3. We desire the highest quality education and formation for the church's ministers, and this review seeks to provide a framework to enable this. The specific and detailed responsibility for this is held in the Quality and Formation Panel and the House of Bishops. The Quality and Formation Panel will be attending to the details of the contents of theological education pathways over the next two years.
4. A report on the work to date of the RMF Review Group setting out a direction of travel agreed by the Archbishops' Council was given to Synod in November 2021 in paper GS Misc 1303 (available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/GS%20Misc%201303%20Resourcing%20Ministerial%20Formation%20Review.pdf>).
5. As set out in that report, under the current RME system the necessary funding has been provided for the training of ordinands over the last five years as ordained vocations have grown and become younger and more diverse. Dioceses have had greater freedom than before in discerning the appropriate training for particular candidates, which they have welcomed, but also more awareness of the financial consequences of their decisions.
6. However, some significant weaknesses have also become evident:
  - a) RME has led to a significant accumulation of unspent money in some dioceses;
  - b) RME funds only the training of clergy at a time when we are increasingly concerned with the development of a wide range of lay ministries;
  - c) RME limits the scope for national strategic decision-making in relation to this significant investment of funding;
  - d) RME does not assist sustainable financial management in Theological Education Institutions (TEIs) because of the uncertainty they have about their income each year;
  - e) pressure to recruit new students encourages TEIs to relate to each other as competitors rather than as collaborative partners in serving the church;
  - f) the maintenance system for full-time ordinands has become significantly more expensive, while being poorly understood and not evidently providing fairly for all candidates.
7. We proposed to establish a new funding system, shaped by the following principles:
  - a) continue to fund in full the tuition and expenses of ordinands in training;
  - b) continue to operate a national funding system for those fees and expenses, funded by dioceses through apportionment;
  - c) preserve flexibility for dioceses in discerning the training pathway for candidates;
  - d) include some funding for those training for licensed lay ministries in the national system;
  - e) establish a system with an element of multi-year block grants for TEIs (to offer greater stability in their income) though still with some variation based on actual candidate numbers and hence on diocesan decisions;
  - f) return to disbursement of money to TEIs from the national system directly, not via dioceses, eliminating the creation of surpluses and adding administrative efficiencies;

- g) establish a Service Level Agreement with each TEI setting out agreed expectations for what it is being funded to provide;
- h) establish a fund to support initiatives and creative innovations in response to the church's identification of its needs and the ongoing *Vision and Strategy* work;
- i) establish a new ordinand maintenance system enabling more control of costs while enhancing transparency and fairness;
- j) consider establishing a diversity fund – in general in Higher Education it is recognised that widening participation requires investment, for example in providing access years or additional academic support.

8. This will help to serve the following key goals:

- a) that the quality of formation for ministers remains high and continues effectively to form ministers for the changing needs of the church, particularly that
  - i) ministers meet the church's expectations as set out in the Vision and Strategy and the formation framework for various ministries
  - ii) ministers are fit for the responsibilities they bear in promoting a safer church
  - iii) ministers themselves are, and enable others to be, missionary disciples;
- b) a culture and practice of lifelong learning for all ministers;
- c) increased accessibility to learning, and increased diversity of learners, through innovative approaches to learning and formation;
- d) broader opportunities for the whole people of God to engage with theological education and formation, deepening their rootedness in Christ and enabling them as missionary disciples in every aspect of their lives;
- e) institutions that enable students to understand and empathise with traditions different from their own;
- f) continuation of theological research and pursuit of theological excellence.

9. We are developing detailed proposals in four areas:

- a) the overall funding model,
- b) ordinand maintenance,
- c) a Service Level Agreement for each TEI, and
- d) expanding use of the funding to include lay ministry.

Accounts of the work in each of the areas follow in subsequent sections of this paper.

10. It is important to note that the aim of the RMF Review is to set up a financial and structural system for the relationship between the TEIs, national church and dioceses (rather than to address every question in relation to theological education and ministerial formation). This is partly to keep the review a manageable project, and also to keep focus on a long-term system. Other questions, such as those relating to curriculum, are ones which will need more regular review on an ongoing basis, and therefore need to be addressable within any system rather than built into it.

11. This work is ongoing as we seek to resource theological excellence throughout the church and available to all, and the institutions necessary to resource this. There are, therefore, other key issues that the Ministry Council will be addressing outwith the RMF Review including:

- a) working with the TEIs to ensure the alignment of their work with the Vision and Strategy – for example, that they help form ministers with a vision for and skills in working with children and young people;
- b) issues of curriculum and formational approach in TEIs
  - i) the church's expectations for curriculum content
  - ii) effective integration between IME1 and IME2, and between IME1 and the learning candidates bring into it
  - iii) issues of pedagogical approach, for example the balance between classroom-based, on-line and placement learning
- c) ensuring the church has effective quality assurance processes in relation to the TEIs, so giving confidence in the training provided and guiding TEIs on any changes they need to make to better serve the church;
- d) questions of cohort and institutional size to enable the sustainable and excellent formational provision;
- e) increased provision of high-quality formation for a breadth of lay ministries in a wide range of contexts across the church to resource the Vision and Strategy;
- f) continued attention to issues of diversity (including theological, cultural, demographic) in ministerial formation.
  - i) In particular, we note that a recent meeting of the Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission engaged with theological education. They commended the good progress already made by the TEIs, Ministry Development Team, and Common Awards. They also noted the need for significant ongoing work;
- g) strengthening provision of CMD across the church.

## **Emerging Funding Model**

12. The funding working group has five main tasks:

- a) to give TEIs greater predictability in their funding so that they can draw up multi-year annual budgets with greater confidence than is now the case. This is likely to be achieved by combining a predictable block grant based on recent performance with a marginal adjustment to respond to changes in the numbers of ordinands in each TEI;
- b) to examine the rationale for differentials in fees between full-time residential, full-time non-residential and part-time training for ordinands;
- c) to enable the control of vote 1 expenditure by ensuring that diocesan decisions on training respond to an overall budget constraint without continuing the possibility that dioceses accumulate unspent balances of vote 1 money. This is likely to be achieved by allocating each diocese a budgetary allowance that limits the maximum cost of the training it can allocate from the national budget, and ensuring that under-used allowances are retained centrally to enable other initiatives to flourish;
- d) to ensure that expenditure on ordinand maintenance is budgeted and controlled more effectively than is the case under the current Pooling system, following recommendations from the maintenance subgroup;

- e) to devise transitional arrangements from RME to RMF, including gathering unspent diocesan vote 1 balances in a way that does not unreasonably impact diocesan cash flow.
13. We have excellent data on entries to TEIs and on diocesan decisions on modes of training for ordinands, and we are modelling to evaluate how alternative proposals would have worked out in recent years. We are also aware of the need to stress-test any proposed model to ensure it would remain appropriate were the number and profile of candidates or TEIs to change. The SLA will be crucial in ensuring that there is appropriate accountability for use of the funding, and mechanisms for renegotiating of grant levels if a TEI consistently fails to recruit the expected number of candidates.

### **Ordinand Maintenance**

14. This group is working on the complex issue of ordinand maintenance costs, which include such elements as meals, accommodation both for residential and non-residential, travel and book grants. The aim is for a system of maintenance that is simple, transparent and fair. It should enable those preparing to enter theological education to understand what financial provision will be made for them and to plan accordingly, especially with regard to wider family finances.
15. The group is considering a model of a standard maintenance grant to every ordinand, from which they would pay their living costs – except housing. The discrepancy between housing costs across England and the fact that most residential colleges have to house some ordinands in commercially rented property, makes it difficult to ask ordinands to pay for their housing from a grant. There is a parallel with the stipend, which is separate from housing costs. Some contribution to the additional support of children could be included in the standard grant. The group is undertaking research to ascertain circumstances in which ordinands would need supplementary support. The value of eating in community for those in both residential and non-residential training is acknowledged and the cost of doing so would need to be addressed transparently
16. Currently, maintenance (including housing costs) is paid for through three streams: accommodation payments to TEIs from Vote 1, funds from dioceses (pooled and balanced 12 months in arrears) and additional funds from dioceses. A future system needs to take into account the amounts currently paid through all three streams. Ideally, maintenance would be allocated and controlled within a single national budget.

### **Service Level Agreements**

17. This group is working to shape a Service Level Agreement (SLA), formally between each TEI and the Archbishops' Council (AC). This would be an expression of a covenant between TEIs and the wider church, rather than simply a provider-client model. The SLA would both affirm the value placed by the church on the work of the TEI and set clear expectations of that work. The group are considering the appropriate length for an SLA (probably between three and five years).
18. There would be annual monitoring of the SLA, aligned with other quality assurance processes, designed to minimise additional work in this monitoring given that such work also consumes resource, while ensuring any problems are identified and addressed. At the point of renegotiating a new agreement the TEI would give a full account of how it has met its commitments over the previous period.
19. The content of the SLAs would be largely generic; rather than agreeing with each TEI individually what it would do to collaborate with dioceses in CMD provision, for

example, and renegotiating this as plans evolve during the lifetime of the SLA, the SLA might contain a generic expectation of collaboration with dioceses with the TEI reporting at the end of the period how it had manifested that in practice. Specific elements in an SLA would relate to areas of specialism held in TEIs, in partnerships between TEIs and/or with dioceses, and which would serve the church through CMD and other programmes.

20. The SLA would contain (amongst other things) commitments made by the TEIs, providing clarity around expectations, concerning:
- a) their role in responding to the Church of England's *Vision and Strategy*, for example by:
    - i) ensuring training is informed by the priorities of the *Vision and Strategy*
    - ii) shaping their programmes, for lay and ordained ministers, to enable ministry to serve the church's changing needs into the future
    - iii) researching and evaluating approaches to the implementation of the *Vision and Strategy*;
  - b) their training of licensed ministers, following the church's policies for ministerial training, including all agreed expectations in relation to curriculum, formational practice and required outcomes;
  - c) the church's expectations of initial training and formation (IME 1) and those of curacy and similar first posts (IME 2);
  - d) the identification of areas of provision for continuing ministerial development, especially in resourcing continuing theological learning in the context of lifelong learning and discernment;
  - e) their full and open participation in the church's quality assurance processes;
  - f) the promotion of diversity, including the demographic areas listed in the Archbishops' Council objectives and respect for the breadth of theological traditions;
  - g) the promotion of the five marks of mission, including through reducing carbon emissions;
  - h) their serving the theological education and formation of the whole people of God through providing ongoing training for licensed ministers and other lay disciples and ministers;
  - i) the maintenance, within each TEI, of a culture and practice of safeguarding and their contributing to this work across the church;
  - j) expectations for all TEIs to sustain and develop collaborations with dioceses, with cross-diocesan networks and with other TEIs;<sup>1</sup>
  - k) the wider resourcing of the church through theological research and dissemination.
21. The group is also working on proposals for a fund to support initiatives across the TEIs, again where this will further the *Vision and Strategy* and where this will foster collaboration and partnership, with all learning from these projects shared widely.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth stressing that this will be an expectation of all TEIs. Some will seek primarily to relate to local dioceses but all need to be actively working collaboratively to ensure they are providing for identified needs.

## **Lay Ministry**

22. The group is clear that the goal must be to improve and expand lay ministry training, not simply to support what is currently done or to replace current diocesan investment in lay ministry training. The funding must be responsive to diocesan needs, and include as an aim a younger and more diverse body of lay ministers across the church. Any proposals will need to align with the funding available following the Triennium funding process.
23. The group is developing as potentially its main proposal a fund to make grants to initiatives in the initial training of lay ministers, furthering the Vision and Strategy. Bids will need to be made by a partnership, with either a diocesan partner or clear diocesan support, and delivery will need to come within appropriate national quality assurance processes (such processes are already applicable to diocesan reader training schemes as well as to TEIs). In this the group is keen to encourage TEI involvement in lay ministry training in the many cases where that would be beneficial. Funding for TEI provision would be incorporated into the TEIs' SLA.
24. In addition, the group is likely to recommend extending to candidates for licensed lay ministry the existing system of funding for additional support of ordinands with disabilities. The group has also noted the need for research on barriers to participation in lay ministry training, especially for potential UKME/GMH candidates; ways of carrying that out in the next year are under consideration by the Ministry Development Team, in order that it might inform the allocation of funding from autumn 2023, rather than waiting for that funding.

## **Conclusion**

25. There is much detailed development yet to be done in all of these areas. We are conscious that the effect of any of these proposals may depend very significantly on the detail, not simply on the high level principles we set out here. We expect that Synod will wish to see more detail prior to the implementation of any new policy. We are consulting Synod at this stage while the proposals are still being shaped to gather further wisdom and guidance. We are seeking to develop the proposals in time for implementation in autumn 2023.
26. We believe these proposals would create a system which will promote adaptive, collaborative and sustainable provision of theological education, serving the initial ministerial formation of ordinands but also enhancing the theological education of the whole people of God. The system will be responsive to the church's Vision and Strategy and future needs as we continue to discern them. We therefore commend them to Synod.

Rt Revd Martin Seeley, Chair of the Ministry Council

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