

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Report

St Augustine's College of Theology

Conducted onsite, March 2023

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Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ

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

Website: www.churchofengland.org

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Glossary

ASE	Annual Self Evaluation
BoS	Board of Studies
CCCU	Canterbury Christ Church University
DDO	Diocesan Director of Ordinands
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance
ECLAS	'Equipping Christian Leadership in the Age of Science'
ERMC	Eastern Region Ministry Course
IME1/2	Initial Ministerial Education Phase 1/2
LASAR	'Learning about Science and Religion'
LLM	Licensed Lay Minister
OPM	Ordained Pioneer Minister
PER	Periodic External Review
RMF	Resourcing Ministerial Formation
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TEI	Theological Education Institution
TPM	Theology and Practice of Ministry
UKME / GMH	UK Minority Ethnicity / Global Majority Heritage

Reviewers

Revd Professor Jeremy Duff, Senior Reviewer; Principal of St Padarn's Institute, Church in Wales

Prof Helen King, Professor Emerita of Classical Studies, Open University; authorised lay preacher, Oxford Diocese

Revd Romita Shrisunder, Diocesan Director of Ordinands, Lichfield Diocese

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 Development 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 St Augustine's College of Theology

Introduction

St. Augustine's College of Theology provides ministerial formation for those intending ordained or licensed lay ministry in the Church of England, as well as serving independent learners. The college offers certificate, diploma, BA, GDip, PGDip and MA courses to students interested in the study of theology and to ordained clergy and licensed lay ministers who are pursuing their in-service professional development. It hosts a small Ph.D. program in collaboration with Durham university.

The origins of St Augustine's College can be traced to 1994 when its predecessor, the South East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE), was founded to train people for Christian ministry in the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, Southwark and later Chichester. SEITE was formed from a merger of two institutions in the south east; the Southwark Ordination Course and the Canterbury School of Ministry. Alongside part-time programmes, full-time programmes for ordination candidates and independent students were offered from 2012. SEITE became responsible for Reader training in the diocese of Canterbury and later in the dioceses of Southwark (2012) and Chichester (2014).

SEITE has been approved by Durham University to offer the university's Common Awards programmes since their introduction in 2014. SEITE's programmes were previously validated by Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). Durham University's Validation Panel found that SEITE, despite its dispersed nature, operating as it then did from offices in Canterbury and London and teaching across different sites in London, Canterbury, and the South East, had a strong sense of community and place and that it worked in close partnership with churches and dioceses in the region.

In 2016 SEITE changed its legal name to St Augustine's College of Theology, intending a clearer brand and public profile and developing a new online presence and promotional material, and moved its main office base from the campus of CCCU to the St Benedict's Centre, Malling Abbey, West Malling. This venue is now the main teaching base for St Augustine's College. It houses a library of some 10-12,000 books, the collection being previously owned by a Chichester diocesan trust and more recently expanded especially in the fields of biblical studies, spirituality and mission. A second teaching centre is located within Trinity House, the Southwark diocesan offices, where there are further library holdings.

PER Process

The PER of St Augustine's College took place in March 2023. St Augustine's staff provided in advance an extensive set of documents for our review, including the self-evaluation and scene-setting document, external reviews, module and programme documents, handbooks and policies, student feedback, staff CVs, and business and financial documents. We were also given access to the institution's Moodle site, where learning materials are stored and where assessed work is submitted and marked. The review team conducted a visit from 9-11 March 2023, taking in both the Malling Abbey base and part of an off-site student residential at Leatherhead.

During both visits we held meetings individually or in small groups with academic staff, students and former students, trustees and members of the governing bodies. We sampled teaching, including some online sessions, and observed worship. We shared in meals which gave further opportunities for informal conversations with staff and students. We are grateful to the St Augustine’s staff and students for their hospitality and collaboration throughout the review process.

General Observations and Summary of Outcomes

As we hope is clear in this report, the reviewers found in St Augustine’s much to commend, including its strong commitment to ministerial formation, good collaborative staff and trustee working, excellent study skills support, and a creative entrepreneurialism in its desire to serve the dioceses and the wider church. We offer a number of recommendations that address issues around for example pastoral care, modelling commitment to parish ministry, support for students’ placement experiences, balance of worship, online teaching, and ownership of formation overall at trustee level. These too are offered as encouragements to the College to build further on its good work and to flourish in serving the church and its mission.

The report is written in relation to the PER Criteria in force for 2022-23 and available via the Ministry Development Team’s quality assurance pages on the Church of England website.

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

The review team regards St Augustine’s College of Theology as fit for purpose for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed lay ministry.

Section A: Formational Aims

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

1. St Augustine's College of Theology describes itself as "providing students and those called to ministry with a spiritually rich and formational theological education". Its governing documents locate it as currently primarily relating to the dioceses of Canterbury, Chichester, Rochester, Southwark and London but are drawn up in such a way as to give equal voice to other Church of England dioceses, or other Christian denominations, who commit to sending candidates to study with St Augustine's.
2. This reflects the ethos of the College in two dimensions. Firstly, geographically. The College is firmly located in 'the South East' – in Kent, London, Surrey, and Sussex – and has committed relationships with certain dioceses, and yet is open to students from outside of this area, or these dioceses. That has begun to happen as the college's reputation has grown, and as online learning and changes to people's work patterns create greater flexibility. Indeed the college expresses a godly ambition to contribute broadly to theological education and ministerial formation within England.
3. Secondly, the college balances a prime focus on ordination training, with training lay ministers, a significant number of independent students, and a desire to be a theological resource for the church at every level. It embraces new opportunities which come either because local dioceses approach them with new needs (for example St Augustine's has developed a pathway for distinctive deacons) or because the staff at St Augustine's identify new opportunities (such as the new online certificate of higher education in Theology, Ministry and Mission which the college has launched).
4. Thus while St Augustine's has its origins in the South East Institute for Theological Education and, further back, the Southwark Ordination Course and the Canterbury School of Ministry, its purpose, culture and activity is now of a vibrant, broadly based, theological college inhabiting particular locations and partnerships but not defined by them.
5. The College has a clear vision of formation with three foci: self-knowledge in grace, diversity, and learning in Christian community. It sees personal change, the work of the Holy Spirit leading people towards maturity in Christ, as the goal of its formational programmes. It intentionally creates an environment, a community of Christian learning energised by the gracious presence of God, in which this formation is fostered. Within this, the diversity of the students and staff is seen as a positive good both as a 'microcosm of the Church of England', and because it enlarges understanding, invites humility, generates self-criticism and creates an expectancy of personal and community change.

6. It is clear that these formational aims are deeply rooted and widely shared within St Augustine's College. There is an integrity within St Augustine's with many of its processes and ways of operating clearly relating back to, or emerging from, these formational aims. The college's presentation of itself online and in advertising expresses this approach. Overall, this gives the college a consistent Christian culture, resisting any simple commodification or fragmentation of education, which is of real value.
7. In particular, the staff team has a very clear sense of the purpose of the College in Christian ministerial formation. Notably, this understanding is just as strongly shared among non-academic staff, and associate tutors, as it is among tutorial staff.

Commendation 1

We commend St Augustine's for the clarity of its formational aims, and the strong ownership of those aims by non-academic and associate staff.

8. Part of the education model is that an understanding of what Christian ministerial formation is itself develops over time, and that it is not helpful for the College to short-circuit this by spelling out for the students what their formation is, or how it will be achieved. Engagement with the student body demonstrated that this approach is taken forward in practice, in that students spoke of a growing clarity about their formation as their course progresses, with most expressing that this non-directive, emergent, approach has been beneficial.
9. As might be expected, these formational aims and their consistent application throughout the institution owes much to the Principal's vision and leadership. Picking up on commentary in the college's paperwork and conversation with stakeholders, we would urge that the way these aims shape the institution needs to be clarified and formalised as part of normal succession and business planning.

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

10. St Augustine's College of Theology trains ordinands for both stipendiary and self-supporting ministry in the Church of England (including distinctive deacons), Readers and Pioneers.
11. Its formational aims, summarised by the strapline 'transforming formation', and the culture within the College, are well-suited to the Church of England's ministerial training requirements.
12. The ordained ministry pathway handbook gives a clear account of the learning programme and relates this to the Church's criteria for ordained ministry. Similarly, the LLM ministry pathway handbook (for Readers, Lay Pioneer Ministers and Lay Pastoral Ministers) relates the programme of learning to the church's criteria. More detailed mappings exist for ordained ministry which demonstrate the care with which the college relates its activities to the Church of England's ministerial training requirements.

13. Financial pressures resulted in the college recently trimming the length of some residential for ordinands. The college itself recognises the negative impact of this since it sees residential time as foundational to the fulfilment of its formational vision. The clear reluctance to do this, and commitment to fundraising to allow this step to be reversed, demonstrates that the formation aims are taken seriously (see further paragraph 94 below).
14. There is a strong spirit of flexibility and responsiveness to the Church's needs within St Augustine's. This is apparent at an informal level, as well as for example in the development of the Council of Reference. Thus the college keeps in step with the changing needs of the dioceses which it seeks to serve.
15. St Augustine's approach puts diversity at the centre and as a positive educational tool, rather than something to be managed. While this was most often expressed in terms of diversity in church tradition, it was apparent that this intention to embrace diversity was not limited merely to matters of church tradition and theological opinion. In particular, as noted later in paragraphs 86 and 104, St Augustine's offers very effective support in the area of study skills and additional learning needs. It also attends carefully to the recruitment and support of UKME students. The college makes deliberate use of the diversity of communities within reach, particularly in London, as part of its educational programme.
16. A strategic review was undertaken in 2022 which, together with the ongoing structures of the college, demonstrates that the relationship between the college's formational aims and the changing ministerial needs of the Church is kept under appropriate review.

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

17. The dioceses of Canterbury, Chichester, Rochester, Southwark and London value the work of St Augustine's and see it as a credible place for their ordinands to train. We heard evidence that the College's reputation is growing and it is attracting ordinands more broadly than previously, both from a wider geography and from a wider range of backgrounds and theologies. This is demonstrated by the steady increase in ordinands over the last years, excepting the impact of Covid. The dioceses value the formational aims and education method within St Augustine's, the flexibility of its staff and programmes, the college's track record of supporting ordinands in full-time employment and the positive morale of ordinands leaving St Augustine's (in the words of one stakeholder, they 'speak well of each other and of the college').
18. The dioceses relate to St Augustine's fundamentally through a provider-purchaser model. They value its work and wish it to flourish because that gives them the option of using it, and indeed gives a valuable option for their ordinands to choose if they wish. However, there is little tangible sense of commitment to St Augustine's from the dioceses, or a sense of responsibility for it. Dioceses make decisions, for example about lay ministry training or the contribution of St

Augustine's to IME 2 programmes, without regard for the impact on the college. It is noticeable that the engagement with the college from dioceses is mainly through Directors of Ordinands in relation to particular ordinands. These relationships are good. Nevertheless, there is no expression from dioceses that St Augustine's featured in their strategic thinking or planning. When asked diocesan representatives framed the relationship with the College as transactional – some of their ordinands train here. Thus there is some legitimacy in the notion that the dioceses take the continued flourishing of St Augustine's for granted, which may of course be a testament to its recent successes and the quality of its staff.

19. There are different models of the relationship between Theological Education Institutions and Dioceses. It is not the role of this report to commend a model but to report and make recommendations which the institution could take forward. However, we are confident that St Augustine's for its part puts considerable effort into seeking to serve and build relationships with the dioceses, and could not credibly do more.
20. The emphases within lay ministry within the dioceses appear to be steadily shifting, with fewer Readers entering training, and training being 'in-house' within dioceses and not involving accredited study. This creates some challenges for St Augustine's, which has a genuine desire to contribute to lay ministry. The tutor for Lay Education has been putting considerable energy into building relationships with dioceses, but it is unclear whether this will bear fruit in increased numbers of Readers training at the college.

Commendation 2

We commend St Augustine's for the energy, flexibility and entrepreneurial spirit which marks its service to the Church, and particularly the work of the Tutor for Lay Education in building relationship with 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.

21. St Augustine's has a strong commitment to the 'faith in science' agenda, with an ongoing relationship with the organisations 'Equipping Christian Leadership in the Age of Science (ECLAS)' and 'Learning about Science and Religion (LASAR)'. This is manifested in honorary staff appointments, theological symposia and talks/training events. This commitment and the opportunities presented is appreciated by students and a wider constituency and fits well within the overall formational and educational vision of St Augustine's.

Commendation 3

We commend St Augustine's for its commitment to the 'faith in science' agenda.

22. St Augustine's main physical location is within Malling Abbey, a community of Anglican Benedictine Nuns. The engagement with the sisters' community is a positive aspect of St Augustine's, valued by students and staff, and seen positively by the wider church.
23. St Augustine's draws widely on local churches for placements for its students. It also ensures that students engage with and learn from non-Anglican churches; for example, one residential involves students in preparation attending growing black-majority churches in London and then being guided in their reflections on this experience. Similarly, there are placement opportunities within hospitals, prisons and schools.
24. The College plays a full part in the Common Awards partnership with Durham University. It has negotiated an agreement with Mirfield to allow its MA students to take modules from Mirfield's MA in Liturgy. It is pursuing similar discussions with other TEIs and has started a series of exploratory meetings with the University of Chichester about some joint activities.

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

25. The college has a clear set of policies related to community life set out in the Student Handbook including a 'statement of commitment' in relation to racism and other forms of 'the blindness and bias of privilege'. There is significant attention paid to the needs of students with a disability.
26. Whilst there are some guidelines about 'classroom confidentiality', there did not appear to be a clear statement regarding confidentiality more generally, setting out for example how information shared with tutors, placement supervisors and others involved in an ordinand's life may feed through into reports for bishops. However, the review team did not encounter any evidence of this causing difficulty. Nevertheless, we would encourage the college to clarify these questions in the student handbook.

27. St Augustine’s values diversity within its student body and many students and stakeholders see its diversity as a positive strength. In response to student requests, it has developed some deliberate structures to ensure the voice of UKME/GMH students and LGBT+ students are heard. Nevertheless, there is some evidence from stakeholders that some younger ordinands, and ordinands from certain streams within the Church, have felt that they would have found themselves more ‘on the edge’ in the community and thus have chosen to train elsewhere. The college recognises the challenges in this area, listing as a ‘threat’ in its SWOT analysis, ‘maintenance of student diversity, especially theological diversity, vulnerable to polarising tendencies within the CofE around controversial issues’.
28. The college chaplain is not an employee of the college, but a NSM priest licensed to the college by the Bishop of Rochester. She makes a significant contribution to the pastoral care received by students. Her work is greatly appreciated by staff and students, and she is often the first point of contact for students, directing them on to other sources of help.

Commendation 4

We commend the work of the College Chaplain and the contribution she makes to the care of students.

29. The pastoral care offered by the staff is appreciated by the student body. We heard ample testimony of the responsiveness of staff to expressions of need. However, at the same time, it appeared that if one didn’t ask, it was possible to fall through the gaps. While appreciating that students need to take responsibility for their own learning and progression, the current situation runs the risk that students who feel disconnected or are less adept at expressing their needs may not receive the help they need.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the college reviews the robustness of the provision of pastoral care within the college, to ensure that it is not overly dependent on the work of the chaplain, and has an appropriate balance of being pro-active or structured as well as responsive.

30. The core teaching staff team is relatively small. As such it is difficult to manifest diversity, though there is more opportunity through the appointment of associate staff. There is a good gender balance among the staff. There are no UKME core tutorial staff, but also only two among the twenty-five associate staff. This is clearly below appropriate benchmarks. However, as detailed in paragraph 82 below, we recognise that the college is taking action in this regard. Therefore while it is important that the plans bear fruit, we make no specific recommendation in relation to the ethnic diversity of the staff body.
31. The degree of experience in parish ministry among the core staff, particularly at incumbent level, is low, though a good number of the associate staff do have this experience. As noted below (paragraph 105) we also encountered quite a wide-spread belief, along students, alumni and placement supervisors, that the College contributed ‘theological’ education to the ordinands

while the ‘ministry’ component was found in the placement. We also encountered among a notable number of students more enthusiasm towards other forms of priestly ministry than being an incumbent or SSM serving in a parish, and we wonder if this is connected to the lack of strong parish-ministry role models among the core staff. While some ordinands will serve in valuable non-parochial roles, parish ministry will be the location for the majority, so it is important that preparing for parish ministry is a strong element of the College’s culture.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the college develops a clear understanding of how, as staff changes occur, it can increase the level of experience for parish ministry among the core staff, so as to further support a committed vocation to parish ministry among many of the ordinands.

32. The college has clear safeguarding policies, publicly available on the website and within the student handbook. Safeguarding training among staff is taken seriously and is up to date. The trustees exercise a commendable level of oversight of safeguarding.
33. St Augustine’s is broadly-speaking a warm, supportive, community. Given the complications of forming community in a non-residential setting, with significant numbers of ordinands, lay ministry students and independent students, the outcomes in this area are notably positive and a testimony to the work and life of both the staff and the students themselves. A concern about the formation of community online is noted in paragraph 79 below.
34. There is a positive culture of engagement between staff and students, as well as structures - particularly through the board of studies - where the student voice can be heard. As is appropriate in a small institution, much of the expression of student voice is informal and relational, and there is significant evidence of changes being made as a result of feedback from students.
35. The college’s engagement with students’ families is very limited. Spouses have been invited to some events, which is appreciated by some, and generally, when spouses have asked for particular engagement with St Augustine’s, the college has been responsive. Some ordinands express a desire for more support from college to help them and their spouses work through the expectations on families within parish ministry. However, the challenges are significant for a non-residential institution drawing on students across a large geography to engage with spouses and families in all their variety. Thus on balance St Augustine’s approach to supporting families seems reasonable, and is appreciated as such by most students.

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

36. St Augustine’s main base is in dedicated buildings within the grounds of Malling Abbey. The location offers good parking, access to local facilities and gardens and a general environment highly conducive to the college’s work. Office space is satisfactory, there are well-equipped teaching rooms, social space and attractive study rooms for students. There is good provision for

the needs of those with mobility or other disabilities. As well as the practical facilities, the Abbey provides a sense of ‘home’ for the college, which is widely valued.

37. Residentials take place either at the Malling Abbey site using local hotels, or at the (police) Federation House Hotel in Leatherhead. This provides high-quality bedrooms and recreation space, and good teaching facilities, with appropriate provision for those with disabilities. The students were content with the facilities at the range of residential venues.
38. The college also operates out of dedicated space within Trinity House in South London - the Southwark Diocesan offices. Satisfactory office space is provided for two staff members, as well as meeting, teaching and library space. This co-location also contributes to a spirit of partnership with Southwark diocese. While functional, the facilities within Trinity House lack circulation and reception space. There are well-developed plans for improvements to be made at Trinity House, with the costs shared with the diocese. These will give St Augustine’s a strong base within London, from which, for example, to offer MA programmes.
39. The provision of worship space on the Malling Abbey site is very good, primarily in the ‘pilgrim chapel’. Students current and former speak warmly of the spiritual benefit of being able to worship in the chapel and more broadly use the grounds for reflection and personal devotions.
40. St Augustine’s does not own any of the buildings it uses and therefore has limited development and upkeep plans. However, it engages appropriately with Southwark Diocese (in relation to Trinity House) and Malling Abbey / Rocester Diocese in relation to the Malling Abbey site.

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

41. The patterns and ethos for worship within St Augustine’s are set out clearly in the student handbook and well understood by students. These apply in the different contexts for worship in college life, including online. Worshipping together is a strong component of the college’s life.
42. The key building block is that eleven different styles of worship are laid out in the handbook (for example, ‘Common Worship Daily Offices’, ‘Anglo-Catholic Worship’, ‘Taizé Worship’ and ‘Charismatic Worship’) and each act of worship is assigned to one of these worship styles. The students responsible for that act of worship then design and lead the worship, supported by a ‘supervising tutor’ and resources from the handbook.
43. The worship patterns and ‘styles’ are appropriate to the traditions and usage of the Church of England. They include the use of the Book of Common Prayer, and familiarise students with Daily Prayer and a wide variety which might be encountered within parish life. The guidelines are clear about inclusivity and respecting differences in relation, for example, to eucharistic practices and theological convictions.

44. The emphasis within this approach lies on students having the experience of working together to lead worship in different styles. This is clearly in keeping with the formational aims and culture of the institution with its emphasis on encouraging learning from diversity and experiential learning. However, students shared that sometimes the worship produced was not necessarily a good example of worship in that style, recognisable as such by those for whom it is their regular way of worshipping. In conversation students also appeared at times to value worship at residential more as an opportunity to learn and experience diversity, than as the worship which ‘feeds the soul’. Recognising that there are difficult balances to be struck in relation to worship within a training institution, nevertheless we make the following recommendation.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the college reviews its patterns for worship, to ensure that:

- a. students are being given high-quality examples of the worship in different styles, recognisable as such by those for whom that is their natural style of worship;**
- b. that an appropriate balance is being struck between worship as an opportunity to experience diversity and develop skills, and worship that spiritually feeds the worshipper.**

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

45. St Augustine’s is marked by warm, positive, supportive relationships between staff and students. The staff are known by the students.
46. The core staff, both academic and administrative, engage in continued learning and development. The college provides appropriate financial and other support to facilitate this, including sabbatical provision for academic staff, research seminars and support for achieving fellowships of HE-Advance. There is an attractive sense that St Augustine’s being a learning community means that the staff are learning as well as the students.
47. The associate tutors are notably well-integrated into the life of the college. Many have significant experience in their subject area, in teaching and in ministry.
48. Given the limitations noted in paragraph 31 above, and recommendation 2, those teaching within the college encourage the integration of what is being learnt in the classroom with students’ experience of life and ministry. The staff encourage serious reflection and wrestling with complex issues.

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.

49. The governance of ‘St Augustine’s College of Theology’ is defined in articles of association most recently updated in 2018. These are clear and fit for purpose, and a simplified account of the governance is helpfully given on the website. The members of the charitable company are whichever diocesan bishops or other Christian denominations commit to sending candidates to be trained at St Augustine’s, for as long as they do so. Thus, while the dioceses of Canterbury, Chichester, Rochester and Southwark are named in the articles of association, their role is in fact only on the same terms as any other diocese – their diocesan bishop is a member of the charity for as long as they commit to sending candidates. Thus structurally the College is independent of any particular dioceses. This structure gives it flexibility for the future, though may also contribute to the sense noted in paragraph 18 above of a purchaser-provider relationship with the core dioceses.
50. The members of the charity then appoint directors, known as trustees, who oversee the college. The principal is also a director ex-officio. The trustees meet at least six times a year. The college’s head of operations is also regularly present.
51. The articles also provide for a Council of Reference, which is purely an advisory body. Its membership is drawn from each of the dioceses sending candidates, from General Synod, partner HE institutions, staff, students and others appointed by the trustees. It currently consists of 14 people. It has no formal powers but rather functions as a ‘think tank’ and ‘sounding board’, a place for open conversation, particularly with diocesan voices, the insights from which will then be taken forward as appropriate by the trustees or staff. This separation of the Council of Reference from the Trustees appears to function well.
52. St Augustine’s also has a Board of Studies, which functions as the Common Awards Management Committee. This is chaired by a Trustee and consists of the Principal, the Director of Studies, and student representatives. This is established by the Board of Directors, and yet does not regularly report to them. Its main function is as a form of ‘staff-student’ consultative committee, ensuring good communication and collaboration. As appropriate areas needing action are then taken by the staff present into the relevant staff meeting. There is good engagement from students with the Board of Studies.
53. These structures appear to work smoothly (see further paragraphs 54-56 below). However, it is apparent that the trustees exercise limited oversight of the education and formational aspects of the college. The trustee meetings primarily focus on the ‘business’ aspects of the college’s life, and there is no subcommittee which focuses on curriculum, formational or student experience matters, since the board of studies is primarily a meeting between staff and students and not part of governance. Nor is there regular reporting to the trustees on these matters, or a structured way

in which the trustee body hears the student voice. In effect, these areas of the college's life have been delegated to the principal. While this may be understandable given the principal's competency and long service, and the demands of the 'business' agenda on the trustees, it is a potential weakness. The educational outcomes for the students are the college's prime business and the critical factor for its success. Therefore the trustees should exercise clear, consistent, oversight of these.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Trustees review the governance arrangements to ensure that they exercise clear, consistent, oversight of areas such as curriculum, formation, quality assurance and enhancement, and student experience.

C2 The TEI has effective team leadership.

54. The Principal exercises effective collaborative leadership of the college. Three members of the small core staff team – the Senior Tutor, the Director of Studies and the Head of Operations – have each served for between 12 and 21 years at St Augustine's, forming the heart of a strong, experienced, staff team. Relationships within the staff team are positive and the strategic direction of the college is broadly understood and supported by staff.
55. The whole staff team connects formally with the trustees at an annual staff-trustee day, but many of the trustees engage frequently with the staff. The relationship between staff and trustees is ongoing and positive.
56. The working of the college is structured around two regular staff meetings – the 'teaching team meeting', weekly, focusing on students' concerns and the teaching programme, and the 'staff business meeting', fortnightly, focusing on logistics, operations and academic administration and learning support. These meetings will pick up issues emerging from the board of studies. While this may suggest a separation of the college into different aspects, it provides an efficient way of conducting business and there is ample evidence that these different aspects of the college's life are drawn together effectively for example in the planning for the new online certificate in higher education.

Commendation 5

We commend the collaborative, effective, nature of the staff team, and the sense of common purpose and mutual respect.

C3 Trustees are appropriately recruited, supported and developed.

57. Aside from the principal, there are currently seven trustees, of whom five are ordained, two are female, one is from a UKME/GMH heritage. There is a good balance of new and more experienced (three appointed in 2011-13, one in 2015, two in 2019 and one in 2022). The trustees bring a wide

range of skills and experience, and have been appointed, and function, correctly solely for the benefit of St Augustine's rather than in any sense being 'diocesan representatives'.

- 58. The trustees display a sound knowledge of St Augustine's and its staff, and a clear dedication to their work. The trustee meetings are conducted with a strong level of professionalism coupled with a Christian ethos and commitment.
- 59. There is a skills audit of the trustees every three years, and consideration of the right mix of skills forms part of the process for appointing new trustees. The college is currently searching for a new trustee to be its treasurer. The process for this is open and transparent.
- 60. As noted above (paragraphs 52 and 55) a trustee chairs the Board of Studies, and there is good ongoing engagement between trustees and staff.

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

- 61. The college has a comprehensive business plan for 2022-2025, which is data-rich, sets out past performance clearly as a guide for the future, and lays out the priorities of the college and the resultant objectives and financial opportunities and constraints. This is summarised as: "The challenge of the next three years, to put it differently, is to capitalize on and develop existing success, while remaining alert and responsive to unpredictable, as well as predictable, change within the environment of our mission." The college has a godly ambition to continue the growth it has seen over recent years.
- 62. The business plan engages with diversity in some detail.
- 63. The annual returns to the Charity Commission are made on time.
- 64. The budgeting process is robust and carefully considered. The finances are tight, and the current fluctuations in ordinand numbers and changes as the Church of England moves to new funding arrangements under RMF are a cause of concern. Nevertheless, the college's finances are sound; indeed there has been a considerable improvement in the college's financial picture through the period 2017-2022.
- 65. The college sets a good balance between financial control and an entrepreneurial spirit.
- 66. Risk is well managed. The strategic risk register is comprehensive with a clear allocation of risks to a 'risk owner', and a schedule ensures that it is regularly reviewed and updated. The trustees engage each meeting with aspects of the risk register in a thorough manner, using this as a vehicle to consider improvements which can be made.
- 67. Effective management processes cover key operational risks. The Head of Operations is highly skilled and experienced, and has a good relationship with the trustees.

68. St Augustine's has recently begun a new phase of fundraising, with a target of seeking to raise 15-20% of its income from charitable giving. It believes that this is necessary to fully fund the standard of formation it wishes to provide to ordinands (in particular residentials), to support the widening participation and learning support agenda, and to allow the college to judiciously pursue new opportunities. It is approaching this task with professionalism. The desirability of this fundraising initiative is shared by the staff team.
69. The need for 'succession planning' is being considered carefully by the trustees, noting for instance that much of the leadership and formational vision of the college lies with the principal, though within the constraints of the tight budget and small staff team, it is difficult to mitigate the likely impact of significant change in the future. We are not making a recommendation regarding succession planning, since the trustees are already engaged with the issue, but note the importance of these issues to the college's future vitality.

The review team has Confidence 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.

70. St Augustine’s College describes itself as a “community of Christian learning and, as such, [it] undertakes theological education for the purpose of formation for Christian ministry, lay and ordained, as well as for those studying to enrich their life of Christian faith and practice”.
71. It offers the following awards under Durham Common Awards: DipHE, BA (Hons), GDip, PGDip and MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission. There is also a CertHE and a GCert. Ordinands already holding a qualification in Theology may apply for the MA.

72. The numbers of students on each pathway in 2022-23 are:

Ordained Ministries	72
Readers	14
Lay Pioneers	4
Independent Students	68
Total	158

of whom 35 of those preparing for ordained ministries and independent students are studying at MA level.

73. The programmes offered are modular and can be matched to a student’s previous educational experience. Reviewers were impressed by the very high level of flexibility given to students to move between part-time and full-time programmes, which allows the College to respond when student circumstances change, as well as by the freedom to take modules in-person or online. Most modules are ‘shared’ modules taken by ordinands, readers in training and independent students: these cover Biblical Studies, Church History, Doctrine, Spirituality, Ethics, Liturgy and Worship. Students on all pathways are welcome at the annual theological symposium in April. Former students particularly valued the opportunity shared modules provide for meeting people on different journeys in their ministry. Some concerns were expressed by independent students that the high proportion of ordinands in ‘shared modules’ meant that ordinands’ concerns took centre-stage in the classes.

Commendation 6

We commend St Augustine’s College for the high level of flexibility it demonstrates when reacting to changes in students’ personal circumstances.

74. In addition to the shared modules there are also pathway-specific modules; in the lay training, for example, all take the same modules until the second year when in addition to shared modules the pioneer students take Mission and Evangelism while pastoral students take Introduction to

Pastoral Care and Readers take a Ministry and Worship in context module with a church placement. Where one module features in more than one pathway, the placement and assignment briefings are adjusted accordingly. Teamwork and Collaboration are particularly explored in the Spring Term Study Day.

75. While the curriculum as a whole is discussed at various points in the year, including the end-of-year review meeting each summer term, neither the associate tutors nor the students seemed fully aware of how it fits together, nor of the coherence of particular programmes. In the Handbooks for each programme, the modules are listed but there is no discussion of how they relate. Within the programme for ordinands, Theology and Practice of Ministry (TPM) features in all years of training and aims fully to integrate practice – previously taught as ‘Pastoral Care’ – with theology – previously taught as ‘Church Ministry’. In response to a review of the Biblical Studies modules, the college has worked to make students more aware of the curriculum as a whole, including allowing time for links between modules to be considered. We respect (paragraph 8 above) an educational method which intends formation to be something more experienced than explained, but nevertheless it is important for both students and (associate) tutors to have a clear grasp of how the different elements of the curriculum fit together.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the College continues to make more explicit to both students and stakeholders the overall coherence of the curriculum.

76. An innovative ‘taster scheme’ in operation since 2020-21 originally allowed students to take a L4 module in Biblical Studies for a discounted fee. This is internally assessed and one of the associate tutors acts as Staff Tutor for these students, also marking their work, within the overall structure of a permanent tutor as convenor for the module as a whole. If students want to continue to a qualification, they are given credit for that initial module. This has proved successful in converting these taster learners into registered students and has been extended to a second L4 module – Spirituality – and to two MA modules, with a goal of increasing the conversion rate to 40%, although the enrolment on taster courses has been acknowledged as being particularly vulnerable to the rising cost of living.

Commendation 7

We commend the innovative use of the taster scheme, the targeted support given to taster students, and the gradual extension of the scheme to Master’s level work.

77. Collaboration with other institutions is still being explored. Some work has been done in recent years and the College plans to work further with these partners: Mirfield (students on MA can take modules from their Liturgy MA), ERMIC (possible joint MA module in Spirituality), ECLAS and LASAR (for Science and Faith activities), Chichester University.

78. Innovation is also shown with the new MA focus on Spirituality. This is not yet a dedicated MA; students focus on this curriculum area for all or most of their modules and graduate with the MA in Theology, Mission and Ministry. Another innovation which the students praised is the 'Faith in Science' project funded by ECLAS which will also help students to work confidently in school settings; this involved redesigning the syllabus for 'Spirituality and Discipleship' and adding an elective L6 module, 'Science and Faith'.
79. A new two-year Cert HE programme for independent students, to be delivered entirely online, has been explored since 2020 and was approved by Durham University in March 2023. It builds on the experience of the College in offering the central L4 modules in an online format as well as an in-person one. It is aimed in particular at those exploring their aptitude as part of their discernment process, and delivery will include online tutorials and forums to improve learning and morale. Students on this programme will have a dedicated staff tutor. In observing current online teaching, reviewers saw that students who arrived early for these sessions had the opportunity to discuss essay choices, ask about resources and express care for each other, and it will be important to find ways of enabling the students on the online CertHE to feel a sense of community while working entirely online.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the College continues to develop techniques for creating a sense of community where the vast majority of the students' experience on a programme will be taking place online.

D2 The TEI's taught programmes are appropriately resourced, developed and quality assured.

80. Faculty staff and associate (external) tutors are all highly qualified with experience of working in other TEIs. Many are research-active. Funding is made available to support permanent staff in attending conferences, and they are given a book allowance and a sabbatical term every five years. The staff team works closely together and meets weekly as a group. Each module convenor is normally a member of this core academic staff; they ensure consistency between teaching centres.
81. Reviewers were impressed that the associate tutors employed are not only involved in teaching their own specialisms but also assist in other modules and in the life of the college more broadly, for example helping with the public-facing online retreat programme. Team membership and being part of a 'community of learning', which values what students bring to the community, is emphasised. Associate tutors clearly value their relationship with the college and are encouraged to attend development days which usually occur twice a year and which focus on good marking practices; recent days were on how best to use Turnitin and on equality and diversity. Some take the initiative in offering their services to the college; others are invited to consider teaching there. Currently, one post is being advertised more widely. All have a contract and a job description, and

there is a dedicated handbook to help them negotiate college processes. In assessing student work, each associate tutor works with a moderator from the permanent staff; they do not have direct contact with the External Examiner. The External Examiner confirmed that moderation processes are robust. Associate tutors know how to communicate any concerns and where to direct students needing further support.

82. A mentor programme will commence in 2023-24 under which each permanent member of the teaching staff will work with a Black or Asian scholar to increase diversity and inclusion in the curriculum. This has been funded by seed-corn money from Durham but its implementation has been delayed. Diversity among associate faculty has improved and it is intended to recruit associate tutors from UKME backgrounds. A workshop on racism has been held and revisions of existing modules incorporate topics around race. Racial diversity issues are addressed in the Christian Doctrine curriculum and in the Spirituality and Discipleship module. A UKME student group has been formed and meets the Principal at least once every term.
83. Library facilities are good. The library at West Malling is accessible at any time through a keypad. There are multiple copies of key texts. In addition to ordering books (into which not only the module tutors but also the associate tutors have input) they receive many donations from clergy in the area. Both it and the library at Southwark have a paid part-time librarian, although the recruitment process for a new librarian at West Malling has been delayed until the autumn to save money. St Augustine's has also negotiated the use of the library at Augustine House in Canterbury Christ Church University. Students on the new online CertHE will be allowed to use the libraries but without borrowing rights.
84. As this is a non-residential college, physical resources are not necessarily the way in which students support their work, and during lockdown these were even less accessible. While individual tutors make sure that module sites flag up online texts, and the steady increase in the amount of online resources from the Church of England online hub has been welcomed, students commented that these did not always match their needs, particularly on Reader pathways, while associate tutors felt that the Hub lacked the more demanding academic material. The College would like to establish a further collection of online resources, possibly by working together with other TEIs. The availability of online resources is particularly relevant to the new online CertHE programme and will need to be monitored.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the College engages directly with the Church of England over any perceived weaknesses in the online hub, and pursues collaboration between TEIs in finding, creating and sharing online resources appropriate for teaching.

85. Teaching spaces at West Malling are well designed for different sized groups and are in excellent condition, with access for those with mobility issues, and include comfortable study rooms for

students. There are plans to improve the site at Southwark. The residential site in Leatherhead is excellent (see paragraphs 36-40 above).

86. It is not possible for students at St Augustine's to access Disabled Student Allowance, because the College is not registered with Student Finance England. This unfortunately restricts the amount of support which students with disabilities can receive. It also creates an uneven playing field since some dioceses offer greater support for their ordinands with disabilities than others. Nevertheless, students with learning disabilities are given dedicated support including a Learning Support Plan tailored to their needs. Some were only identified while at the college and the tests to confirm their needs were carried out by the Tutor for Writing, Study Skills and Singing. All staff, including the associate tutors, highly value her work, as did a director of lay ministry and the alumni. The voluntary Chaplain has also acted to triage students who may need such help. There is also comprehensive material on study skills provided online.
87. Students are involved in module and course evaluation. Feedback on pathway-specific events is carried out through forms, online questionnaires and informal feedback and is discussed at a meeting of the teaching team. Tutors look at the feedback on their own module and their evaluation of it then feeds into the ASE. Cohorts also give group feedback at the end of their pathway or programme.
88. There is evidence of a low response rate when students are asked to give module feedback online (only 6 out of 27 shared modules reaching a response rate of more than 50%) and students are not sure how their feedback will be used. Such feedback is sometimes passed to the Management Committee/Board of Studies. Students were aware of occasions when their feedback led to change, for example in how a module was staffed. However at the higher level, it is less clear how the student voice plays a part, as decisions are made following informal discussions between the Principal and the administration and teaching staff. While this can lead to a timely response, it is less clear to students how their input is used.

Recommendation 8

We recommend greater transparency in sharing with students the result of their feedback, for example on the 'You said ... We did...' model.

89. Quality assurance and enhancement takes place by means of processes overseen by the Church of England's Ministry Development Team (such as annual self-assessment and periodic external review) and the quality processes built into Common Awards. The Board of Studies (which also functions as the Common Awards Management Committee) has a broad and, in our view, somewhat unclear, role. In many respects it functions as a student-staff committee, with the majority of its business being questions and suggestions raised by students, and staff seeking to inform or gain input from student representatives. It includes representatives from 9 student groups. (Although we note that in the most recent Student Handbook (online) 5 of the 9 positions were listed as vacant, and the Board of Studies noted at its November 2022 meeting that there was

no level 5 representative, which would hamper the BoS role in discussing student opinions if this situation were not just a temporary blip.) This staff-student work is done well. However, the Board of Studies is also responsible for monitoring “the quality and standards of learning and teaching”, reporting to the Board of Trustees. The minutes give less evidence of this. For example of the critical examination of data on the comparative marks of different types of students on the same module, or between modules, or measures of student satisfaction with different aspects of the programme or the programme overall. Indeed, it is not clear to us how a body which other than the chair is composed of staff and students would be able to effectively challenge the college’s performance and hold it to account in relation to the quality assurance of academic provision. The Board of Trustees also appears not to receive a regular report from the Board of Studies nor receive its minutes.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the college should reflect on the potential difficulties of having the same body acting as both the governance body (with delegated authority from the Trustees) and the staff-student committee.

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

90. Teaching was observed in person and online at all levels; shared modules can be taken with either in-person (Mondays or Fridays) or online (Wednesday evening) teaching. While the College materials stress the ‘flipped classroom’ in which the content is largely provided online prior to the class, leaving class time available for discussion, this was not always evident in practice. Although online teaching observed consistently made the links between the material of the course and current issues in the church and the world, it varied in its provision for student discussion. Some online teaching was engaging, with students feeling able to interrupt and to share from a wide range of theological positions, as well as answering questions posed by the tutor, but reviewers also saw some that was very traditional in style, with the tutor speaking for up to an hour around ‘lecture notes’ which had been shared online in advance, with little time allocated for small group work or full class discussion. In these sessions, the students seemed very passive and there was little encouragement or opportunity for them to ask questions, with the ‘lecture’ session involving no screen-sharing of timelines or maps. The reviewers also observed in-person teaching and were impressed at the level of student engagement and depth of discussion.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that, particularly in view of the move into online-only teaching on the new CertHE, the College should share best practice in teaching methods online – both from among its staff and from other TEIs – to facilitate appropriate engagement from students.

91. All programmes are assessed by coursework only. Clear guidance is given on assessments, although some tutors provide more guidance than others. Tutors are encouraged to use a diverse range of assessment methods, and this is positively encouraged under Durham guidelines with full criteria provided. However, overwhelmingly assignments are essays, written theological reflections or written portfolios, except where an individual student's needs have led to Durham being asked whether an alternative method can be used. Shared Modules are assessed by an essay and an assignment that aims to integrate the module material with ministerial experience; Texts and Themes weekly seminars do not have summative assessments, and this is valued by the students in creating a safe space in which they can be challenged. Feedback is thorough and timely. The External Examiner raised some concerns around unhelpfully negative language in feedback from one tutor; there is evidence that feedback can be edited as part of the moderation process to ensure that it is properly supportive. While we acknowledge the logistical challenge of more diverse forms of assessment, and understand the college currently prioritising their use for students with particular needs, we make this recommendation.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the College designs a more creative range of forms of assessment to be offered to all students, as encouraged within Durham guidelines.

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

92. As students progress from L5, learning outcomes develop appropriately and by the higher levels they are also able to choose their own essay titles in independent study units, with the approval of their tutors.

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

93. As noted in paragraph 8, the education method at St Augustine's values students making connections for themselves and experiencing 'light-bulb moments' when different aspects of learning click into place. We encountered a range of experiences of this process, from students who valued this approach to those who felt that it would have been more helpful had the college done more to help them see how 'it all fits together'. Similarly, students expressed that 'formation' was mysterious, with different students seeing this as a positive or negative comment.
94. The presence of the Sisters at West Malling is an important aspect of formation. There are plans to create an icon which could be brought to Leatherhead from West Malling, thus bringing together academic learning and spiritual development. Residentials such as those in Leatherhead and West Malling are a very important part of the student experience and a setting in which formation

happens. In September 2022 the Board of Trustees agreed to reduce the number of residential sessions per annum to save money; the effect of this on students should be closely monitored.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the College keeps under regular review both the financial and the formational effects of reducing residential sessions.

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 in their love for God.

95. The reviewers found that the academic programme, placements, residentials and corporate prayer life enabled students to grow in their Christian faith and discipleship, develop as adaptable and relational future ministers and recognise the interaction between issues of changing society and the implications for the Church's ministry.
96. St Augustine's commitment to corporate prayer life is evident in the way the teaching days and residentials are embedded in prayer. The cycle of Daily Offices and Eucharist using different Anglican liturgies, including liturgies from 'new monastic' communities, enable students to engage with a range of resources to grow in their understanding of the breadth of the Church of England. The Mission project undertaken by students in the first term and the subsequent Pastoral and Church placements pay attention to tradition, spirituality, and contextual interpretation. Friday evening addresses at residentials often include aspects of classical and contemporary spirituality. Final-year students also have the opportunity to undertake a spirituality retreat. The Spirituality and Discipleship module requires students to choose and implement a spiritual practice for two months which provides additional resources to broaden students' spirituality. Students are also expected to lead contemplative or intercessory prayer groups during placements.
97. Tutorial Groups are encouraged to develop and lead worship using different forms of liturgy. In conversation, some students expressed their struggle of maintaining a rhythm of personal prayer in the midst of the busyness of work and study. TEI documents suggest that conversations about student's prayer life take place with Personal Tutors although second- and third-year students in discussion did not have a clear sense of how the college ensured their continuing spiritual development. Students explained to reviewers that second and third-years do not have structured one-to-one meetings with Personal Tutors; the focus of their engagement being in Tutorial Groups. The students themselves seemed unclear about by whom or through what process their spiritual development is supervised and developed. Several students spoke enthusiastically about the opportunity in Tutorial Groups to design and use liturgies that were informed by different church traditions, although some students expressed their concern that the resulting worship often was not an accurate representation of the stated tradition. (See further paragraph 44 above.)

Recommendation 13

We recommend that St Augustine's explore ways in which students could be further supported in maintaining a daily rhythm of prayer life that would sustain them in their future ministry.

98. The non-residential nature of St Augustine’s with a significant number of independent students, coupled with students from diverse traditions and contexts has created a culture of inclusivity and space for healthy dialogue. In addition to the permanent tutorial staff, who are greatly appreciated by the students, the college benefits from an array of external tutors who enable students to engage with diverse theological thought and practice. According to the Mapping document, Associate Tutors have ‘published expertise in liturgy and the arts; spiritual direction and retreats; and pastoral care and spirituality’ which enhances the quality of teaching at St Augustine’s. The alumni spoke warmly about how the theological diversity of St Augustine generated a solid foundation which enabled them to minister in a variety of contexts during curacies and first incumbencies.
99. Both staff and students spoke enthusiastically about the Faith in Science programme which enabled students to explore the relationship between science and faith and created opportunities for students to undertake placements with local schools. The commitment to explore the impact of climate change was further enhanced by working closely with St Mary’s Abbey. Although the funding for this project has ceased, St Augustine’s is seeking funding to develop such initiatives and, as their first post-project enterprise, has arranged a theological Symposium in Easter 2023, ‘Feeling our Way: Emotion, Science, and Faith’. The tutorial staff also spoke passionately about the way in which they integrate contemporary issues in their teaching thereby enabling students to develop a world-engaging faith (see above, paragraph 21).
100. It is admirable that St Augustine’s creates ample opportunities for placements for students through the Mission Project, and Pastoral and Church placements. However, several students expressed their anxiety and stress in arranging their own placements. The experience of students differed from diocese to diocese. Many external stakeholders such as ministry facilitators and placement supervisors expressed their desire for more clarity of expectations and ongoing support from St Augustine. Concern was also raised about the impact of short Mission Projects on placement churches and congregations. Although students are expected to produce a reflection on their placements, it seemed to us that the quality and outcome of placements was very much dependent upon the incumbent which raised some questions about the overall strategy of placements.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that St Augustine’s reviews its strategy of placements (and students’ involvement in home church contexts) to:

- a. Ensure that there is a consistency of learning experience and outcome between placements;**
- b. Support students integrating their academic learning and ministerial formation;**
- c. Mitigate the stress that students face in finding their own placements;**

- d. **Offer clarity of expectations and a level of ongoing contact during the year to placement supervisors and ministry facilitators.**

E2 Students are enabled to grow in their calling to ministry.

101. The module on Sacramental Theology and Ministry, placements that enable students to develop the necessary insight and skills in training to lead and enable others in mission-shaped ministry, residential coverings on Anglican ecclesiology, and the diversity of traditions all create opportunities for students to develop their commitment to their own discipleship and further embody their distinctive call to ordained ministry in the Church of England.
102. St Augustine's enables the exploration of a variety of ministries including the Distinctive Diaconate and Ordained Pioneer Ministry. Students expressed their sense of gratitude to the staff of St Augustine for identifying their call to ordained pioneer ministry and supporting them in their transformed sense of vocation. However, there is no distinctive pathway for Ordained Pioneer Ministry; OPM ordinands study a module on Mission alongside other students and subsequently undertake another module on Mission and Evangelism incorporating a pioneer placement. Distinctive Deacon students expressed their satisfaction at having a separate group led by a distinctive deacon which provided space for vocational conversations and sharing of experience. Students recognised and articulated several areas where there was an overlap between their calling to the distinctive diaconate and pioneer ministry.
103. Questions were raised by some Readers in training about the extent to which their local contexts and formation at St Augustine's enabled them to embody their distinctive calling to licensed lay ministry. The oversight of formation for Readers is different than for ordinands, in that the personal tutor role is held by a diocesan figure, not college staff. This contributes to some Readers feeling that the engagement with St Augustine's is purely about the accredited study, like an independent student. The fact that for most Readers their 'home context' / placement will be a given (where they already worship) not chosen as a training location, raises challenges for ensuring that the placement experience always contributes strongly to the Readers' training, and integrates well with the College work. The experience of those choosing to study online differed from those who chose to study in-person, the former expressing a lack of sense of belonging to the community of St Augustine.

Commendation 8

We commend St Augustine for creating a culture where students are encouraged to discern the variety of ways in which ordained ministry is expressed in different contexts and for providing flexibility of training pathways to suit individual needs.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that St Augustine's:

- a. Reviews with the relevant dioceses how together they ensure that the home context of Readers in training provides appropriate opportunities for learning and formation;**
- b. explores ways in which Readers in training feel part of St Augustine's community and are encouraged and empowered to inhabit their distinctive call to licensed lay ministry.**

104. Students with neurodiversity expressed their immense gratitude for the help and support provided by St Augustine. The presence of the neurodiversity paradigm creates a welcoming and inclusive culture at St Augustine. The individual learning plans also provide evidence of support for enabling learning for those with neurodiversity. More widely, several students shared how they had benefited from individual and corporate support from the Tutor for Writing, Study Skills and Singing. Nevertheless, we did also hear of a small number of lay ministry students with no prior theological learning who found their academic studies insurmountable, resulting in them stepping back from training. This is a complex area – neurodiversity being a different issue than prior educational achievement or class.

Commendation 9

We commend the support for students' individual needs offered by the Tutor for Writing, Study Skills and Singing.

105. Several alumni spoke warmly about the way in which St Augustine's had equipped them to minister in a variety of contexts through its academic programme, placements, residential and community ethos. The non-residential nature of St Augustine's means that a significant level of formation takes place at training churches and placement contexts and evidence is sought from students' theological reflection and reports from external stakeholders. Whilst this approach seeks to embody integration of academic learning and contextual formation, a few alumni and students commented on the relationship between academic learning and ministerial formation, whereby they perceived St Augustine's primarily as a place for academic learning whilst ministerial formation occurs elsewhere.
106. Several students and alumni expressed their gratitude for the personal support they had received from both teaching and non-teaching staff; however it appeared to be on an informal and ad hoc basis. As noted in paragraph 97, second- and third-year students do not have regular structured one-to-one meetings with their tutor, and students did not seem to view the personal tutor as a source for spiritual and moral support, and gravitated towards the chaplain, placement supervisors or spiritual directors for this. Therefore, we had some questions about the approach of monitoring personal and formational growth particularly but not exclusively for second- and third-year students. (See paragraph 97 above.)

E3 Students are equipped to grow in their love for people.

107. The opportunities created by placements and the collegiality and learning that takes place at teaching days, residentials and Easter week enable students to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the aspects of pastoral relationships, collaborative ministry, and missional engagement. Students seem to have built good friendships and support networks amongst themselves. Several ex-students shared how much they had valued the interaction with students below and above their academic year, although some students commented on the time it took to form relationships as a non-residential college and the lack of sense of community for those choosing to undertake online learning pathways. “Lay Day” for lay ministry students was well received by students and there was a desire for ongoing support and a need to see how this could be negotiated with dioceses.
108. The Faith in Science project, Integrative Seminars, Mentor Programme for UKME students from September 2023 (ASE), placement opportunities with St George’s, Jerusalem, and the pedagogical element to all teaching point to St Augustine’s attention to raising awareness and responding to global issues that inform ministry in the rapidly changing world.
109. The inclusive culture and theological diversity of students creates a safe space for students’ voices to be heard. Many past and present students commented on the dynamic nature of the college and the accessibility to the senior staff and leadership team. In addition to the friendships being developed amongst students in the community of St Augustine’s, students also have access to UKME/GMH and LGBT+ support groups supported by the voluntary chaplain.

E4 Students are helped to grow in wisdom.

110. The placement modules incorporate theological reflection which is assessed by tutors. The pedagogical approach to teaching also enables students to reflect upon their own experiences as well as the wider issues facing the Church of England. Topics covering sociological, historical, pastoral, ecumenical, faith & science, theological and ecclesiological development underpin the teaching and discussions at residentials and Easter school thereby enabling students to identify interaction between the Gospel, culture, and daily lives. Furthermore, the focus of interfaith relations which also involves working with church communities from London’s ‘African diaspora’ point towards St Augustine’s commitment to enable students to recognise the plurality and diversity of perspective and culture.
111. Mission is integral to the learning at St Augustine which is evident in its teaching and provision of placements to experience a diverse range of leadership in a variety of contexts and situations. The theological reflection integrated in the placement modules and modules on the theology and practice of mission point to one of St Augustine’s core values i.e., ‘readiness for ministry and mission in a changing society’ and its outcome to ‘identify theologically and missionally relevant features of congregational, social, and cultural contexts, in the service of a reflective practice that fosters appropriate decisions for action’. This is achieved through modules on mission and the

mission project undertaken by students in the first term that involves theological reflection which engages with scripture, tradition, and reason.

112. Some DDOs and alumni expressed their desire for St Augustine to equip students more in the area of Leadership, particularly but not exclusively in multi-parish benefices. Reviewers found that placements provided students with opportunities to grow in their pastoral identity, engage in a variety of ministry contexts, lead others in their faith and discipleship, and preach and lead worship to enable students to develop their leadership skills. However, reviewers also learnt that some ministry facilitators/placement supervisors explored the understanding and impact of contextual leadership with students whilst others did not. Students themselves shared varying experience of the opportunity to reflect upon their understanding of leadership and were unsure to the extent to which they felt they were being equipped for leadership as future ministers.
113. As mentioned above, several students, alumni, and stakeholders spoke warmly about the inclusive and accepting disposition of St Augustine; a place ‘where you can be yourself’ said one of the students, whilst another comment on being ‘happy and accepted for who you are’ shows the community enables a safe space to accept vulnerabilities and seek help which is integral to future ministers.

Commendation 10

We commend St Augustine’s for shaping a new generation of ordained ministers with authenticity for mission in a rapidly changing world.

E5 Students are helped to grow in the quality of fruitfulness.

114. The variety of placement contexts and diversity of traditions among students enable engagement with different theological views. The pedagogy of teaching which is further informed by the traditions and experience of the permanent and associate staff also enable students to engage with different theological viewpoints that are transformative rather than just observational.
115. The home/training parish and placement context provide some opportunities for students to help others grow in faith. Although the Church placement expects students to preach and lead worship which enables adults to grow in faith, the opportunity to help children to grow in faith is sporadic amongst students as it was dependent upon the ministry opportunities at home and placement contexts. The provision of a school placement that emerged through the Faith in Science project was therefore a valuable addition. Although only a handful of students grabbed the opportunity, this is an area that could be further developed.
116. Several alumni and students spoke amiably about their transforming journey of faith and discipleship and its impact on their formation and ministry. Several staff and students expressed their deep gratitude to the presence and influence of the community of St Mary’s Abbey. Many commented on how the tranquil environment of the Abbey grounds generates a space for reflection and learning. The experiences gained from leading a mission project by developing and

implementing strategies of mission and evangelism; experience gained from pastoral placements; opportunities to enable others in faith and discipleship during church placements and the ongoing ministerial engagement with home/training church all provide sufficient opportunities to enable personal disciple and faith and enable others to grow in faith.

117. St Augustine's states as one of its IME I outcomes as, 'communicate Christian faith and practice, through persuasive preaching and teaching, both to cultivate a mature Christian discipleship in congregational and secular life, and to engage in sensitive apologetic and missional discourse'. However, some students commented on the lack of opportunities to develop their preaching and the desire to have more peer-reviewed preaching opportunities.
118. St Augustine's serves as a catalyst and resource for enabling students to lead others in mission and evangelism by working in active partnership with churches, and in a range of contexts. As a non-residential college, there is significant dependence on formation that takes place in home/training churches and placement churches. It is therefore vital that the college exercises appropriate quality control of placements (paragraph 100 above) and ministry opportunities in home churches to ensure that students are given appropriate help to develop in mission and evangelism.
119. The role of the voluntary chaplain at St Augustine has continued to develop in recent years; the chaplain attends residential and is a resource person to the student body offering spiritual and pastoral ministry. Through scheduled and impromptu conversations, the chaplain provides pastoral care; responds to spiritual needs and concerns; offers sacramental ministry; provides resources for retreat and enables students to grow in their spirituality through provision of resources and most recently commissioning of icons of St Augustine and St Hadrian. The reviewers were mindful that the chaplain was not on the permanent staff which creates uncertainty regarding the future of the role. Coupled with the intermittent nature of meetings with the personal tutor this raises questions about the need of specific roles that encapsulate spiritual and pastoral care and ministerial formation of students.

Commendation 11

We commend St Augustine for its commitment to widening the corporate spiritual life of the community through resourcing and teaching.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the college considers how it can ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in discipleship of young people whether in placement or elsewhere.

E6 Students are equipped to continue to develop their potential.

120. The non-residential nature of St Augustine's requires students to negotiate work, familial responsibilities, academic learning, placements and commitment to their own discipleship and faith which creates a foundation for students to develop self-discipline, self-care and create

structures of accountability in order to flourish in ministry. As mentioned earlier, several alumni spoke warmly about the way in which St Augustine's had equipped them to undertake ministries in a variety of contexts.

121. St Augustine's programmes provide evidence of their commitment to enabling students to commit to a 'critical, diverse, and context sensitive practice of mission as an essential responsibility of Christian communities of faith'. The programmes offered at St Augustine's give students enthusiasm for learning and ministry. The flexibility of programmes also enables students to develop their skills and interests in the field of theology and ministerial practice.
122. The staff's personal interest in the students' wellbeing and the eagerness to see them grow enhances the student's experience of learning and formation at St Augustine's. The staff's commitment to learning and their pastoral approach inspire students to develop their potential to integrate leadership and pastoral care. The ethos created by the college of mutual learning and support which seeks to promote educational skills is encouraging students to inhabit the importance of life-long learning, although we were not able to access data on how many St Augustine's alumni went on to further study opportunities.
123. The variety of placement contexts, and use of different venues for study days and residential also enable students to manage change, develop time management skills, create space for learning and recognise the sacrificial nature of ministry whilst maintaining family commitments and encouraging self-care.

E7 Students are able to demonstrate trustworthiness.

124. Several ex-students spoke about the way in which St Augustine has enabled them to develop self-awareness, create healthy boundaries, develop time to pray, reflect and rest. According to the Formational Overview, 'the new Spirituality and Discipleship module, with its emphasis on embodiment, also underlines the relational character of 'following Christ', prayer and spiritual practice'. The college handbook also suggests that the 'college-based worship is set within the students' own regular devotional practices, which will be encouraged and reviewed in the course of tutorial meetings'. Although, as mentioned in E1, some students shared their difficulty in maintaining a daily rhythm of prayer which raised some questions about spiritual accountability; see paragraph 97.
125. On their website, St Augustine's has clearly displayed its policies and statements of commitments to diversity and racism, disability, equal opportunities, harassment, social media, classroom confidentiality, students' complaints and safeguarding. In conversations with staff and students, the reviewers found out that the college creates a safe space where concerns are heard and addressed appropriately thereby creating a culture which promotes safe and harmonious Christian communities which students would emulate in their ministry. The reviewers appreciated that the evidence of students' trustworthiness is seen in their interaction with others, the use of

language, behaviour, student dynamics, development of relationships with others during teaching days and residentials, placement reports, friendships, and quality of transformation which in turn finds its way into penultimate and final reports.

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.

126. Reviewers found that there was a clear system of gathering the progress of students' academic learning and formation. Penultimate and final reports reflect the evidence gathered from a variety of internal and external sources and the reports effectively portray students' trajectory of academic and formational growth or the lack thereof, in some cases. Although the reviewers noticed that there are limited suggestions for further learning needs during IME 2 and on occasions there has been a delay in sending Penultimate reports to dioceses.

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

Conclusion

The review team has Confidence with Qualifications in St Augustine's College of Theology in preparing students for Ordained and Licensed Lay Ministries in the Church of England.

Summary of Commendations

Commendation 1

We commend St Augustine's for the clarity of its formational aims, and the strong ownership of those aims by non-academic and associate staff.

Commendation 2

We commend St Augustine's for the energy, flexibility and entrepreneurial spirit which marks its service to the Church, and particularly the work of the Tutor for Lay Education in building relationship with dioceses.

Commendation 3

We commend St Augustine's for its commitment to the 'faith in science' agenda.

Commendation 4

We commend the work of the (volunteer) College Chaplain and the contribution she makes to the care of students.

Commendation 5

We commend the collaborative, effective, nature of the staff team, and the sense of common purpose and mutual respect.

Commendation 6

We commend St Augustine's College for the high level of flexibility it demonstrates when reacting to changes in students' personal circumstances.

Commendation 7

We commend the innovative use of the taster scheme, the targeted support given to taster students, and the gradual extension of the scheme to Master's level work.

Commendation 8

We commend St Augustine for creating a culture where students are encouraged to discern the variety of ways in which ordained ministry is expressed in different contexts and for providing flexibility of training pathways to suit individual needs.

Commendation 9

We commend the support for students' individual needs offered by the Tutor for Writing, Study Skills and Singing.

Commendation 10

We commend St Augustine's for shaping a new generation of ordained ministers with authenticity for mission in a rapidly changing world.

Commendation 11

We commend St Augustine for its commitment to widening the corporate spiritual life of the community through resourcing and teaching.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the college reviews the robustness of the provision of pastoral care within the college, to ensure that it is not overly dependent on the work of the chaplain, and has an appropriate balance of being pro-active or structured as well as responsive.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the college develops a clear understanding of how, as staff changes occur, it can increase the level of experience for parish ministry among the core staff, so as to further support a committed vocation to parish ministry among many of the ordinands.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the college reviews its patterns for worship, to ensure that:

- a. students are being given high-quality examples of the worship in different styles, recognisable as such by those for whom that is their natural style of worship;
- b. that an appropriate balance is being struck between worship as an opportunity to experience diversity and develop skills, and worship that spiritually feeds the worshipper.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Trustees review the governance arrangements to ensure that they exercise clear, consistent, oversight of areas such as curriculum, formation, quality assurance and enhancement, and student experience.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the College continues to make more explicit to both students and stakeholders the overall coherence of the curriculum.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the College continues to develop techniques for creating a sense of community where the vast majority of the students' experience on a programme will be taking place online.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the College engages directly with the Church of England over any perceived weaknesses in the online hub, and pursues collaboration between TEIs in finding, creating and sharing online resources appropriate for teaching.

Recommendation 8

We recommend greater transparency in sharing with students the result of their feedback, for example on the ‘You said ... We did...’ model.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the college should reflect on the potential difficulties of having the same body acting as both the governance body (with delegated authority from the Trustees) and the staff-student committee.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that, particularly in view of the move into online-only teaching on the new CertHE, the College should share best practice in teaching methods online – both from among its staff and from other TEIs – to facilitate appropriate engagement from students.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the College designs a more creative range of forms of assessment to be offered to all students, as encouraged within Durham guidelines.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the College keeps under regular review both the financial and the formational effects of reducing residential sessions.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that St Augustine’s explore ways in which students could be further supported in maintaining a daily rhythm of prayer life that would sustain them in their future ministry.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that St Augustine’s reviews its strategy of placements (and students’ involvement in home church contexts) to:

- a. Ensure that there is a consistency of learning experience and outcome between placements;
- b. Support students integrating their academic learning and ministerial formation;
- c. Mitigate the stress that students face in finding their own placements;
- d. Offer clarity of expectations and a level of ongoing contact during the year to placement supervisors and ministry facilitators.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that St Augustine's:

- a. Reviews with the relevant dioceses how together they ensure that the home context of Readers in training provides appropriate opportunities for learning and formation;
- b. explores ways in which Readers in training feel part of St Augustine's community and are encouraged and empowered to inhabit their distinctive call to licensed lay ministry.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the college considers how it can ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in discipleship of young people whether in placement or elsewhere.