

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Report

St Mellitus College

Conducted onsite, October-November 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
BCP	Book of Common Prayer
CASS	Common Awards Students Survey
CPAS	Church Pastoral Aid Society
DDO	Diocesan Director of Ordinands
FG/T	Formation Group / Tutor
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
HTB	Holy Trinity Brompton
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IME1/2	Initial Ministerial Education Phase 1/2
LLF	Living in Love and Faith
LLM	Licensed Lay Minister
NSL	SMC's National Safeguarding Lead
OfS	Office for Students
PCP	Primary Church Placement
PER	Periodic External Review
RMF	Resourcing Ministerial Formation
SLC	Safeguarding Leadership Course
SMC	St Mellitus College
SpLD	Specific Learning Differences
SP	Short Placement
SPTC	St Paul's Theological Centre
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TEI	Theological Education Institution
UKME / GMH	UK Minority Ethnicity / Global Majority Heritage

Reviewers

Very Revd Dr Peter Robinson, Senior Reviewer; Dean of Derby.

Revd Dr Admos Chimhowu, Deputy Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research and Senior Lecturer, Manchester University; SSM curate at St Chrysostom, Victoria Park (Manchester Diocese).

Revd Hilary De Lyon, Assistant Priest, Diocese of Norwich, former Chief Executive, Royal College of General Practitioners; Audit Chair, West Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group; Vice-President, Royal Society of Medicine.

Revd Dr Stephen Laird, Anglican Chaplain, University of Kent; Vicar, Blean; New Testament Tutor, St Augustine's College; Canterbury Diocese.

Revd Jane Maycock, interim Team Vicar, Cartmel Peninsula and former tutor with Cumbria Christian Learning and CMD / Leadership Enabler, Carlisle 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 Mellitus College

Introduction

St Mellitus College (SMC) was founded in 2007 by a threefold partnership between the Diocese of Chelmsford, the Diocese of London and St Paul's Theological Centre (SPTC).

SPTC is the owner of the lease on St Jude's, Collingham Road, SMC's London centre, to which it moved its main teaching and administration activities in 2012. The governance of SMC oversees that part of SPTC's activities that relates to accredited academic teaching. Approximately half of the staff team is employed by SMC and half by SPTC.

SMC is led by the Dean and a senior executive team. The Chair of the Board of SMC who is also the President of the College, the Rt Rev'd Graham Tomlin who was the first Dean has offered stability and continuity over the first seventeen years of SMC.

SMC sees itself as a national college which has the potential to make a distinctive theological contribution to the Anglican Communion. There are four physical centres which engage with regional missional and ministerial distinctiveness. In addition to its founding centres in London and Chelmsford: SMC South West in Plymouth, established in 2017; SMC East Midlands in Nottingham, established in 2019. Whilst there are four teaching locations, there are five centre directors in the senior team with two based at London representing distinct communities, one for Mondays and the other for Tuesdays. Although each student is primarily associated with one centre students are mixed across the centres at Residentials and teaching weeks to foster a totality of vision. A 2013 arrangement with five dioceses in the North West, SMC North West, came to an end in 2020 after seven years.

The Bishops of Exeter and Truro currently participate in the governance structures (SMC South West Partnership Board), along with the Bishops of Southwell and Nottingham, Leicester and Derby (SMC East Midlands Advisory Board). The main board has a practice of inviting observers and most recently this role has been occupied by the Bishop of Leicester and Bishop of Truro.

In 2023 a total of 27 Dioceses are 'sending Dioceses', in the sense that they regularly or on occasions support ordinands to train with SMC.

Programmes offered by SMC

At the time of the PER there were 239 ordinands plus 120 independent students on accredited courses. In addition, there were 8 LLM being trained for Chelmsford Diocese and 4 Locally Licensed Ministers being trained for London Diocese. In the academic year 2022-23 there were 229 ordinands in training, twenty-three for LLM ministry and 98 independent students. SMC is the largest single Theological Education Institution serving the needs of the Church of England. It trains between one fifth and a quarter of the Church of England's ordinands.

SMC has embraced Common Awards, validated by the University of Durham. The academic and formational programmes that are offered by SMC include:

- Certificate of Higher Education in Theology, Ministry and Mission
- Certificate of Higher Education in Christian Ministry and Mission
- Diploma of Higher Education in Theology, Ministry and Mission
- BA Theology, Ministry and Mission
- MA Theology, Ministry and Mission
- From 2019 there has been an agreement with Durham University to offer a pathway that would lead to the award of a PhD. This is not part of the church's Common Awards partnership with Durham University, but an official agreement directly with the University meaning that appropriately qualified staff from SMC are able to co-supervise research students.
- The Caleb stream is the discernment and formational pathway for mature potential ordinands – 'seasoned saints' as someone put it to us – who have the support of their diocese to train as a self-supporting ministry in a one-year training programme.
- The Peter Stream supports members of groups under-represented both within the church and in theological training and is open to those who have experienced exclusion from ethnic, social or educational perspectives. It offers a distinctive element of discernment that runs alongside theological and formational teaching to prepare candidates for the Church of England selection process and entry to ordination training.
- A Beginning Theology course which gives access to theological training for independent learners.

The Caleb, Peter and Beginning Theology streams were not within the scope of the PER, but are an important part of SMC's offer and its community and of its response to the vision for ministry that the Church of England embraces. Throughout the report they are referred to as important evidence that SMC is developing inclusive access to theological education and training.

Hopes for the PER

In a preliminary conversation with the Dean and the Academic Dean the hope was expressed that the PER exercise would offer an opportunity for SMC to take a step back, see the larger picture and understand how SMC was perceived by the wider church. The expectation was that the PER would be both an encouragement to the College and a way of learning. Just as the previous PER 'helped us mature an institution' so the scrutiny offered by the current PER was welcomed as a means of continuing the 'slow maturing process'. The previous PER was in October-November 2017, and prior to that in 2009.

Similar hopes were expressed in a meeting with the Chair of the trustees who spoke of the PER being 'an extra pair of eyes', noticing new things, with good constructive feedback, helping to see 'what are we missing and not seeing' and two-way feedback to the Church of England's Ministry Council. We were asked

‘what difference does the complexity of SMC make for the PER process given the scale and regional nature of SMC’s reach? We noted that an extra PER reviewer was allocated to the Review Team to enable sufficient engagement with multiple stakeholder groups and venues. This report is written in the spirit of openness to this question being explored for future PERs.

PER Process and General Observations

Scope of Visit

The PER took place at the Residential Weekend at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick on October Monday 30th and Tuesday 31st October 2023, and then in London on Monday 6th November 2023 and in both London and the East Midlands on Tuesday 7th November 2023. The Common Awards team carried out their academic assessment on Monday 6th November 2023 at the London Centre and one of the PER team joined the all-day meeting. Thus, the review team were immersed in SMC community life for four full days in three locations. Representatives of the team met with Board members, the Dean and his senior executive and management team members including the Academic Dean and the Chief Operating Officer, Centre Directors, the Director of Innovation and Development, and the National Safeguarding Officer.

Teaching sessions were observed, and the team participated in worship both at the residential, and during their visits to the London and EM centres. Across all venues there were meetings with placement supervisors, chaplains, senior students, full-time and part-time ordinands, LLM trainees and members of the Racial Justice Priority group, subject tutors, and the Head of Communications. There were conversations with students in breaks between events and at mealtimes. As well as ordinands and LLMs in training the team met participants in the Caleb and Peter stream.

Views were sought from a wide range of stakeholders by questionnaire prior to the PER. These are referred to throughout the report and summarised in Section A.

SMC 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 SMC’s online learning platform, where learning materials are stored and where assessed work is submitted and marked.

The Review Team would like to thank the students, Dean and whole staff team of St Mellitus College for their gracious welcome and generosity with their time in answering questions and providing material whenever we asked.

The SMC Journey

All in leadership and governance are self-aware of the journey that SMC is on. As nearly 17 years old now – in its late teens! - there is an awareness that the College is, and needs to, step into a new place and is self-consciously asking itself both what the shape of the new space is and how to enter it. As will be referred to later SMC has grown rapidly. The Chair of the Board spoke of the journey that SMC is travelling and the

way that the regional centres were ‘a surprise’ as SMC responded to requests from dioceses. There is much to reflect on as the regional centres progress in their work and strategic questions for the Board about what does an SMC regional centre look like in the future.

The senior staff and those involved in governance are fully aware of the challenges the Church of England’s Higher Education sector faces at present. One challenge expressed to us was around finance. In common with the whole HE sector SMC feels the impact of the effective reduction in fees year by year and this presses questions around SMC’s hosting of different learners and the value they get for their money. Staff spoke of the tension between serving expectations of the Office of Students and the Church of England’s requirements for ministry training. The expectation is that there will be a smaller number of ordinands coming through the national recruitment and discernment processes in the next few years. There are continuing questions about the implications of the Resourcing Ministerial Formation process led by the national Ministry Development Team and future decisions about the TEI sector that may be made by General Synod. The strong awareness of the background challenges to the theological education sector in general and for SMC in particular were present in many of the Review Team’s discussions.

A key part of the SMC journey has been the concept of generous orthodoxy which had its origin in the deliberations of its three founding partners. One Board member referred to generous orthodoxy as ‘a gift to the Church of England’ which the reviewers received as an invitation to explore how generous orthodoxy was embraced within the SMC community and its immediate stakeholders. The Chair of the Board who holds much of the narrative continuity of SMC’s journey made three points about generous orthodoxy. First, that generous orthodoxy is something dynamic and always to be narrated as it is never complete and continually needs working on. Second, Holy Trinity Brompton is only one partner in the delivery and life of SMC and cannot be said to sum up the college: this is something that needs to be contended in order to achieve clarity about it. Third, a recent book edited by the Chair of the Board – *Navigating a World of Grace* – attempted a scoping exercise of generous orthodoxy and its capacity to give space to reflect, connect theology with practice and in doing so embrace a wide range of traditions.

As will be apparent from the beginning of our report the core value of generous orthodoxy was a feature in many discussions with staff and students and featured in the stakeholders’ feedback. The Review Team trust that readers will find the way we have reported on our encounter with generous orthodoxy helpful. The concept of ‘false narratives’ or ‘myths’ about the place of SMC in its relationship with Holy Trinity Brompton and the Church of England and beyond is one to which leaders are sensitive. There is no easy response to this concern, but we trust that the Reviewers’ report has negotiated this sensitivity appropriately.

Finally, it is important to note the impact of the coronavirus pandemic from March 2020 on the theological training sector generally and on SMC in particular. The theological students coming through the system now are the first since 2020 to come through the discernment process face to face.

SMC learnt a great deal during the pandemic, which influenced pedagogical patterns and led to greater innovation. It forced questions about using more innovative pedagogical methods such as new online

tools. The SMC team reported that the pandemic made SMC even more attentive to where and how learning takes place. For example, the ‘Flipped Classroom’ emerged which creates more discursive space within the classroom – flipping the usual teacher-centred experience to a student one (see comments below in section B). The staff team concluded that the learning that happens around the physical teaching space cannot happen whilst students are online.

This is not to downplay the virtual learning environment but to point out that what might be called ‘consolidation of learning’ is limited in the virtual world. SMC was mindful of those whose formation period was affected by the pandemic who are now in ministry and have sought to support former students to integrate their experiences of the pandemic into their ministry. Included in this is the recognition that they will be leading those whose lives were affected in the pandemic and asking how they can use their own experience to lead. SMC have seen the gap in theological provision which was opened up by the experience of the pandemic as a formational opportunity.

Summary of Outcomes

As we hope is clear in this report, the reviewers found in SMC much to commend in its leadership, its energy and enterprise, and in the distinctive contribution it makes to the national church’s life and the breadth of its discernment and formation for ministry. We hope that the commentary, commendations and recommendations that follow will be an encouragement to the College to develop its work further as it continues to serve the church and its mission.

Sections A-E of this report are written in relation to the PER Criteria in force for 2023-24 and available via the Ministry Development Team’s quality assurance pages on the Church of England website. We have added a further section F on LLM training to draw our findings in that area into one place for clarity.

CRITERION	OUTCOME
A Formational Aims	Confidence
B Formational Context and Community	Confidence
C Leadership and Management	Confidence
D Teaching and Learning	Confidence
E Ministerial Formation	Confidence with Qualifications
F LLM Training	Confidence with Qualifications
Overall Outcome: Ordinands	Confidence
Overall Outcome: LLM trainees	Confidence with Qualifications

The review team regards St Mellitus College as fit for purpose for preparing candidates for ordained ministry, and in the training that it contributes to dioceses’ formation of Licensed Lay Ministers.

Section A: Formational Aims

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

1. SMC states its formational aims clearly in the Formation Scene Setting document provided to the PER reviewers, headlined by the SMC vision:

The vision of SMC is to see theologically confident and committed followers of Jesus in every church. Our mission is to provide innovative theological education and training for those called to serve Christ in the church and the world.

2. The same paragraph links this with what it calls the 'founding narrative':

This mission reflects the college's founding narrative: SMC was founded to offer theological education and training set in the context of prayer and worship, which combines academic excellence, a focus on missional leadership, the shaping of Christian character, and the flexibility to fit around busy lifestyles.

3. This reflects the journey of development and growth SMC are experiencing after seventeen years and the way that the founding narrative acts as a 'steer' or a 'rudder' and holds the direction of SMC. We observed how the different elements of the founding narrative speak to the headline vision and it was often supported in documents by elements of the founding narrative. We encourage SMC to continue the guided evolution of the expression of its vision and formational aims so that both the deep sense of journey and progression of the college are given appropriate expression and its contemporary expression comes across with enduring and renewed clarity.
4. The formational vision and aims fall well within the scope of the objects of the primary delivery vehicle and the accountable body St Mellitus College Trust, as they do with the objects of the partner organisation St Paul's Theological Centre.
5. SMC aims to fulfil its formational aims by offering full-time and part-time ordination and licensed lay ministry training, through undergraduate and post-graduate study. It fulfils the breadth of the formational aims through the Peter and Caleb streams and a Beginning Theology course.
6. SMC writes in the same scene-setting document that "a core value of the College is its commitment to 'generous orthodoxy': committed to credal orthodoxy, the 'faith once handed on to the saints', while wanting to hold this in a generous, enquiring and open way. The College approaches education through the lens that theology is a spiritual, not just an intellectual discipline, and needs to be pursued in the context of a growing life of prayer and worship." The document outlines that this commitment plays out in multiple domains of the college's life: in the relationship between worship and study, such that academic learning is held within the context of prayer and worship; in receptivity and openness to different church traditions and practices nationally and globally; and in practical commitment to mission in local contexts.

7. The Formational Scene Setting document reflects the SMC statement of values which leads with the 'Mountain Peaks' that 'underpin all we do'. These, in order, are generous orthodoxy, excellence, hopeful, innovative and missional. Of these five values generous orthodoxy is headlined and therefore consistent with the Formational Scene Setting document's emphasis on the core value of generous orthodoxy.
8. In a paper dated around 2017 entitled *Generous Orthodoxy – Doing Theology in the Spirit* and made available in a module's paperwork, the Chair of the Board described generous orthodoxy as 'pivotal to the identity of the college'. Taking our cue from the paper: generous orthodoxy is found in the relationship between worship and study because theology is all about worship; it is found in giving and receiving from each other in the midst of difference and embracing the principle that its 'only in giving away can we receive'; it is found in a 'bigger, expansive, hopeful and humble' view of the church; and it is found the way that a generosity of spirit will translate into mission.
9. The reviewers explored how the core value of generous orthodoxy was understood by SMC students and stakeholders, looking for evidence that key aspects of the original theologically coherent vision which was embraced at the inception of SMC continue to be upheld. We found it in ordinands who spoke of the value of studying in an environment infused in prayer and worship; in the expression of one student who enjoyed more freedom than in previous contexts to embrace other Christian traditions; in the strong diversity of community life and in the way that mission was an intrinsic part of the SMC commitment to context-based training.
10. All of this is impressive, though we note at section E5 (para 185) and Recommendation 25 that SMC could perhaps be more intentional about equipping its students to work well across some areas of theological difference. But overall, the reviewers found that many students spoke with enthusiasm of the formational significance of SMC's culture of generous orthodoxy, which they understood in terms of the outworking described above. We observed the aim of generous orthodoxy as way of doing theology in the formational and training environment that is lived, practical and contextual.
11. The reviewers explored the ways in which SMC's commitment to generous orthodoxy is understood by its wider stakeholders. To quote the Chair of the Board's paper again, "Generous orthodoxy is not a pragmatic compromise, a useful way of holding together contradictory viewpoints, or somehow finding a balance between unity and truth".
12. However, stakeholders' feedback (DDOs, Bishops, Alumni etc) frequently revealed outside perceptions of the practical outworking, in the SMC community, of generous orthodoxy: 'working together'; 'collaboration'; 'respect'; 'churchmanship' were typical ideas referred to. In other words, external stakeholders did not readily articulate generous orthodoxy's theological coherence or credal heart but seemed to see its outworking, principally, as a 'big tent'.
13. The Team were interested to note that, with the exception of St Paul's Theological Centre, there is no documentary evidence of a culture of generous orthodoxy, properly defined, being explicitly articulated in church settings outside SMC. We noted that in the SMC placement policy documents,

including information and training for Supervisors, there was minimal reference to or promotion of generous orthodoxy; and none of SMC's top 5 Primary Church Placement (PCP) churches emphasise or describe the concept of generous orthodoxy on their websites or claim ownership of it. However, the reviewers recognise that each church reflects its individual tradition and it is in the college setting that those strands and traditions are intentionally held together.

14. It occurred to the Team that it would be good to enable a wider understanding of generous orthodoxy in practice both within and beyond SMC itself, including the extent to which its principles continue to be lived out by former students now in ministry. We were pleased to learn that some years ago the College received funding from the McDonald Agape Foundation to fund a multi-part research project that focused on the reception of Generous Orthodoxy and whose outputs included: a series of public lectures to which alumni were invited, two books that furthered thinking about Generous Orthodoxy (including Navigating a World of Grace referenced by the team in the General Observations at the beginning of this report), and a colloquium that brought together scholars from around the world to consider Generous Orthodoxy from a range of different disciplines. We would urge that this thinking continues to be developed and shared widely as opportunities allow.

Commendation 1

We commend the depth with which the theologically rich vision of generous orthodoxy is clearly and effectively maintained and understood across the SMC community, including organisationally and in the sensibility of the student body, and is harnessed as a force for formation.

15. The Formational Scene Setting document states that the student community is diverse and holds within it a wide range of church backgrounds and denominations. The Formational Scene Setting document says: 'Students and staff together seek to inhabit, learn from and contribute to an approach to study and training that is hopeful, innovative and missional and marked by a commitment to excellence and what we describe as 'generous orthodoxy'.
16. The formational aims flow through SMC's publicity not least of all in the college prospectus which highlights the words: 'The vision of SMC is to see theologically confident and committed followers of Jesus in every church.' The vision of SMC as elaborated in the Formational Scene Setting document is woven through the prospectus and integrated in its context.
17. The prospectus in terms of its images and the stories of students reflects the experience of ethnicity that the PER reviewers encountered during their four days of visits.
18. The website is focussed on drawing potential students and stakeholders into the stories of students experience of studying at SMC, the chosen stories demonstrate the diversity of the student body at SMC and presented effectively to inquiring students. The formational aims are

overtly expressed in the prospectus that is a click through alongside information about the different courses offered, and implicitly and informally in the students' testimonies.

Commendation 2

We commend the striking and effective deployment of student stories and testimonies that are foregrounded to SMC's key audiences including prospective ordinands.

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

19. The initial briefing meeting with the PER Team indicated that reviewers had formed very positive views of SMC's work to grow and diversify vocations across wider access streams which is entirely in line with the Church of England's vision and strategy. This is explored further at several points in the report and was borne out by the review itself with reviewers discovering strong evidence SMC embraces the Church of England's vision for its national vision and understanding of its ministry requirements. SMC own the need for ministers, lay and ordained who are themselves missional disciples and who are 'collaborative', 'flexible' and 'adaptive' and whose goal is a church that is 'younger and more diverse' within a church that demonstrates a 'mixed ecology' of forms. The Reviewers encountered a culture where these commitments were part of the institution's discourse and life and this is evident throughout sections D and E of this report.
20. There is a suite of policies all available to students and staff digitally and therefore references to these in the report. We noticed that although the Racial Justice policy states the vision of SMC in its opening paragraph, explicit references to the vision and formational aims are rare in the full range of policies. We recommend that as policies are renewed and re-stated that consideration is given to how policies are visibly rooted in the SMC's vision. This is an opportunity to further embed the vision and formational aims throughout the SMC community.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that SMC consider inserting an explicit statement of its Vision and formational aims in the policies as they are revised and renewed so that the link between each policy and the vision and strategy of SMC is articulated.

21. The business plan is rooted in the vision and statement of formational aims. The first section picks up the notion of theological confidence and focuses on the development of the next generation of theologians to service the life of the Anglican Communion and beyond through growing a love of theology across the college and enhancing the research culture of the institution. The second section of the business plan focuses on formation and how the College will do this by investing in discernment as an ongoing task in Christian vocation, innovative delivery of the formational experience, the extended scope of placement partners and the continuing emphasis on being safe community enabling excellent safeguarding training. This will be done through existing

frameworks – the Church of England’s formational framework for IME1, the Common Awards Curriculum Framework, the policy document Setting God’s people Free and Living Ministry Research Briefings. The business plan as a key governing document indicates that SMC holds its own vision and formational aims and their development in the context of the expected framework for theological education and training.

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

22. SMC informs its public profile proactively. The senior team are supported by a Head of Communications who is part of a communications and media team maintains an evolving communications strategy which takes up both internal and external communications. A strong emphasis is on making communications accessible not least of all to prospective students. Researching both the website and social media reveals a high-level clarity in communication. The effectiveness of SMC communication is seen for example in the way that the Beginning Theology course is publicised.
23. Communications with stakeholders is strong even though it had been named as an area of development in the SWOT analysis. In 2023 twenty-seven dioceses could be described as ‘sending dioceses’ for both ordained ministry and LLM. Over twenty stakeholders responded to our request for feedback for this PER. The responses came from senior clergy and lay, DDOs and heads of ministry as well as alumni. The responses demonstrated ownership of SMC through a passionate engagement. Respondents spoke warmly of the work that SMC currently does with ordinands and LLMs but there was a depth to the responses that allowed a high-level critique from stakeholders about the outcomes for ministry across the church and a ‘wish-list’ of some areas where more input might be desirable. These areas included intercultural competence, a greater specialism for training the distinctive diaconate, youth ministry training, preparing ordinands for the continual changes occurring in parish ministry including multi-parish ministry and more focus on rural formation.
24. The SMC vision and formational values are communicated both directly and indirectly through open days and networking events which are held in each of the centres. They are publicised through digital media. There are bespoke events organised by SMC and those in which they engage through partnership, including the HTB Focus conference, New Wine and the National Youth mission weekend. Further external communication by SMC takes place both implicitly and explicitly through being an engaged presence in national and international networks. There are Peter Stream and Caleb Stream open days also and days for supervisors and future incumbents’ days add to the way that the SMC vision is communicated.
25. The communications strategy has a clear view of the different categories of stakeholders including actual and potential donors, and also alumni – within them many of SMC’s supervisors. A monthly newsletter, St Mellitus College Connect is issued. There is a brand strategy that ensures that the

SMC 'look', 'feel' and 'tone of voice' is consistent across communications platforms which together with choice of font and colours conveys a recognisably SMC perception.

26. Within the communications activity there is a clear sense of how successful stakeholder engagement is through careful monitoring campaigns. A good example of this was a recent campaign to communicate with potential participants in the Beginning Theology course. This identified what went well and took feedback from students for future improvements. Another example is the way that advertising took place for the Peter Stream, which has helped increase the diversity of the student body. Feedback surveys are used for every event and engagement with potential and actual stakeholders.
27. Future developments are stated to include being more intentional about targeted audiences (and in particular looking at social media statistics to help reach the 25-35 age group), communications becoming more accessible and having greater clarity and reaching a greater diversity of audiences that might match the diversity of those already attending SMC. The communications strategy pays attention to the centres: for example at Chelmsford and in the South West organising open evening and in partnership advertising through diocesan websites.

Commendation 3

We commend the professionalism of SMC's communication work and strategy in its sensitive application of marketing tools, particularly in the desire to reach new and younger audiences and market the rich theological offering of SMC.

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.

28. As the introduction notes, SMC are close partners with a number of dioceses served by its regional centres, and with some 27 sending dioceses currently.
29. The context-based training pioneered and supported by SMC means that partnerships with a diverse range of churches and other placement contexts are a crucial aspect of its life as an institution. In some cases ordinands remain at their sending church when entering training; others move to a fresh Primary Church Placement (PCP) at the beginning of their studies. SMC reported that, at the time of the PER, ordinands are on placement in a wide variety of churches, with approximately 135 different ones (relating to the four teaching sites) engaged across the current ordinand cohort. Some PCPs have multiple ordinands on placement, which would significantly strengthen their organisational bonds with SMC. Significant efforts are made to undergird these PCP relationships administratively, helping to secure a culture which enables effective supervision of students whilst in their placement contexts.
30. The Team did not hear evidence about ongoing local Ecumenical Partnerships and SMC does not formally train for ministry in partner denominations.
31. Partnerships with other faith communities may occur in PCP settings and, given the context-based character of the training, this is appropriate. Meanwhile there is a Taught Module, 5IF Christianity and Interfaith Engagement, which is designed to encourage direct engagement, by students, with people of other faiths within their communities. It is taken by all ordinands, along with LLM candidates.
32. Partnerships with civic and community organisations may occur in PCP settings. The secondary, Short Placement (SP) can also be helpful in this regard, and Reviewers met with students who had undertaken placements with the Army and at a Hospital Chaplaincy. Students spoke of friends and peers who had enjoyed SPs in a range of other contexts, including schools.
33. The Forge (SMC's formational and leadership programme undertaken by full-time ordinands, and its equivalent for part-timers, Refine) relies on both internal speakers and partnerships with external organisations who provide speakers: examples include a CPAS presentation and a talk by a prison governor. The Alpha Leadership Conference is attended by ordinands, where they are exposed to Christian leaders from across the globe. Ordinands may choose to pursue the possibility of an ecumenical trip to the Anglican Centre in Rome. There have been instances where ordinands have taken the opportunity to experience life in the wider Anglican Communion by undertaking their SP overseas.

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

34. The Student Handbook has clear information, including contact details, relating to external providers including national helplines and support in accessing specialised counselling for ordinands. The handbook contains policy documents relating to Equality and Diversity (undated, it covers gender and sexual orientation as well as race, disability etc); Academic Conduct/Plagiarism (July 2023); Absence and Attendance (July 2023); and Discipline (September 2022) and Safeguarding (see below) amongst other things. There is no Policy Document providing for Welfare and Pastoral Care, but the 'College Life' Section of the Student Handbook contains materials relating to the Formation Group (FG) system, and other sources of support.
35. Given the context-based mode of training, the provision for student welfare and pastoral care is complex as it is focused on life both with the SMC community and in the PCP and - to a great extent - the zone of reflection and formation within which these two things inter-relate, with the latter overseen within the FG context. The responsibilities of Formation Group Tutors (FGTs) are set out in a comprehensive role-description and training document, the Formation Group Tutor Handbook. FGTs 'lead' on the students' pastoral and academic support and other aspects of development: ordinands usually stay with the same FGT, and group, for the duration of their time with SMC, the life of the group coinciding with the duration of their training.
36. Many students spoke of finding the communication and support that they enjoyed via their own FGs WhatsApp group (which included the FGT) invaluable. They spoke highly of the sense of community and pastoral care engendered within the FGs, even when, at the start of the academic year, a 'new' FG had only been constituted for a matter of weeks. The SMC volunteer Chaplains (below) generally spoke highly of the functionality of the FGs.
37. Students spoke warmly of the role of the Centre Directors, and how they were also important presences in the provision of pastoral care, developing relationships with students and overseeing delivery of The Forge and the Refine programmes, which are shaped to reflect the Church of England's 7 formational 'Qualities'.
38. St Mellitus has a Chaplaincy Team, with members normally engaged on a voluntary basis at a specific teaching site. Some have particular responsibility for a specific group of students such as ordinands or youth ministers. The team provides pastoral care, spiritual guidance, prayer and encouragement to the students who make use of their services, and their ministry may make an important contribution to a student's formational journey: the group of Chaplains with whom the PER Team engaged on the Residential reckoned that a third to a half of SMC ordinands seek out their support during their time as students with SMC, some of these individuals on frequent occasions. Availability, and a capacity to reflect theologically on the challenges facing students are among their key offerings and, encouragingly, the PER Team heard from some students that they were happy to consult a Chaplain even if there was no immediate presenting issue: such

consultation could be seen as valuable for its own sake, not just in reaction to pastoral emergencies.

39. The Chaplains felt that they could also reflect concerns and issues from the student body generally back to the college staff, and - in addition - they carry a clear safeguarding brief. Centre Directors or FGTs are able to provide students with further information about the Chaplains, and how to access them. Contact details are available in the Moodle Handbook, along with a statement about confidentiality, describing the rare scenarios where an issue a student discussed with a Chaplain may need to be escalated, for example if a student is sensed to be a risk to their own safety or where there are potential safeguarding or disciplinary concerns.
40. Given the key role of the FGs, their functionality was extensively probed by the Team. It was apparent from the volunteer Chaplains as well as the students that there was a feeling that the character of the leadership of the groups could be differently nuanced, depending on the experience and personality of each individual FGT. There were instances where lay tutors were looking after ordinands; or a younger tutor looking after older students (these are not necessarily problems in themselves, but it was mentioned as an observation, and could have implications for the selection, training and supervision of FGTs).
41. According to some students, FGs do not meet together often enough for what was described as 'formation time'. Although FGs meet every week, focused pastoral group conversations do not happen weekly. One student described a 'hurried agenda' during formation time, and another said that they felt that they would like to have one-to-ones with their FGTs more often, or earlier in the annual cycle. SMC SW and SMC EM ordinands also commented on the fact that their FGs were smaller than the London ones, and that this could be seen as a disadvantage. Group sizes seem to range from 5 to 12.
42. Centre leaders agreed that holding Placement Supervisors on track and in communication (including ensuring that placement agreements are adhered to) is a key part of the FGT role and could be challenging. It is also important to keep reviewing what takes place during FG meeting times.
43. It is stated clearly in Placement handbooks that pastoral care of students is essentially the responsibility of the FGTs at SMC. Correspondingly, training for PCP supervisors is expected to be supervision-focused, and the apparent separation of the supervisor role (PCP) from the pastoral provider role (SMC) appears to reflect an intention to avoid the well-documented difficulties which can emerge, in any work context, when these roles are combined, resulting potentially in a lack of clarity.
44. Nevertheless, it is understood that students ought to receive pastoral care and support in their placement contexts, many of which may have a Parish Support Group, constituted for the purpose. Students may have a long history of getting pastoral support from their church 'family' context, and it is acknowledged in SMC materials that this may happen. Although there is no

quantified expectation: “We ask incumbents to help our students as they progress through the course. There are a number of specific ways this is done, over and above the more informal help, prayer, support, and possible lending of books, which we trust will be offered as part of pastoral care.”

45. There is some recognition by the SMC leadership that FG/FGT pastoral care will in fact be experienced alongside a student’s own wider support networks (which may include Spiritual Directors, the SMC Chaplaincy team and some particular external Christian community networks which were mentioned by students). The PCP context may be a very important source of ongoing pastoral care and some students’ accounts suggested that they were finding this at a level well beyond that which SMC may have imagined or is aware of. Students, when asked about pastoral care during their total SMC experience, often spoke most immediately and most fulsomely about what they experienced in their PCP. In short, in-college pastoral support is largely good as the foregoing paragraphs reflect, but with the caveats noted at para 41 in relation to Formation Groups; and there does seem to be some discrepancy between SMC’s expectation and students’ experience of the balance between FGs and PCP contexts in terms of ordinands’ access to pastoral care in practice: hence Recommendation 3 below.

Commendation 4

We commend the investment, including quality staff time, and the detailed Formation Group Tutor Handbook, which SMC continues to put into the maintenance and development of the FGs within the life of SMC.

Commendation 5

We commend the role of Chaplains and the way SMC encourages and facilitates student access to the Chaplaincy team.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that SMC consider transferring some sessions of the Forge/Refine programmes to online media for ordinands to view in their own time, in order to free up session time for group discussion and pastoral conversation.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that SMC continue monitoring the complex role of FGTs, particularly in relation to understanding of PCPs, including the PCP’s place in pastoral care and the enforcement of relevant agreements.

46. In regard to the diversity profile of the SMC staff community, the college submits data to the annual Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) staff return. Amongst academic staff, 12% of reporting staff would identify as UKME/GMH. 49% of academic staff are female. Due to the college operating four centres across the country, SMC can show how it draws staff from a range of POLAR

postcodes (a measure of the proportion of young people in a given area who participate in HE) which demonstrates geographic and socio-economic representation.

47. SMC appreciates the need to work continually at increasing the diversity of its staff 'to reflect the demography of the student intake and the contexts in which they are placed'. Future aspirations include identifying potential theological educators from its own, more diverse, student body. Staff CVs reflect good levels of current or recent-past engagement with parish and/or sector ministry, and Senior Students spoke of the value they attach to the insights of a diverse range of lecturers who are also grounded in parish ministry. Staff appraisal procedures are designed to recognise and, potentially, reward the wider engagements with church life and ministry.
48. A 26-page Safeguarding Policies and Procedures document (which covers responsibilities under the Prevent Duty), dated July 2023, is available to staff and students in the online Student Handbook. The final page is in poster format ('Promoting a Safer Church') which could be printed out for display (a copy of it was on display at the registration area at the entrance to the Residential attended by the PER Team at the Hayes), with similar summary information, including Prevent, appearing on the SMC website. That said, as per Recommendation 6 below, we would encourage SMC to develop more prominent resources (such as roll-up banners on stands) to raise awareness of the safeguarding environment at Residentials.
49. The college's annual safeguarding report, in line with new recommended practice for TEIs, provided clear data and assurances that issues were recorded and followed up appropriately.
50. All first-year ordinands and LLMs undertake the church's mandatory Safeguarding Leadership Course (SLC) with SMC, and the basic and foundations programmes before entry; and taught pastoral care and practical ministry modules across levels 4-6, found within the regular teaching programme, include engagement with safeguarding issues and protocols, as does other formational material delivered within the FG context. Hence, the Team saw that safeguarding is embedded within the formational strategy and in SMC life including the requirements placed upon its PCPs, which must have comprehensive safeguarding arrangements in place. Meanwhile SMC ordinands have responsibility to behave in accordance with the policies and procedures of the PCP's safeguarding policy and practice; and to adhere to national safeguarding guidelines.
51. The overall responsibility for Safeguarding lies with the Dean of SMC, but the appropriately qualified and experienced National Safeguarding Lead (NSL) officer is operationally responsible for the work. In that capacity they are part of the SMC Senior Team (which also includes all five Centre Directors and meets fortnightly) and 'entitled to bring any matter for discussion', they are able to reflect, and advocate for, the maintenance and development of the SMC culture of Safeguarding at a strategic level within the College.
52. The impressive commitment of the SMC NSL to their task, across all centres, is driven by their belief that 'the Church should be the safest place' and energised by a compassionate responsiveness ('nobody should be left after the first conversation') a pastoral curiosity and a

desire to heighten sensitivity across SMC to noticing vulnerability, along with an active awareness of the dangers which can be found in places where there is a lack of communication. As well as speaking in those visionary terms about the SMC culture of safeguarding, the NSL gave a list of the practical ways (most reflected in the points above and/or witnessed by the Team) by which the profile of the Safeguarding agenda was maintained within the SMC environment and, where appropriate, beyond.

53. In meeting ordinands, the PER Team discovered a high level of understanding of the essential learning objectives of the SLC, and a good awareness of who to reach out to, in both the SMC and PCP environments, with a possible safeguarding concern. The NSL had also described how it had become evident from student reflections offered within the SLC that, on occasions, ordinands seemed to have assumed the role of (informal) ‘champions’ of Safeguarding within their PCP, alert to the issues and able to suggest actions to improve the safety of the ministry environment.

Commendation 6

We commend the excellent Safeguarding and Prevent policy and personnel in place at SMC, meeting the institution’s stated aim to embed safeguarding within the culture of the institution and the formational agenda.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that SMC present the key safeguarding issues, advice and reflection in a visually engaging booklet-form, similar to The Forge booklets, or the Spiritual Health Check booklet.

54. In terms of the make-up of the community, SMC included just over 330 students in 2022-3, as well as the staff. Independent students made up over a quarter of the student body. Of the 250 or so training for licensed ministry, just over half of whom were women, 10% were LLM candidates. The rest were on a path towards ordination with around 40% of the ordinand cohort aged under 40. 75% of the ordinands were married. Ordained Pioneer Ministry Candidates are found among the ‘regular’ ordinand cohort, including those who are seen as future church-planters. The ‘mixed ecology’ of ministry aspirations within the Church of England is reflected by the diverse callings found within the licensed ministry cohort.
55. College data shows a doubling of the proportion of UKME/GMH students from 11% of the student body in 2017 to 22% in 2022. In terms of the ordinand cohort the movement has been from 9% to 20%. SMC’s 5-year plan reflects aspirations to be accessible to neurodiverse, and to see the flourishing of students of all ethnicities, ages, educational experiences and social backgrounds. Further, SMC’s diversity pattern varies across its four centres, each of which has a different balance of student ages, backgrounds and part-time or full-time training tracks.
56. The PER team attended a Residential that included ordinands from all four teaching sites, and were welcomed by a student body which seemed energetic and varied in age, ethnicity and social background. The SMC leadership has expressed concerns that the racial diversity seen within the

student body does not reflect that seen in wider society, and this is an issue it is addressing as a strategic priority with the help of external stakeholders. Yet, with evident justification, SMC claims that ‘the non-residential full-time model of training has widened access and participation, raising up vocations from within diverse groups of people’. Students, meanwhile, volunteered that there was no such thing as ‘the St Mellitus type’!

57. Reviewers appreciated the enrichment which Caleb stream students (lay people already established in ministry, and on a one-year programme of discernment) brought to the life of Residential, and were also interested to hear ordinands who had emerged out of the Peter Stream tell their stories (Peter Stream students, from under-represented backgrounds, would have begun their engagement with SMC with a year-long programme of theological teaching and formation, laying a foundation for further training as licensed ministry candidates). In 2022-3 there were 19 Caleb students in London, and 8 at SMC EM, and 21 Peter Stream students in London.
58. The reviewers recognise SMC’s aim to make accessibility and racial justice central to their strategic priorities over the next five years, intending that these become embedded in every aspect of its culture and not just through the curriculum. They would suggest that perhaps the structural elements which have supported the highly successful development of SMC’s safeguarding culture across the whole organisation might be used as a model from which these further aims can be mapped. Those structural elements in the case of safeguarding include an internal network of responsible officers, plus regular governance-level discussion, reporting and communications.
59. Stakeholders described the ‘strong community feel’ of SMC, and Reviewers concur with an observation that the College ‘is a hopeful and faith-filled place and the sense of welcome and community permeates all they do’. Some students, energised by the experience of corporate life at the Residential, said that it made them wonder whether they ought to have opted for a fully residential training programme at another college. Others, who had domestic and work commitments, appreciated the value of the Residentials but described their frequency (5 weekends, one week-long, and a retreat) as ‘a punishing routine’: these comments by individual students were reflective of their own varied situations and were not bids for change as those making them seemed aware of the potential drawbacks of other modes of training (e.g. full-time residential) for candidates in their situation.
60. SMC believes that a context-based model of training encourages vocational exploration by others (who see and observe the ordinands) which could result in more candidates, across the 4 regions, coming forward.
61. The SMC community is usually too large to express itself visibly as a totality and independent and lay ministry students do not attend the ordinand residentials. A routine experience of community life at SMC will be based on time spent at one of the four teaching sites (a teaching day or evening class) plus - for ordinands - the support of an FG, along with The Forge (full-time students) or

Refine (part-time) programmes, and community life at each of the centres inevitably displays its own distinctive flavour.

62. Community cohesion is supported by various forms of communication, including the weekly email (teaching-site specific), the SMC Connect e-newsletter, emails from the Dean and emails sent to ordinands in advance of residentials. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Vimeo, and Spotify - GodPod are examples of social media used officially by SMC.
63. Wherever it gathers, the SMC community begins and usually ends the day or the evening with prayer and worship and this is described at section B4, below.

Commendation 7

We commend the clear trajectory towards greater diversity among the student cohort since 2017.

Commendation 8

We commend the development of the Caleb and Peter Streams, and the enrichment of the SMC community that their student cohorts bring.

64. According to the SMC student handbook, 'student feedback is a vital to the life and ministry of the College. To ensure the collective student voice is heard, the College has several mechanisms for gathering feedback'. Listed are the in-house First Term Student Survey; and the national springtime Common Awards Student Survey (CASS) along with individual Module Evaluation feedback. Reviewers also noted an 'end of year' survey. These feedback systems relating to SMC's taught programmes are further described at section D2.
65. More broadly, students described 'a responsive college environment', listing a number of channels through which they could raise concerns or pursue an agenda of change across the broader aspects of College life. It is here that a key role is held by the Senior Students, whom the PER team found to be a diverse and articulate group, successfully representing the different teaching centres, the different programmes (including experience of the Peter Stream) and many of the different backgrounds seen among the student body as a whole. The Senior Students are well placed to convey feedback from the full diversity of the SMC community.
66. Other students, when asked where the student voice was heard, mentioned their FGTs, along with Centre Directors, whilst the 'senior hierarchy' was no less approachable. College staff also value the interviews conducted in connection with annual reports to the bishops as a useful source of information and insight around what could be usefully changed. In SMC documentation we learn of " 'the priority the college puts into the collection of student feedback through multiple sources. In most instances students engage because they think what they have to say will be heard' ". According to its Annual Self-Assessment, 'The College's end of year survey indicates that 69.9% of students feel always or mostly well-represented as a student in the college, and 71.1% of students feel that their specific programme is either always or mostly well represented.

Commendation 9

We commend SMC for its provision of ample feedback opportunities, with a ‘you said, we did’ approach at SMC abundantly evident and readily available to students.

67. Although married students constitute the greater proportion of the SMC community, students who are unmarried (many may have a key supporter) constitute a significant minority. In 2023 and in response to student feedback, spouses and key supporters were invited to join their local induction day, up until lunch, with a specific ‘spouses and key supporters’ session featuring in the programme.
68. During the week-long Residential, a range of ‘support lunches’ were offered to parents and carers with specific areas of responsibility, including parents of children with additional needs; parents of children under 4; and foster carers and adopters. An e-newsletter is also produced for spouses and key supporters.

Commendation 10

We commend SMC for its evolving pattern of support for families/key supporters in response to perceived needs.

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

69. Ordinands and students at SMC are provided with adequate teaching facilities. Indeed, the use of the Hayes as a venue for residentials works well for the most part and the London and East Midland facilities visited provide appropriate facilities. The London centre is especially well developed and suited for the teaching requirements of SMC. The review team notes the innovative use of shared space in the regional centres and is satisfied that SMC has struck a good balance between cost effectiveness and utility of the shared teaching spaces used. This was particularly evident in the East Midlands Centre where SMC are making good use of the shared space. The review team notes that staff, ordinands, and students at SMC are satisfied with the teaching facilities provided.
70. We noted some of the challenges faced by those who live with physical disabilities in mobility and access especially during the residentials. The Review Team had conversations with students with disabilities who shared where there were challenges. We also discussed the matter with the staff team. We acknowledge the conscious efforts SMC leadership make to ensure that those living with disabilities are supported when issues arise. We observed a culture of honest dialogue and mutually supportive efforts to overcome disadvantage.
71. The Review Team met with the Director of Innovation and Development and learnt about the innovative work being done to extend SMC engagement with students who identified as neuro diverse and would wish to encourage the continued development of this vital piece of work for the present and future students.

72. We observed that SMC is aware of the challenges faced in all its centres in regard to its buildings. In London a principal challenge has been the growth in numbers and additional facilities have been trialled during the past few years. There are particular challenges at each of the regional centres of which we were supplied with a full analysis that included an outline development plan, and therefore gives confidence that SMC is working well with its buildings and thinking strategically about their respective futures. We reviewed the 'Venue Facilities Action' document that demonstrated detailed and careful planning for each centre on a weekly basis.
73. Reviewers were pleased to understand that carbon neutrality is key to the way that SMC approaches its buildings. There is a clear understanding of how general upkeep needs to contribute to the goal of reaching net zero targets through achieving a reduction in operational footprints by reducing waste and focusing on sustainability, including a paperless pledge. There is an *Action Plan for Carbon Neutrality* that sets out the full path for SMC towards carbon neutrality with especially detailed planning for 2023 and 2024. SMC has clarity that its work towards carbon neutrality and environmental stewardship is 'rooted in a deep theology of creation care'. This is evidenced well in the way that SMC shows how the academic and formational curriculum has environmental theology woven into the teaching programmes.
74. The space used for worship at a mid-Autumn residential at the Hayes Conference Centre at Swanwick was a rectangular hall furnished with around 300 front-facing, moveable chairs - an arrangement maintained for worship sessions attended by the Team but changed for a voluntary evening session. Plasma screens, suitable for the display of both words and images, were positioned at the front of the hall and along the sides, and used in preference to service sheets during the main, compulsory acts of worship. There was a staffed sound desk at the rear of the hall. The area at the front of the hall had a fixed, raised platform, accessible by a few steps. The hall was appropriately lit and fully accessible.
75. Hence, the focal points were the raised platform and - for leading/performance - the floor area below it, where microphones, a piano, an electronic keyboard and a moveable lectern were positioned. A table, serving as an altar, was positioned centrally on the platform. It had been dressed with two white sheets. The side of the sheet which presented itself to the congregation had a visible oblique crease or fold which gave the arrangement a distracting asymmetry. On the top of the altar, positioned centrally, was a small wooden cross on a plinth. There was a pair of altar-style wax candles, both of them unevenly clotted with set wax. Other than at the 7.30am Communion Service noted below, the candles were left unlit but were nonetheless prominently displayed at morning and evening worship on each of the two days when the Team was in attendance. No liturgical Bible was visible on the lectern, or elsewhere in the focal area, for the sessions attended.
76. Team Members attended a voluntary 7.30am weekday service of Holy Communion whilst at the Residential. A printed Order of Service was given to worshippers as they arrived, and this was followed closely. Robes/vestments were not worn by the President who, to the Reviewers, looked

uncomfortable during the manual acts due to the fact that the table/altar was lower than ‘altar height’. The president was also clutching, and leading from, a small, printed order of service, occasionally with difficulty, and read the Collect from a mobile device. The lit wax altar candles were clotted and uneven.

77. The organisation and maintenance of the visual focus of worship at the Residential seemed surprisingly poor, with items provided, and used or not used (an ‘altar’ of an inappropriate height; unlit candles on prominent display at main acts of worship) in ways which did not seem thoughtful or aesthetically satisfying. This was in stark contrast with the professionalism and evident preparation of leadership of worship, including by the speakers and the musicians. Granted, the furnishings available in a hired or provided space are somewhat out of SMC’s direct control, but there is still value in thinking through ways of working with these constraints, which are not uncommon in ministry.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that SMC review its use of space and furnishings for corporate worship at residenceals and embrace residenceals as a means of modelling good practice.

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

78. The SMC Worship Guide provides for worship in the College context states that “At St Mellitus College, everything we do - our theology, our formation, our relationships, and our practice of mission and ministry - is done in the context of prayer and worship.” Students are reminded that “Drawing the community together in worship is at the heart of what God calls us to do, and your time in College is an opportunity to grow in discernment, confidence, knowledge, skills, and ability when leading corporate worship”.
79. The Team noted the patterns of worship across the centres: London (Mondays) and East Midlands and South West (both Tuesdays) begin their full-day programmes with a half-hour period of worship, concluding with a further 15 minute session at the end of the afternoon. For the evening teaching sessions in London (Tuesdays); East Midlands (Mondays) and Chelmsford (Thursdays), the programme begins with a 20-25 minute worship time. Additional opportunities for the leadership of worship occur for the ordinands at the residenceals: “this is where the College community fully immerses itself in the range of Anglican worship styles, led by students and staff”.
80. Students take responsibility for planning and leading the worship sessions (excepting Eucharistic presidency) and - directed by their teaching centre rota - may be expected to deliver from a specified range of forms: Morning or Evening Prayer (Common Worship); Morning or Evening Prayer (Book of Common Prayer); Eucharist (Common Worship); extempore prayer and worship; and - an end-of-afternoon option at the daytime centres - ‘reflective, creative, meditative’ worship. There are two additional local requirements: a Book of Common Prayer (BCP) Holy Communion

Service features on the South West rota; and end-of-evening Compline is customary in Chelmsford. Lead-students are urged to plan music for all of the larger corporate acts of worship and consider other enhancements, such as providing a lighted candle for the Chelmsford Compline.

81. At Morning Worship and Evening worship attended by the Team at the Residential, the skeletons of Common Worship forms were recognisable, but use of the Common Worship lectionary was partial and inconsistent. Daily Prayer calendars (e.g. for the Anglican Communion) were not referred to.
82. The Worship Handbook highlights the options typically involved within Common Worship liturgies, but stipulates that the full integrity of BCP provisions are to be respected. A resource offered to facilitate the delivery of BCP Matins is provided alongside Handbook materials, and it appears that the document could be followed on a mobile device (thus obviating the necessity of referring directly to a printed book).
83. The leadership and experience of worship is clearly an area where GO is expected to be lived out by the whole college community. There is realism in the footnote comment that “we will not all agree, and individually we won’t necessarily change what we do, but we can grow in our appreciation of other traditions and our own as we work together to serve God and proclaim the gospel of Christ in word and action.” Yet the Team listened to many warm and enthusiastic accounts, from both students and staff, of a full Anglo-Catholic style Eucharist which had been the main act of worship at the Residential the previous Sunday morning. Meanwhile notices given out on occasions when the Team were present promoted a breadth of options, from praying the Rosary to informal, ‘unplugged’ worship.
84. At Residentials, there is a clear institutional intention to fully engage students with different traditions and approaches found across the Church of England and even beyond. With the single exception of a Saturday morning Eucharist, attendance at morning and evening corporate College worship at residentials is compulsory, and at its heart is the Sunday Eucharist which “will follow the pattern of Common Worship or of the BCP, but may be Catholic, Charismatic or Evangelical in style”. At the residential the Review Team listened in on an optional workshop for ‘liturgical cantoring’ where students were fully engaged in its practice.
85. Ordinands also participate in the running and leadership of the programme of worship at Residentials including musical contributions; the setting out of furniture; sacristy duties and overseeing the Quiet Prayer Room. Student leaders of worship at the residentials are directed to work as teams and are expected to focus on the delivery of worship in the form and tradition prescribed on the rota, respecting its integrity as part of the College’s spirit of GO.
86. The SMC Worship Guide highlights the fact that the diverse traditions represented among the college community have lots to offer, and the importance for all students of being ready to receive from them. The Review Team members took part in worship at both the London and EM Centres. At the London centre the worship was appropriate for the setting and for a day or evening that

focused on teaching and formation. It was participative and well planned and in that way contributed to the full picture of diversity.

87. The Team experienced corporate worship at a mid-Autumn residential at the Hayes Conference Centre at and noted that at all times there was a visible diversity (age, GMH, gender) among the teams of students responsible for leading and assisting in worship. Voice projection (in tandem with using the microphone) was successful and clear, and worship leaders seemed well prepared for their roles, completing the sessions within the allocated timeframes. Slides which appeared in the screens (giving Bible passages, prayer biddings and responses and the words of worship songs) usually carried the St Mellitus branding style and were used and controlled appropriately.
88. In three of the four compulsory Morning/Evening worship sessions attended by the Team at the Residential, the tone of the worship was set by an extensive use of worship songs, led by a small band. The worship-leader musicians were clearly talented and experienced. On both evenings a short talk was given, once by a (female) senior member of the SMC Faculty; and on the other occasion by an experienced (male) speaker who is a Visiting Professor: in one instance the message was based upon reflections on an artwork; on the other it took the form of an exposition of a Bible passage.
89. The FG responsible for an act of Morning or Evening Worship was usually introduced by the staff tutor of the group, giving a sense that there was ongoing supervision, and on at least one occasion the FGT was seen praying alongside the group in the 5 or 10 minutes of space before the worship formally began. The Team was also pleased to see that the congregation was welcomed at the door by members of the FG (which could include staff). The Team sensed that the character of an FG, and individuals within it, was able to find expression in the tone and context of the acts of worship and this was effectively demonstrated on one occasion when the congregation was led, by students of GMH ethnicity, in a Yoruba worship song.
90. Team members attended a voluntary early morning service of Holy Communion. There was no readily available advance-information about whether the President would be a male or female priest. Inevitably, attendance at this voluntary service was lower than at the compulsory worship, but 50-60 worshippers, with a generally higher age profile than the student body as a whole.
91. At compulsory morning and evening worship, students arrived on time and levels of attendance seemed impressively high and students gave the worship their full attention (there was no significant issue with students being distracted, during worship, by their mobile devices). A variety of responses indicated engagement, including enthusiastic singing and in many cases (but by no means all, and possibly not even among the majority) the raising of hands. Whatever the character of the response, a genuine eagerness to participate, and to 'receive' something from the worship session, was observed.

Commendation 11

We commend the quality of student-led worship, including the planning and preparation and the musicianship evident at the Residential; and the visible diversity among the student teams delivering it.

Commendation 12

We commend the comprehensive and clear section on Worship in the Student Handbook, and the way it reflects SMC's determination to involve students in worship from a range of traditions, reflecting the ethos of generous orthodoxy.

92. We would encourage, however, that SMC consider whether the section on Worship in the Student Handbook should include material which gives guidance, or at least prompts discussion, about when it is appropriate, and not appropriate, to read forms of service (including BCP) and - especially - Bible passages - from mobile phones and other devices. We offer this acknowledging that there is a wide variety of practice within the church but wish to underline that it can result in the absence of a Bible/'The Scriptures' from the visible focus of worship, or even place of worship, something unprecedented in Christian custom and which may even carry with it credal implications.
93. Aside from the practicalities of worship, it was hard to find signs of the 'credal heart' of GO reflected in SMC's worshipping life. The provision for the recitation of the Creed was omitted from the St Mellitus College 'Order for Holy Communion' service sheet, provided for worshippers at the early morning Communion Service at the Residential, although we are assured the Creed is included in the Sunday morning eucharist, and a range of hymns across different worship events (they were less in evidence during the Residential, where more contemporary worship songs were favoured). It was also noted that the visual focus of the main worship sessions at the Residential did not include a Bible: a 'whole Bible' (as opposed to isolated scripture passages onscreen) has credal significance.
94. Notwithstanding the above, and our recommendation below, we would add that no student expressed concerns that the integrity of their faith (in a credal or dogmatic sense) had been challenged or disrespected at SMC, and no student presented themselves to the Team with concerns about the health of SMC's credal heart.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that SMC ensures giving due prominence to the credal heart of generous orthodoxy in college life, perhaps by reviewing its use of hymns and worship songs with a credal focus along with the visible presence of a physical Bible at Morning and Evening Prayer.

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

95. An ordinand's report of a staff member's assurance (on behalf of the staff team) that "our vocation is serving your vocation" was recognised and affirmed by other students present in the group, one adding that the SMC staff team are known to pray regularly for their students. This could be in the environment fostered by the FGs, and specifically as FGTs carried out their roles. This may be enhanced by ongoing group interactions via WhatsApp. Students also particularly valued the relationships they had built with Centre Directors.
96. During the visit, PER Team members witnessed a whole range of styles of interaction between staff and students. At worship sessions, staff were present to introduce their FG worship leaders, and on occasions were positioned, with a smile, to welcome the SMC community at the entrance doors of the worship space. They were integrated with students at the mealtimes at the Residential.
97. An observed teaching session on Intercultural Worship at the Residential included a panel presentation involving staff members who spoke candidly and at times movingly about relevant episodes from their life stories, occasionally showing some vulnerability which the students clearly appreciated. At the same session, staff members engaged with breakout group discussions and spent time after the formal end of the session with students who gathered at the front with further points and questions. At the London and EM centres the Review Team observed a similar undefended, relaxed and engaged interaction between staff and students, including at mealtimes.
98. Another area where it is important to have good interaction between staff and students is study support. Students who had engaged with the Academic Skills Team described the quality of the encounter as 'phenomenal'.
99. SMC's relationship with Durham University means that the Durham Excellence in Learning and Teaching Award (DELTA) is an option for its teaching staff, and there is an expectation that newly appointed teaching staff will undertake relevant professional development within their first two years at the College. We understand that 37.5% of the current teaching staff (generally those who have begun their engagement with the work of teaching and training in more recent years, as is usual) have a teaching qualification which is relevant to and appropriate in the context of their role.
100. DELTA, or some other professional teaching accreditation (such as the PGCE) certainly features on many staff CVs or is in progress, alongside an array of postgraduate degrees, professional qualifications and listing of publications (a collection of the latter appears on the SMC website). At the Residential, warm recognition was given to a staff member who had recently published a book.
101. Staff development also takes place at the national Academic Staff meeting, at which a particular theme, such as the emerging challenges of Artificial Intelligence or a focus on methods of

assessment is examined and explored. In addition SMC may offer work skills training opportunities (IT, Health and Safety etc, are listed in the Induction Information document for SMC London).

102. A high priority is given to ‘excellence in Formation’ and ‘Contribution to the Church’ in appraisal and review documentation which lays out provisions for lecturer progression, with an expectation that development in an individual’s spiritual formation and character, along with commitment to ministry within the wider church, will be evidenced by student feedback and references. All SMC staff, whether academic, administrative or pastoral, are involved in local church ministry in one capacity or another.
103. Two days are set aside each year for a staff retreat, with each staff member entitled to an annual personal retreat day in addition to their usual annual leave, and the areas of church life and spiritual development are expected to feature in meetings with line managers where the agenda includes personal formation.
104. Teaching staff at TEIs often have to engage students with difficult subject areas or academic agendas where there can be an immediate tension between existing student sensitivities and a teacher’s academic integrity. Reviewers observed that Biblical Studies teaching staff fully acknowledged the issue, suggesting a wise and pragmatic approach to holding in balance the attraction of an academically progressive agenda on the one hand and pastoral sensitivity on the other.

Commendation 13

We commend SMC in its nurture of a staff team whose members are committed to their roles, and engaged with a comprehensive formational work environment in which they share.

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

Section C: Leadership and Management

C1 The TEI has clear and effective governance structures.

105. SMC has grown exponentially since it was founded in 2007, and now has centres in the South West and the East Midlands, as well as the centres in London and Chelmsford. This rapid growth has been effectively managed, despite the loss of one centre in the North West and the difficulties caused by the pandemic, as well as severe financial pressures, which have affected an institution with large numbers of students much more seriously than most other theological colleges.
106. Following 16 years of growth, SMC is wisely looking for consolidation and a focus on quality not quantity. Its growth has not affected its values and in particular its distinctive core value of 'generous orthodoxy', which is well understood and appreciated at all levels of the organisation and is seen as vital in preparing its students to be comfortable in a wide range of different settings.
107. The Chair of the Board, with his varied experience of the organisation from its inception, provides strong leadership, and understands the role of the Board in providing oversight and leaving the day-to-day running of the College to the Dean and the senior team. Regular meetings between the Chair and the Dean ensure that the Board is kept well informed and the Dean is well supported, a most important basis for a well-run organisation. In particular, the Dean is able to benefit from the experience of the Chair who led the establishment of the College as its first Dean.
108. It is therefore particularly important that the College should be aware of the importance of succession planning for the role of Chair, given his particular skills and experience within the organisation, but also of other key posts including the Dean. This would normally be a role undertaken by the nomination committee (see Recommendation 8 at C3). The loss of key personnel is also a risk that should be included in the risk register.
109. We were not able to attend a board meeting as part of our visit, which would have enabled us to assess more fully the dynamics of the board, which can be especially difficult if individuals who do not know each other well are meeting virtually, as has been the case here. There is evidence that several members of the board recognise that they do not know the organisation well, and this should be rectified as soon as practical.
110. Following its Effectiveness Review in 2021, the Board has more recently created an undated plan for its governance structure, linked with the integration of the SMC and SPTC finances, which includes the appointment of a SMC Treasurer, but this does not appear to be linked to any succession planning strategy.

Commendation 14

We commend SMC for its strong leadership and effective relationship between the Chair of the Board and the Dean.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Board should give consideration to succession planning for trustees, especially for the role of Chair.

C2 The TEI has effective team leadership.

- 111. We observed good working relationships among the senior executive, who operate as an effective team, integrating well the academic and operational aspects of college life. The senior team attend board meetings and it is clear from the minutes that members of the executive, in particular the Dean, participate in the meetings, and appear to have good working relationships with the board.
- 112. Staff are kept well informed, are consulted as appropriate, and understand the values and strategic direction of the college. Roles are clearly designated and staff understand their roles and responsibilities, and how they fit into the organisation as a whole. There was great enthusiasm for SMC among employees at all levels, and the culture encourages learning from mistakes and innovation. The leadership encourages staff at all levels to innovate. It is clear that there is a widely owned vision for excellence and a very positive motivational culture.
- 113. SMC has appointed members of staff from the GMH community, but their strategy is proving difficult as their success has led to their GMH recruits being headhunted by other organisations. Nevertheless the College continues to pursue this important goal.

Commendation 15

We commend SMC for its strategy of matching racial diversity among the staff team with that of the student body.

C3 Trustees are appropriately recruited, supported and developed.

- 114. SMC is a company limited by guarantee which is registered as a charity, and the constitution allows for between three and 13 'trustees' (board members). The three 'Members' of the company are the Bishops of London and Chelmsford, each of whom is ex officio a member of the board, and St Paul's Theological College, which has the right to appoint a member of the Board from among its own trustees. Further trustees are appointed by those Members, one is appointed by the General Synod and the President of the College is also a trustee.
- 115. Since the 2017 PER, the diversity of the Board has greatly improved, though much of this improvement has been outside the control of SMC. Most obviously, the Bishops of London and Chelmsford, who were both white men, have been succeeded by women, one white and one GMH. Opportunities to affect the Board's diversity directly rest largely with the three Members as it is they who have the power of appointment to the board. The Articles merely require the Members to "have due regard", among other things, to "the rich diversity of the Church of England and the

country that the College serves”, without any specific mention of diversity as to gender, ethnicity, education or social background.

116. At present, while in terms of sex and ethnicity there is diversity, there is no regional diversity from the newer Centres of the College, and there may be a question as to the social diversity as well as some gaps in terms of skills and experience, particularly in the areas of pensions, law and digital.
117. While SMC has, following the recommendations of the 2017 PER, added brief biographies of the Board members to the website, it is unclear in some cases who has appointed them, and in one case it is stated that the individual is the General Synod ‘representative’ on the board of governors. Given that, strictly speaking, no board member should be regarded as a representative of the member or other body which appointed them, we encourage greater clarity in this matter. All board members are under a duty to act in the way they consider in good faith most likely to achieve the purposes of the College: this is the advancement of the Christian religion by preparing for public ministry candidates selected by the Church of England (para. 3 of the SMC Memorandum of Association).
118. General principles of good governance hold that appointments to a board should be subject to a formal, rigorous and transparent procedure, and that an effective succession plan should be maintained for board and senior management. Appointments and succession plans should be based on merit and objective criteria and, within this context, should promote diversity of gender, social and ethnic backgrounds, cognitive and personal strengths (see for example Principle J of the UK Corporate Governance Code). A nomination committee will often lead the appointment process, making recommendations to those who appoint board members and thereby ensuring a consistent approach to the issue of diversity and the need for a range of appropriate skills and experience. The Charity Commission has carried out research that shows that using personal recommendations and word of mouth, while popular, are not necessarily the most effective way of recruiting board members. Using wider, more inclusive methods, for example advertising and trustee brokerage services, can access a wider range of options, and the Commission recommends this approach.
119. Given the demands on members’ time and commitment, the reviewers are conscious of the possible risk of meetings being inquorate. To avoid any such risk, as well as to provide future assurance of diversity, SMC would be well advised to allow the Bishops of London and Chelmsford to appoint permanent alternates who would be able to stand in for them as Members when necessary. This may require amendment to the Articles of Association, and we invite SMC to consider taking advice on the scope for doing so. To improve the process of appointments to the board, a nomination committee should be established (not necessarily as a committee of the board), chaired by an individual who is independent (i.e. not a stakeholder), and with a small number of additional members from the board, responsible for recommending appointments of board members other than those who serve *ex-officio*. This would not deprive Members of their ability to appoint to the board. Instead they might be required by the Articles to have due regard

to the recommendations of the nomination committee. The board should also consider succession planning, which is of vital importance for the College, in particular for the role of the Chair of the board. This might be done in conjunction with the nomination committee.

Recommendation 8

A nomination committee should be established, chaired by an individual who is independent and with a small number of additional members from the board, responsible for recommending non ex officio appointments of board members, to ensure diversity, flexibility and continuity.

120. Induction of trustees currently includes a brief meeting with the Dean and a meeting with the Chair prior to their first board meeting, to give some of the context for the College, the board and its members. Trustees are given an induction document which provides a general introduction to the College, and includes a copy of the constitution, extracts from the Higher Education Code of Governance which the College is required to adopt under the Office for Students (OfS), the East Midlands Memorandum of Understanding and the Terms of Reference for the College's committees. Continuing training is not carried out as part of a planned programme, but rather consists of occasional training, including safeguarding training in 2020.
121. In accordance with the Higher Education Code of Governance, the College undertakes an internal Board Effectiveness Review every 4 years, most recently in Autumn 2021, with reports to the SMC Audit Committee and Board. This review comprised a questionnaire for Board Trustees, a separate questionnaire for the Partnership / Advisory Board Members and a Trustee Skills Audit, and actions were taken as a result. In response to changes in the Board and vacancies arising, the Trustee Skills Audit was repeated in June 2023 to assess the alteration in skillset. There have been no appraisals of individual Board members.
122. We would recommend that, on joining the Board, Trustees are given a copy of the Charity Commission's guidance document *The Essential Trustee* and are required to read it. This is an essential requirement expected by regulators. There should be regular training on the duties of a company director and a charity trustee. Since every company is unique, it is important that this is carried out with the board as a whole, with the opportunity for the Board to discuss together issues and questions that might arise from the training.
123. In discussion with the Board it was recognised that there was a need for regular review of the Board's work and processes. The Board and individual members and trustees should undertake an annual appraisal, and it is desirable every three years such appraisals are not wholly internal and that instead some independent element is introduced by using an external reviewer or facilitator. The appraisal process should include reviewing systems of governance and performance both individual and corporate. The appraisal process should not be regarded as an end in itself, and the results should be carefully considered for lessons learned and any action required, with appropriate follow up to ensure those actions are implemented and their effectiveness

subsequently reviewed. Issues of diversity and the presence on the Board of necessary skills and experience should be an integral part of a Board appraisal.

Recommendation 9

We recommend all new SMC trustees be asked to read *The Essential Trustee* as part of their induction and to confirm that they have read it.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the Board adopts periodic external facilitation of its performance including training for its members and trustees.

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

124. SMC has developed a well-thought out and comprehensive five-year business and strategic plan (2023-28). There is an excellent SWOT analysis, which identifies the key issues, including financial threats, some of which (most obviously capped tuition fees and changes to RMF) are outside the College's control, and have a much greater impact on such a large institution than on most other theological colleges. Despite these problems, SMC continues to provide generous funding for students, to ensure they are well supported. The College also has plans to increase its fundraising. Since its latest Board effectiveness review (Autumn 2021), in order to improve oversight of finance and strategy, the executive meet members of the Audit Committee more frequently.
125. The College has an effective structure to enable staff and students to be kept informed and to be consulted. This means that the strategic plan is owned at all levels of the organisation.
126. SMC clearly demonstrates that its risk register is integrated into the governance of the college, but we are concerned that the current document may not be as useful as it could be, since almost all the risks have supposedly been mitigated to a very low level, which does not distinguish effectively between those that need to be considered as continuing risks, such as areas of finance, because they cannot be fully mitigated, being outside the College's control.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the risk register is reviewed to highlight key risks which need to be kept under scrutiny.

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.

127. St Mellitus College (SMC) offers a range of under-graduate and post-graduate programmes that respond to the ministerial training needs of the sponsoring church. The TEI demonstrated an awareness of the changing needs and practices of the church – specifically how they have adapted their training as the church shifted from criteria to qualities that they now train to. SMC training provision caters for ordinands and independent students through at all four centres.
128. Although out of scope of this review, the Team acknowledges creative ways in which SMC also contributes to ministerial formation through the Caleb and Peter streams. The review notes this as an example of SMC responding to the changing needs of the church by expanding opportunities to those responding to Christ's calling but who in the past may have felt excluded. We note with satisfaction the diversity of ordinands and independent students at SMC as evidence that it is responding to and attracting all who are called including independent students. Similarly, we note the growing numbers of independent students as evidence of the quality of learning and of SMC's responsiveness to growing demands for their courses. SMC has shown good awareness of this demand and responded by broadening its curriculum appropriately.
129. A critical area of commendation for SMC is the depth and breadth of the curriculum for ordinands at all levels. It is clear to the review team that at SMC candidates live out the 'generous orthodoxy' through the design of a curriculum that stretches them out of their comfort zones and allowing them to develop a robust understanding for the different dimensions and traditions of the faith. It encourages them to prepare to serve the church in different contexts. We formed a view that this approach which focuses on developing the formational qualities builds a resilient faith and forms ordinands to engage with an ever-changing ministerial context in an agile way.

Commendation 16

We commend the depth and breadth of SMC's curriculum for ordinands at all levels.

Training in Context

130. Ordinands training at SMC are trained in context. This means a theoretically robust curriculum delivered through structured study - reading, lectures, seminars, workshops, and conferences that complement the individual placements as pedagogical spaces. This approach allows candidates an opportunity to train in situ and to see what 'faith' looks like when it hits the ground, providing them with space to grow their faith and build on the qualities the church seeks. In the words of one ordinand 'we learn theories in college and when we experience placements, we also build a theory of ministry and learn from comparing the two'. In this approach the ordinands habituate reflexive

practices and find the support of placement supervisors and their tutors' important parts of this formational journey.

131. The Review Team is satisfied that this approach delivers the qualities the church is looking for in ordinands and could see evidence of how learning in context produces ordinands that have a better understanding of the realities of contemporary ministry. It was clear to the review team that candidates' experiences become the basis for further engagement with their learning and to a considerable extent also became an important aspect of the personalised learning that SMC works to.
132. We also note the effectiveness of the formation groups in providing a space for peer-to-peer learning, support, and reflective practice. Ordinands and other students- including those who have left SMC spoke very highly of these as a crucial cog in building SMC cohort identity. Ordinands also spoke highly to the enhanced access they have to their tutors and the central role these have in helping to shape and monitor the individual learning needs. This is good practice and is working well.
133. We note the crucial role also played by the placement supervisors and, as we comment further at section E4 (Recommendation 21) encourage SMC to continue to develop a systematic way of engaging with them.

Commendation 17

We commend SMC's use of formation groups as an effective and valued space for learning, support and reflective practice.

Range and Depth of Programmes

134. Academic qualifications offered by SMC are validated by Durham University as part of the Common Awards scheme. Ordinands and other students can study part-time or full-time. The undergraduate qualifications range from FHEQ Level 4 to level 6 and include: a Certificate, Diploma and BA (Honours) in Theology, Ministry and Mission. These are available to ordinands as well as independent students. An analysis of the SMC curriculum map shows that SMC continues to train ordinands to the church's ministerial requirements as individual learning plans are mapped to the qualities for ministerial formation. For the undergraduate provision, SMC also offers independent students' opportunities to specialise in Emerging Generations and, Youth Ministry, respectively. These specialist streams are an example of the responsiveness of SMC to changing needs of the sponsoring church and society.
135. The review notes with satisfaction that the establishment of the respective centres in South West (2017) and East Midlands (2019) has allowed SMC to respond to the regional nuances in the demands for Ministry training. In addition to expanding opportunities for study locally, these regional centres provide scope for necessary adaptations of SMC training to local needs of the church and society.

136. At post-graduate level (HEQF level 7), SMC offers an MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission to both ordinands and independent students. These are available to study part-time or full-time. The review notes that the MA also comes with pathways for specialisation - with the London centre offering the possibility to pursue a pathway in Mission in Contemporary Culture or Biblical Studies. It is clear to the review team that these focused pathways allow for the development of specialist knowledge and skills required for the different areas of Ministry by the church.
137. We note that SMC in putting on these post-graduate programmes is not only responding to the needs of the church but also teaching to their research strengths. The Review Team observed with satisfaction the research-led teaching that underpins SMC's post-graduate programmes with a considerable number of staff teaching courses in their areas of research specialisation. This is highly commended as it ensures that the quality of learning the ordinands and other students remains world class. The review team is satisfied that SMC's programmes are world-engaging, have appropriate depth, enable theological learning, and designed to ensure faith relates to life.
138. SMC currently does not offer FHEQ level 8 qualifications but does allow those interested to register with Durham. Qualified SMC staff are able to co-supervise PhD candidates with the Durham Faculty of Theology and Religion. This is commended as it allows faculty to remain engaged in research that enriches the training they do.

Commendation 18

We commend the quality of research-led teaching that underpins SMC's post-graduate programmes, the relationship with Durham University that support doctoral study, and SMC faculty's ongoing engagement in research.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that as the number of staff engaged in co-supervision increases, SMC considers if it can start to offer validated PGR qualifications at level 8.

139. The Review Team notes with satisfaction the vibrant engagement the students and ordinands have with high profile theologians including Rowan Williams and the upcoming Nicaea Conference in 2025. This demonstrates an ambition and a desire to shape theological debates and be at the cutting edge of creating knowledge. In the end, it is this engagement with theological debates that can ensure the SMC model continues to evolve its own theological discursive constructions and practices. We commend SMC for this and encourage SMC to continue to build the diversity of partnerships and engagements with even those whose theology may be different from them. We encourage SMC to continue to expand the range of topics covered especially navigating some of the controversial aspects including topic like faith and human sexuality. Given the diversity of the ordinands and student body we also encourage SMC to engage expand their engagement with decoloniality and related topics covered in Black Theology.

Commendation 19

We commend SMC's ongoing engagement with a wide diversity of theological discourse and we encourage its continued expansion of topics, which might for example include areas of Black Theology.

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

140. The Review Team is satisfied that the programmes at SMC are appropriately resourced, developed and quality assured. SMC recruits highly qualified staff and is able to retain them within levels of attrition expected in a TEI of this size. There are challenges with ensuring the diversity of staff matches the student body. When staff join SMC, they are inducted well, and the leadership ensures that new staff norm around the quality expectations. The Review Team notes SMC's well embedded tradition of peer review and staff development that ensures those who teach on the programmes have the required competencies to engage with students and ordinands.
141. SMC has begun to encourage professionalisation of teaching qualifications and staff are required to complete the Durham programme (DELTA) or a near equivalent within two years of employment. Currently nearly 40 per cent have completed this qualification. The annual peer review of teaching that is embedded as part of the development review process also ensures that a culture of continuous personal improvement and learning is embedded with SMC. The review team recognise this drive to professionalise teaching qualifications among staff as an important aspect of meeting the quality standards for their programmes, and encourage SMC to explore pathways to support those seeking Advance HE Fellowship over time.

Commendation 20

We commend SMC for recruiting highly qualified staff, inducting them well and instituting a good peer review process that supports teaching and other skills development, and we encourage its further exploration of pathways to support those seeking Advance HE Fellowship.

142. We note the under-representation of GMH staff especially among the teaching staff. While acknowledging the challenges faced, we encourage SMC to continue to consciously continue to diversify their teaching staff, so it reflects the diverse student body it has.
143. Although SMC has a robust system of peer-to-peer staff learning and review, we encourage them to continue to broaden this aspect to include development of capacity to use emerging and engaging new interactive technologies especially during large group settings at residential. Many such can be integrated into the existing training and teaching equipment available at the centres and residential.
144. We note with satisfaction the number of research active staff and the growing portfolio of publications by SMC staff. We however encourage SMC to develop ways of promoting these

publications including on their website. We also encourage more internal show case events - perhaps annually? - to share the research that is being done as a way of encouraging the emergence of a theological epistemic community at SMC.

145. Library and IT resources at SMC work well to support the study and learning needs of the ordinands and students. We note the growing and expanding print and e-resources provision available through the Hub. Students – including mature, part-time and distance learners spoke highly of the library and IT provision and commended staff for their patience and responsiveness to their learning needs. The review team notes with satisfaction the support given to students at SMC who arrive without the requisite IT and study skills and the provision available to them. The appointment of the Lead Tutor and the Academic Skills Tutor also ensures sufficient focus is maintained on supporting the learning needs of all at SMC. We encourage efforts to continue to develop specialism in managing and supporting students with Specific Learning Differences (SpLD). It is clear to the review team that students with different learning and other needs are treated with care and support to build the skills they need to succeed at SMC. Library provision at the regional centres is adequate and in development. At the East Midlands Centre the temporary space being used although set off site from the college hub is still accessible and provides further study space.
146. Overall, we are satisfied that Library and IT resources at SMC meet the varied learning needs and requirements of the ordinands and students.

Commendation 21

We commend SMC for their student-centred and effective approach to meeting the SpLD, study skills and other support needs of a wide diversity of learners, and encourage their further development of this support.

Recommendation 13

We recommend SMC continue its efforts further to diversify its body of teaching staff including in terms of GMH representation.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that SMC explore further the scope to highlight its staff publications and research culture, including via the website and showcase events.

Recommendation 15

We recommend SMC continue efforts to find a more permanent space for the regional library in the East Midlands Centre.

Curriculum Review and Development

147. As part of the review, the team had access to the programme material available on the learning platform Moodle. The material is very well structured and standardised. There is evidence of norming around the quality of materials provided to learners and it is also clear that great effort has been made to ensure that the platform is easy to navigate and material easy to locate. We are satisfied that this infrastructure makes always learning accessible and from anywhere through this platform.
148. SMC is part of the Common Awards (CA) framework that has inbuilt mechanisms for quality control and assurance. A review of past QA reports and a privileged engagement with the QA team from CA during this review shows that the processes for quality control are working well, allowing issues to be picked up early and to be addressed. There is evidence that SMC continuously evaluates the relevance of their curriculum through a very structured annual cycle (ASE) that monitors not only how the teaching being done is landing but also the nature of the content and how it helps the ordinands and independent students meet the expected ILOs and build the formational qualities. A review of the ASE for 2022/23 demonstrates a desire to ensure that the process helps to drive quality of teaching, learning and formation.
149. SMC also uses the Common Awards Student Survey (CASS) to benchmark the quality of experience of their learners and there is evidence that SMC leadership through the working group and the Management Committee (which has student representation) take seriously the outcomes of the survey and do respond to the issues they raise. The review notes with satisfaction the value of the Racial Justice Priority Group (see the Commendation in Section E) and senior students group as important platforms to promote inclusion and diversity at SMC. We are satisfied that SMC not only has spaces for interacting with but has created mechanisms for ensuring that the students' issues are heard and acted on. We note the very high levels of satisfaction (95%) revealed in the latest CASS survey as evidence of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning environment at SMC. A very low attrition rate of 8 students confirms that once students arrive here many go on to complete their studies. It is our view that the systems and processes for quality control at SMC are working well and allowing the institution to deliver high quality programmes.
150. We would, however, encourage SMC to put in place a system of exit interviews to ensure it understands the nature of challenges faced by those who do not complete and what it can do better to support them. We also encourage SMC to review the functions of the management committee especially thinking though how the participation of student representatives can enhance the quality of discussions and how SMC responds to issues raised.

Commendation 22

We commend SMC for ensuring that there is continuous senior leadership engagement with quality issues and that issues raised by the learners are dealt with effectively and in good time.

Recommendation 16

Building on SMC's excellent engagement with learner feedback, we encourage the college to institute exit interviews with those who do not complete programmes, and that it reviews the mechanisms for student input into the management committee to aid further understanding of issues and support needs.

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

151. There is a good mix of teaching and learning styles and assessment methods, and students and staff make concerted effort to make learning engaging and interesting. Staff use the standard lecture method, small group discussions, seminars, workshops, panels to engage with their learners. All centres are adequately equipped with projecting equipment as well as other more traditional equipment like flip charts (during the residential). While the latter still has its place, we encourage its gradual replacement with emerging technologies for visualisation that we have seen deployed especially during visits to the London and East Midland centre. Given that SMC's teaching bases are well supplied with IT and that the college largely serves a digitally adept learner community there seem to us to be ready opportunities for further creative IT use, even allowing for the constraints of technology provision at external venues – hence Recommendation 17. We note the central role of the lecture methods but deployed in what is in essence a 'flipped classroom' in some of the courses. Students expressed satisfaction with this approach as it allowed them to engage with learning material and to come prepared to discuss and share with others.
152. The use of the seminar method is working well especially for the level 7 courses. Our observations during the residential and during structured visits to the centres confirm the sentiments of the students interviewed that these small seminar settings encourage the development of independent critical thinking about theology. One area of special commendation for SMC is their ability to encourage the expression of faith and prayer even during learning. As one learner puts it, we are encouraged to see 'theological study as an act of worship'. This was in evidence during the Review Team's visit as a group ended their leadership small group discussion with a prayer for each other'.
153. The review team notes with satisfaction the wide variety of formative and summative assessment methods deployed at SMC. The formation group is central to some of the formative feedback as the regular interaction with the FGT encourages the development of an ongoing feedback loop that even takes in the placement supervisors as well. With nine different forms of assessment (essays, reflective journals, theological reflections, projects, presentations, exams, practical skills, resource for others, portfolio), SMC ensures that learners with different learning and engagement styles are accommodated.

154. We note the minimal use of examinations as a form of assessment and encourage SMC to continue to be in dialogue with CA about developing guidance for the use of generative AI.
155. Assessment methods at SMC though governed through the CA partner agreements allow innovation in assessment methods. We are satisfied that the system of assessment and feedback is working well. A look at the performance of the students also shows that staff use the full range of marks available to them, rewarding exceptional work with higher grades while also pointing out inadequate work through constructive feedback. The moderation process is working as expected and students can be confident that the grades they get reflect the quality of work submitted. We are also satisfied that the process of norming new staff through double moderation ensures consistency and a safe induction that protects quality of assessment. The use of the marking guide is also essential in ensuring that there is consistency of practice and approach across the different examiners. Similarly, the use of the Academic Skills Tutor is crucial in this feedback process especially when the learners require additional support. Overall, we are satisfied that assessment and feedback systems are working well and produce outcomes that allow each student to demonstrate how they meet the ILOs.
156. We commend the systems and practices in place and would only suggest consideration of a 'feedforward' approach to complement what SMC does. 'Feedforward' is particularly important for SMC as it allows the varied learners opportunities to engage with their tutors after their assessed work.

Commendation 23

We commend SMC's varied and effective range of teaching and learning styles and of formative and summative assessments, while we would encourage further consideration of a feedforward approach to aid students' development.

Recommendation 17

We recommend that SMC explores the scope for further use of engaging interactive technologies as part of its teaching and learning especially at residentials.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that SMC continue to dialogue with the Common Awards team about developing guidance for the use of generative AI technologies in the context of assessments.

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

157. Based on a review of the curriculum map we are satisfied that the module portfolio at SMC allows students to meet their learning outcomes. We can make this call across all the levels (HEQF levels 4-7). When looked at in the context of HEQF expectations we note that the portfolio of modules

allows for student progression and development over their course of learning programmes. It is clear why some modules are foundational and how they relate to other modules. The modules are designed with sufficient levels of overlap, but always with clarity around the ILOs. The more foundational modules (level 4) provide a platform to build and establish key theological and other concepts and practices while the higher-level modules (level 7) encourage the development of independent critical thinking about the bigger theological questions facing society.

158. Indeed, talking to the ordinands and independent students across the programmes and based on a sample review of the external examiners reports we are satisfied that SMC students do meet their ILOs and the students get a learning experience comparable to leading providers and in line with HEQF expectations. We have pointed out elsewhere in this report how SMC programmes provide sufficient breadth to meet the expectations of the ‘formational qualities’ that need to be met. We note with satisfaction that students can choose to specialise and study topics of interest in greater depth. The introduction of new programmes in Youth Ministry is a good example of this as are the new taught postgraduate programmes that SMC has introduced.

Commendation 23

We commend SMC’s ‘demand’ driven model of curriculum and programme development, effectively balancing generic and national programme expectations against specific ministerial needs in the respective regional centres.

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

159. The training in context model used at SMC allows all who come here to integrate their academic learning with in-situ ministerial development. Reflective practice is an important part of their learning and development and as reflected elsewhere in this report candidates are encouraged to learn about theory in their classes but also build theory through practice. For the candidates, the placement requirement helps them link their academic learning to the practices they encounter in day-to-day ministry. The formation groups and the availability of an SMC tutor and a placement supervisor encourages them to process their experiences against this background of the academic courses.
160. It was clear to the team that students are encouraged to become theologically reflexive thinkers with evidence of much success in this. During our visit it was clear that as the candidates returned from their placement, they are given space to think about their experiences with others and with their tutors. Also evident is the extent to which candidates continually surprised themselves ministerially venturing into areas and traditions that were out of their comfort zones. We noted some good examples of peer-to-peer learning and evidence that ‘the generous orthodoxy’ in use here is an effective way of preparing students for a much-changed ministerial context in which they will be working in teams and often covering several parishes with different faith traditions.

161. As we reflect earlier in this report, and in line with section B recommendations, we encourage SMC to continue to develop the context-based training model, and its 'generous orthodoxy' perhaps working to manage the HTB label that is an unfair characterisation of what contemporary SMC experience is about in reality.

The review team has Confidence 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.

162. There was no doubt of the infectious nature of students' faith, expressed in both informal and more formal conversation. Students spoke very positively of the formation group as a context within which transformation happened, through mutual support, building friendships with and learning from students from very different traditions and backgrounds.
163. That this faith is rooted in scripture and worship was clear. Reviewers observed morning worship at the residential week and the London centre. Their overall impression was largely positive, but mixed: while the Sunday Eucharist the previous day had been a high mass in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, it was noted that the three morning worship sessions experienced were quite similar in style, including the repetition of a worship song on subsequent days, raising a question about co-ordination between the groups delivering worship at residential sessions.
164. That said, worship and input across the whole residential included significant expressions of theological and cultural diversity: students were exposed to (amongst other things) a talk about an artwork (created by and Iranian-born woman artist who was not herself a Christian); the reflections of a Chinese worship leader (a recorded interview in a teaching session); a Yoruba worship song; an Anglo-Catholic Sunday Eucharist; and a profusion of worship songs at Morning and Evening Prayer. These referents, representing a very wide range of discourses, were experienced in short order within the corporate life of a student community where ordinands of different ages, genders, church traditions and ethnic and cultural backgrounds were represented. All of this reflects our commendation of SMC's intentional diversity in worship and the excellence of student-led acts of worship that we saw (Commendations 11 and 12)
165. Nonetheless, and as per Recommendation 6 above, we believe it would be good for SMC to consider the extent to which students are enabled to worship in the college context through the more traditional hymnody for example, through which many in the Church of England still worship.
166. The ASE document (section A.5a) notes that "Those devising and leading worship are encouraged to draw upon the full range of cultural expressions of worship available" and that ordinands should "draw on their own cultural traditions of worship, to reflect and enhance the diversity of the college." Notwithstanding the very positive elements of diversity in worship and experience noted above, we believe there is further to go in developing a worshipping life that is more fully informed by the riches of the Anglican liturgical tradition.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that the feedback form for student led worship, filled in by the Formation Group tutor, includes something more explicit in sections two and three about making choices which reflect these concerns around inhabiting a diversity of worship traditions.

167. TEI staff are perceived to model a very positive formational context, reflecting one of the strengths identified in the college SWOT analysis. Students spoke highly of the experience of studying theology in a prayerful context, about being taught by tutors who are “prayerful and godly people”. The principle of ‘Generous orthodoxy’ is not simply a slogan but is evident to students in their tutors. Students spoke highly of the staff’s stated commitment that their vocation is ‘to serve you in your vocation’.
168. The reviewers have evidence of some concerns about realistic scheduling and formation for those training part-time. Whilst these ordinands said that the amount of formation time has been improved in response to concerns raised by students, they felt that there was still room for improvement. Again, whilst being positive overall, there was some question over formation in relation to people who may be working full time alongside training, e.g. making sure a regular one-to-one meeting with the FG tutor was in the diary.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that SMC give renewed attention to the practicalities of regular formational support for those training part-time, especially where they have fulltime work or other commitments alongside this.

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

169. The context-based training offered by SMC enables students to reflect continually on their ministerial calling in the ‘hands-on’ placement as well as in the college-based learning and formation group. The three streams of The Forge formation programme roots this in a focus on self, on the church and on the wider world. The encouragement to continual reflection on the students’ calling is evident in the collaborative nature of the end of year reports to Diocesan Bishops, in the student briefing email from the Dean and the information video for students.
170. Placement learning is significant: a context-based ordinand’s Primary Church Placement (PCP) may be with “a parish church, fresh expression of church, church plant or some other ‘hands on’ mission context”, part of the aim of which is to allow ordinands to grow in confidence in leading worship and preaching. In all instances the ordinand and the PCP supervisor are asked to address expectations around involvement in worship and related spiritual development. PCP training agreements outline the frequency of opportunities that the trainee will have to undertake ministerial roles/tasks in their local context: preach, lead worship, maybe school collective worship, and the like. PCP supervisors have extensive responsibilities in terms of facilitating reflection and giving ongoing feedback.

171. There is an expectation that the context of the Secondary Placement (SP) - away from any expectations at the PCP context - will be “distinctively different ... (for example, socio-economic demographic, theological tradition, spirituality)” from the ordinand’s PCP. 50% of the time spent here would constitute ‘face to face’ ministry, which could well include worship, including a ‘main act of worship’ such as a Sunday Communion service. Again, there is supervision and reporting.
172. The review team noted evidence of some issues around placement oversight and we comment further at section E4.
173. Attention to ministry in non-parochial settings was evident in the teaching programme observed at the London Monday teaching, with sessions offered on church-planting and pioneering, and schools.
174. With regard to the distinctiveness of calling, one part-time student training for the distinctive diaconate mentioned having to remind tutors that not all students were training for priesthood.
175. The exposure to fellow students from very different backgrounds in the Formation Group had a positive effect on growth in calling, expressed by one student as enabling them to “be more in love with the Church of England than I was”.

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

176. In terms of racial justice the college has been proactive. The revived Racial Justice Priority Group has an action plan based on but going further than From Lament to Action; progress is being made in diversifying the curriculum; black and Asian theologians have been included in the level 7 Missiology module. In conversation some students expressed the desire to have more focused teaching on black, feminist and womanist theology and theologians.

Commendation 24

We commend the work of the Racial Justice Priority Group as an example of good practice and for its achievements.

177. Stakeholders referred to the need to further develop intercultural competence such that students demonstrate the awareness that the church in the UK is no longer operating from a position of power and privilege.
178. This resonates with commentary in sections B4 and E1 about student led worship. It was good to see in morning worship the teaching of a Nigerian song by African-heritage ordinands. The challenge, always, is whether or not our shared worship reflects the deeper sense of love for all people and the disfigured world we are part of.
179. We comment at E5 on some aspects of working across theological difference. The equipping of students by SMC to grow in their love for people appears to the reviewers positive in many ways,

but we urge continued attention to extending further the integration of developing love for people in difference across all aspects of college life.

E4 Students are helped to grow in wisdom.

- 180. Comments about equipping students to grow in these formational qualities are bound to overlap, not least because of the three-way structure of training with St. Mellitus: the specific academic modules of study, the placement context and the formation group. In these three, ordinands are challenged intellectually, are expected to articulate their learning in work for assessment, are expected to engage in the practical work of ministry and to reflect on it with their peers.
- 181. Current students, alumni and other stakeholders are very positive about the way in which SMC enables ordinands to develop as reflective learners who are integrating study and the practice of ministry from the outset of their training. Placement supervisors spoke of seeking to pick up with the ordinands what they are studying in college and to reflect on it with them in supervision sessions. Placement supervisors try to give ordinands an area of priority for leadership development.
- 182. There was evidence that oversight of placements can be variable, depending partly on the diocese and the centre. Across a large, multi-centre TEI perhaps some variation is hard to avoid, but this is a key matter given SMC's core pattern of training, as was also picked up in the 2017 PER. Section D1 refers further.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that SMC review and tighten up the oversight of placements, especially in terms of their importance as a space to grow in leadership and collaborative skills.

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

- 183. Teaching observed by the reviewers balanced input and discussion, encouraging students to articulate their response and listen to one another.
- 184. In conversation with students and from stakeholder comments there is some concern that the part-time training pathways are less effective. This may be evidence of 'strain at the edges': SMC's full-time training model has alongside it a part-time training pathway (working to different national expectations about contact time and, often, the focus of ministry trained for); if the latter does not work as well, does that mean it should be reviewed? For example, London part-time ordinands reported that there could be more rigorous use of the placement working agreement (see Recommendation 21).
- 185. There is a proposal to develop a module that offers accredited reflection on the placement. This proposal is just being picked up again after a delay, but will be a significant addition to evidence of a student's growth in fruitfulness.

186. In terms of handling theological diversity, reviewers noted the stance taken by the college on LLF. Senior leaders when asked seemed to say that they were waiting for the C of E to make a stated position then respond. Politically, this is perhaps understandable and pragmatic. But a TEI's calling, in part, is to equip its learners to work well with theological difference. Might SMC find ways to be more proactive in engaging with the LLF material with its ordinands and LLM trainees? Does the principle of 'generous orthodoxy', central to the college's identity and highly important in its ethos, give room for this kind of exploration? To do so would model the outcomes in E5 about working across difference, and offer valuable preparation for students to lead others in doing so. The reviewers note that differences within congregations can be stressful for clergy, and can lead to some retreating into their theological 'safe spaces'. Addressing this in the college context offers a valuable opportunity to build up resilience in a space where students feel safe.

Recommendation 22

We recommend that SMC should continue to seek ways in which contested theological issues in the life of the church can be safely and fruitfully explored within its community.

E6 Students are equipped to continue to develop their potential.

187. Evidence from SMC alumni was very positive about their preparedness to go on learning as they left college and entered curacy and IME2; this was echoed by a DDO observing this transition. Some placement supervisors felt that it was a bit of a bumpy transition into curacy. Again, the reviewers' recommendations elsewhere around placement supervision and consistency of oversight apply here.

E7 Students are able to demonstrate trustworthiness.

188. Expectations around the quality of trustworthiness are that students be equipped to develop disciplined habits of prayer, study and reflection and a readiness to be accountable within the church's structures, including around safeguarding.
189. The reviewers' findings here are positive. Former students and training incumbents speak very well of personal and spiritual formation for ministry, and the review team noted the significant contribution of a residential week which includes a Leadership Formation course. SMC emphasise that all students should have a spiritual director.
190. The Team spoke with many ordinands who were deeply and openly appreciative of the experience of doing academic learning within the context of prayer and worship. One student is quoted on the SMC website as saying, "we wrestle with tough questions, but it always comes back to worship". Prayers were also used to 'book-end' main teaching sessions witnessed by the Team at the Residential.
191. We discuss and commend at section B2 SMC's strong commitment to safeguarding training and practice and its embedding of a safer church culture across its community.

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.

- 192. Documentation showed a rigorous reporting process throughout the time of training, with which students were engaged as part of continuing reflection on their learning and ministerial development.
- 193. Placement supervisors spoke of a strong sense of partnership with the college, and of the positive three-way relationship between themselves, the ordinand and the Formation Group tutor.
- 194. Placement supervisors were very positive about the move to using the seven qualities for discernment as the framework for reporting, as this offers consistency throughout the whole discernment and training process, but agreed that it made it much harder to write the report.

Recommendation 23

We recommend that SMC should offer training to placement supervisors specifically on how to evidence formational development within the new qualities framework.

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

Section F: Licensed Lay Ministry training at St Mellitus

195. Licensed Lay Ministers (LLM) in training are taught at both the London and the Chelmsford Centres and in partnership with the two Dioceses of London and Chelmsford.
196. The Review Team met with a small group of those training for LLM, a mixture of those training in at the Chelmsford Centre and the London Centre. The Team also met with the Formational Tutor for the London Tuesday LLM Group and the Lay Ministry Adviser from Chelmsford Diocese, a lay person and LLM trained at SMC. One recent trainee responded as a stakeholder and offered reflections on their experience at SMC.
197. At Chelmsford the LLM group gathers for a meal in Chelmsford Cathedral and concludes its teaching evenings in the Cathedral with compline. The group numbers a total of 11 in this current academic year (one in year 1, six in year 3 and five in year 2). The one trainee from Chelmsford in 2023 is part of the London LLM group, and in the recent past it also has hosted a trainee from Guildford.
198. At London the LLM group meets at St Jude's, the London Centre, on Tuesdays. There are currently 7 LLMs in training and this has recently reduced from 9.
199. In Chelmsford the diocese works with other partners in the provision of LLM training and SMC is one such partner. In London candidates for LLM have the option of attending St Edmund's – an alternative training provider to SMC.
200. SMC is connected into the ministry structures of each diocese. SMC has representation on the London LLM Board which meet three times per annum. In Chelmsford the Formational Tutor is a member of the Diocesan ministry oversight team.
201. The primary placement is the LLM student's home or sending parish. The only LLM-only modules are 'Introduction to Preaching' and 'Introduction to Pastoral Care', otherwise students take part in modules with ordinands. Due to the constraints of the PER, it was not possible to observe an 'LLM only' teaching event.

Response to the 2017 PER recommendations

202. In the 2017 PER recommended that SMC 'review the governance of its LLM training programme with its partners dioceses including oversight of quality of teaching when not provided by SMC'. In the follow up report of 2019 it was recorded that progress in re-structuring LLM programmes had been made with an emphasis on accrediting hitherto un-accredited delivery of teaching, but new governance arrangements were still in development.
203. There has been significant progress. Now there is a document entitled 'Formation for LLMs in Training' that outlines the general expectations for a new trainee and is applicable to all LLM

students, and the particularities for training in each diocese is negotiated through a partnership agreement. The document is rooted in the values of generous orthodoxy.

204. SMC has a partnership agreement with each diocese which is renewed on an annual basis by the Dean of SMC and a senior ministry person in each diocese. Each document is tailor-made to the needs of the particular diocese and sets out clearly how the partnership serves the ministry needs of the diocese. The partnership document covers the complementary responsibilities of each partner in teaching, pastoral support and formation, and also financial arrangements. In each case the diocese takes the lead on matters to do with recruitment with SMC in a supporting role.
205. The London agreement – negotiated in 2020 - makes provision for the Durham University Common Awards Diploma qualification (240 credits), and the Chelmsford agreement – negotiated in 2019 - for a Durham University Common Awards Certificate qualification (180 credits). Academic responsibilities for each party are carefully described and the question of unaccredited teaching was resolved by bringing it under SMC’s direct oversight.
206. There is a new pathway for LLMs that began in Chelmsford in 2022 which included an interfaith module and an alternative placement of 100 hours. In London a new pathway commenced also in 2022 and also included the interfaith module and an alternative placement of 50 hours.
207. The Review Team concludes that a full response has been made to the 2017 PER recommendation.

Current position

208. The LLM tutors described the formational work with LLM students as ‘a work in progress’. The Refine material (formation for those training part-time) is used in the London setting although has to be adapted given the different set of ‘criteria’ for LLM ministry than for ordinands. The change from ‘criteria’ to ‘qualities’ referred to earlier in this report in respect of ordinands was introduced for LLM students from the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year. The new qualities will be introduced gradually as new cohorts take up training. Refine will still need adapting given the difference between LLM and ordinand qualities.
209. In conversation students spoke very positively about their experience of SMC’s teaching. For example, the introduction to the bible was inspiring and a residential teaching week around pastoral care and preaching was described as transformative. The diversity of lectures and the pace of learning was ‘like a whirlwind’ which reflected (positively) the intensity of the learning experience. They also spoke about the excellent pastoral care they received during their course as well as the positive benefits of being part of a supportive community. Flexibility in scheduling modules from one year to the next around personal circumstances – family and professional responsibilities – was greatly beneficial and appreciated. Exposure to different types of worship was valued as was the flexibility of LLMs to take up the offer of studying Greek or Hebrew. A LLM who has recently completed their training spoke of the positive impact of generous orthodoxy and of being part of an environment where ‘faith seeks understanding’.

210. Students were honest about their experience and this to some degree reflected the commitment to train as a LLM being coupled with busy lives, either in paid employment or holding key responsibilities in a local church. Not all the teaching they experienced was described by them as 'good' with a small proportion being classified by them anecdotally as 'poor', and there was also an uncertainty about whether their feedback had been accepted and enacted. One key comment that was fed back from students at the Chelmsford centre was about the recent late arrival of the yearly timetable for teaching events which caused some personal difficulties. Concern was expressed whether SMC fully understood the pressure of LLMs in training and fully takes account of the many commitments that an LLM trainee often has. There were constructive suggestions for the way forward: one was that bibliographies for assignments can be too general and that an approach that suggested more guided reading would work well and relieve some of the pressure. A recently trained LLM suggested that a yearly weekend might be included to support formation and the necessary growth of relationships across the LLM trainee group.
211. The Review Team shared these concerns with members of the Executive Team and noted that there was LLM student and staff representation on the Management Committee and hence SMC were enabled to work with and respond to the sort of concerns raised with us. We noted also that the question of the appropriate patterns of residencies and teaching weeks was a live one with the SMC senior team as was the question of dovetailing a heavy learning load for students with busy and committed daily lives. In the London Centre there is a new self-assessment process introduced in 2021 that although not a formal requirement has been welcomed by LLM students. There is acknowledgement that there is work to be done during the interview and application stage in structuring realistic expectations.
212. The low numbers offering for LLM training are a significant challenge to LLM leaders and unless there is an uplift in number the viability of LLM training in both dioceses on the current pattern is threatened. The challenge is not simply financial and therefore about allocation of precious staffing resources, but low numbers offer a pedagogical challenge also. It is not just low numbers: working with unevenly numbered cohorts is challenging also. A key question for SMC leaders is how far LLM training can be aligned towards that for ordinands. There are external pressures: for example, in Chelmsford even though there is strong episcopal endorsement for LLM ministry it is recognised that the recent introduction of a two-year course in Christian studies run by the diocese may well mean that as a result new candidates might not be signing up for a three-year LLM course.
213. It is noticed that on the London Diocesan website only the pathway to LLM through St Edmunds is highlighted. LLM ministry is highlighted on the St Mellitus' website, but in the context of recruitment by Chelmsford Diocese. This in part reflects the partnership agreements where the lead partner is the diocese. It may be that this observation captures some of the uncertainty about where training for lay ministry fits within the SMC offer.

214. In the 2017 PER a second recommendation about LLM training focused on reviewing the viability and intensity of the LLM pathway with the diocese of London. How dioceses develop policies for LLM ministry, recruitment and training is beyond the scope of a PER, but the importance of this question remains six years later, and for SMC's partnership with both dioceses.
215. Strong progress in LLM training in both governance and delivery has been made since the previous review. The Review Team observe that the energy for LLM delivery and development amongst SMC leaders and in those with whom they are in partnership. The SMC LLM training offer is one in which confidence can be sustained but key questions remain over numbers and recruitment, something that cannot be separated from the wider ministry context and debates throughout the church of England. How does the energy and the offer of LLM training by SMC potentially match with and enhance the energy and commitment to lay ministry in the diocese of Chelmsford and London and how could the partnership articulated in the existing agreements be re-set for more viable numbers and cohorts? The Team takes the view that only if there is a move from the current uncertainty that LLM training will flourish through the current partnerships.

Commendation 25

We commend the energy and sense of vocation evident in SMC and in partner staff for the growth and development of LLM ministry and training in partnership with London and Chelmsford Diocese.

Recommendation 24

We recommend that the uncertain future of LLM training and the lack of viability is explored by the SMC Board and the Senior Executive team and that landmark conversations are held with the Dioceses of London and Chelmsford with a view to re-setting the partnership agreements around the nature of the training provision for LLMs, communication and recruitment.

The Review Team has Confidence with Qualifications in LLM formation via St Mellitus College and its partner dioceses.

Conclusion

The Review Team has Confidence in St Mellitus College in preparing students for Ordained Ministry in the Church of England.

Summary of Commendations

Commendation 1

We commend the depth with which the theologically rich vision of generous orthodoxy is clearly and effectively maintained within and understood across the SMC community, including organisationally and in the sensibility of the student body, and is harnessed as a force for formation.

Commendation 2

We commend the striking and effective deployment of student stories and testimonies that are foregrounded to SMC's key audiences including prospective ordinands.

Commendation 3

We commend the professionalism of SMC's communication work and strategy in its sensitive application of marketing tools, particularly in the desire to reach new and younger audiences and market the rich theological offering of SMC.

Commendation 4

We commend the investment, including quality staff time, and the detailed Formation Group Tutor Handbook, which SMC continues to put into the maintenance and development of the FGs within the life of SMC.

Commendation 5

We commend the role of Chaplains and the way SMC encourages and facilitates student access to the Chaplaincy team.

Commendation 6

We commend the excellent Safeguarding and Prevent policy and personnel in place at SMC, meeting the institution's stated aim to embed safeguarding within the culture of the institution and the formational agenda.

Commendation 7

We commend the clear trajectory towards greater diversity among the student cohort since 2017.

Commendation 8

We commend the development of the Caleb and Peter Streams, and the enrichment of the SMC community that their student cohorts bring.

Commendation 9

We commend SMC for its provision of ample feedback opportunities, with a ‘you said, we did’ approach at SMC abundantly evident and readily available to students.

Commendation 10

We commend SMC for its evolving pattern of support for families/key supporters in response to perceived needs.

Commendation 11

We commend the quality of student-led worship, including the planning and preparation and the musicianship evident at the Residential; and the visible diversity among the student teams delivering it.

Commendation 12

We commend the comprehensive and clear section on Worship in the Student Handbook, and the way it reflects SMC’s determination to involve students in worship from a range of traditions, reflecting the ethos of GO.

Commendation 13

We commend SMC in its nurture of a staff team whose members are committed to their roles, and engaged with a comprehensive formational work environment in which they share.

Commendation 14

We commend SMC for its strong leadership and relationship between the Chair of the Board and the Dean.

Commendation 15

We commend SMC for its strategy of matching racial diversity among the staff team with that of the student body.

Commendation 16

We commend the depth and breadth of SMC’s curriculum for ordinands at all levels.

Commendation 17

We commend SMC’s use of formation groups as an effective and valued space for learning, support and reflective practice.

Commendation 18

We commend the quality of research-led teaching that underpins SMC’s post-graduate programmes, the relationship with Durham University that support doctoral study, and SMC faculty’s ongoing engagement in research.

Commendation 19

We commend SMC's ongoing engagement with a wide diversity of theological discourse and we encourage its continued expansion of topics, which might for example include areas of Black Theology.

Commendation 20

We commend SMC for recruiting highly qualified staff, inducting them well and instituting a good peer review process that supports teaching and other skills development, and we encourage its further exploration of pathways to support those seeking Advance HE Fellowship.

Commendation 21

We commend SMC for their student-centred and effective approach to meeting the SpLD, study skills and other support needs of a wide diversity of learners, and encourage their further development of this support.

Commendation 22

We commend SMC for ensuring that there is continuous senior leadership engagement with quality issues and that issues raised by the learners are dealt with effectively and in good time.

Commendation 23

We commend SMC's varied and effective range of teaching and learning styles and of formative and summative assessments, while we would encourage further consideration of a feedforward approach to aid students' development.

Commendation 23

We commend SMC's 'demand' driven model of curriculum and programme development, effectively balancing generic and national programme expectations against specific ministerial needs in the respective regional centres.

Commendation 24

We commend the work of the Racial Justice Priority Group as an example of good practice and for its achievements.

Commendation 25

We commend the energy and sense of vocation evident in the SMC and in partner staff for the growth and development of LLM ministry and training in partnership with London and Chelmsford Diocese.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

We recommend that SMC consider inserting an explicit statement of its Vision and formational aims in the policies as they are revised and renewed so that the link between each policy and the vision and strategy of SMC is articulated.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that SMC consider transferring some sessions of the Forge/Refine to online media for ordinands to view in their own time, in order to free up session time for group discussion and pastoral conversation.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that SMC continue monitoring the complex role of FGTs, particularly in relation to understanding of PCPs, including the PCP's place in pastoral care and the enforcement of relevant agreements.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that SMC present the key safeguarding issues, advice and reflection in a visually engaging booklet-form, similar to The Forge booklets, or the Spiritual Health Check booklet.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that SMC review its use of space and furnishings for corporate worship at residential.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that SMC give more prominence to the credal heart of GO in college life, perhaps by the inclusion of the Creed in Holy Communion, and the use of hymns and worship songs with a credal focus along with the visible presence of a physical Bible at Morning and Evening Prayer.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Board should give consideration to succession planning, especially for the role of Chair, but also of other key posts including the Dean.

Recommendation 8

A nomination committee should be established, chaired by an individual who is independent and with a small number of additional members from the board, responsible for recommending non ex officio appointments of board members, to ensure diversity, flexibility and continuity.

Recommendation 9

We recommend all new SMC trustees be asked to read 'The Essential Trustee' as part of induction.

Recommendation 10

We recommend annual training for board members, with periodic external facilitation.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the risk register is reviewed to highlight key risks which need to be kept under scrutiny.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that as the number of staff engaged in co-supervision increases, SMC considers if it can start to offer validated PGR qualifications at level 8.

Recommendation 13

We recommend SMC continue its efforts further to diversify its body of teaching staff including in terms of GMH representation.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that SMC explore further the scope to highlight its staff publications and research culture, including via the website and showcase events.

Recommendation 15

We recommend SMC continue efforts to find a more permanent space for the regional library in the East Midlands Centre.

Recommendation 16

Building on SMC's excellent engagement with learner feedback, we encourage the college to institute exit interviews with those who do not complete programmes, and that it reviews the mechanisms for student input into the management committee to aid further understanding of issues and support needs.

Recommendation 17

We recommend that SMC explores the scope for further use of engaging interactive technologies as part of its teaching and learning especially at residentials.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that SMC continue to dialogue with the Common Awards team about developing guidance for the use of generative AI technologies in the context of assessments.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that the feedback form for student led worship, filled in by the Formation Group tutor, includes something more explicit in sections two and three about making choices which reflect these concerns around inhabiting a diversity of worship traditions.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that SMC give renewed attention to the practicalities of regular formational support for those training part-time, especially where they have fulltime work or other commitments alongside this.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that SMC review and tighten up the oversight of placements, especially in terms of their importance as a space to grow in leadership and collaborative skills.

Recommendation 22

We recommend that SMC should continue to seek ways in which contested theological issues in the life of the church can be safely and fruitfully explored within its community.

Recommendation 23

We recommend that SMC should offer training to placement supervisors specifically on how to evidence formational development within the new qualities framework.

Recommendation 24

We recommend that the uncertain future of LLM training and the lack of viability is explored by the SMC Board and the Senior Executive team and that landmark conversations are held with the Dioceses of London and Chelmsford with a view to re-setting the partnership agreements around the nature of the training provision for LLMs, communication and recruitment.