

## Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Report

# Rochester Diocese Licensed Lay Ministry Formation Programme

**Conducted onsite, February 2023**

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## Glossary

ADFM	Assistant Director of Formation for Ministry
ASE	Annual Self Evaluation
CMD	Continuing Ministerial Development
IME1/2	Initial Ministerial Education Phase 1/2
LLM	Licensed Lay Ministry
PER	Periodic External Review
PMG	Programme Management Group
TEI	Theological Education Institution
UKME	UK Minority Ethnicity
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

## Reviewers

**Revd Canon Nick Moir**, Senior Reviewer; ministry training officer, Ely diocese.

**Dr Clare Amos**, honorary director of lay discipleship and director of ministry experience scheme, diocese of Europe.

**Revd Dr Elizabeth Jordan**, leadership development consultant and former lay ministry adviser, Chelmsford diocese.

**Canon Linda Wainscot**, former diocesan director of education, Coventry 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 Rochester Diocesan Licensed Lay Ministry formation programme

### Introduction

Rochester diocese's Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM) formation is part of a wider programme of vocational discernment and formation for lay ministers. This begins with attendance at an 'It's Your Calling' day after which candidates may, with the agreement of their incumbent, register for the Bishop's Certificate, a six-module course over five terms and under the headings: Mission and Ministry, Bible and Belief, Worship and Spirituality, Ministry in Context, God's Word in the World, and Pastoral Ministry and Christian Discipleship. The vocational aspect of the course is highlighted by the first module, Mission and Ministry, which presents candidates with a wide range of practitioners in the diocese. During the first year the Director of Formation & Ministry presents candidates with the diocese's vision for Licensed Lay Ministry and they are invited to consider their own calling in the light of this. At the end of the first year there is a selection process with trained selectors following the nationally agreed qualities for discernment grid for lay ministers for those offering for LLM. There are also candidates who explore a calling to ordination.

Those who continue to the LLM formation programme complete two compulsory modules, Opening God's Word and Christian Leadership and congregational studies, and four specialist modules chosen from: Anna chaplaincy, bereavement and funeral ministry, care for creation, church history and ecumenism, community engagement, creative arts in mission and ministry, doctrine, healing and wholeness, Interfaith lay chaplaincy, leading public worship, music ministry, preaching, public theology, reimagining church, spirituality and prayer, and working with children/young people.

Those who do not continue with the programme receive the Bishop's Certificate at a public celebration – alongside the LLM candidates – which also confers permission to exercise a local ministry under the supervision of their incumbent.

The programme has been running in its current form since September 2012. It superseded a Certificate in Higher Education in Ministerial Theology for the training of Readers and other commissioned and authorised lay leaders (Evangelists and Pastoral Assistants) that had been validated by Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) from 2006. (That programme in turn had built on a successful collaborative partnership between the University and the Diocese that had existed from 1998, primarily for the training of curates.) The decision to move to a non-validated programme was due to a number of factors including the viability of a continuing partnership with CCCU and that Common Awards was not yet available (though in the pipeline.) Among the recommendations of the previous PER was that the possibility of Common Awards validation should be kept under review.

The current diocesan strategy for lay ministry retains a commitment to integrating the older differentiation between Readers (who are licensed) and evangelists, pastoral assistants, Anna chaplains and others (who are commissioned or authorised) into a single stream of licensed lay ministers. The PER of 2016 recognised the strength and exemplary nature of the programme by giving an outcome of Confidence for each of the (former) criteria. The programme has developed and the excellent leadership remains in place, so we have no reason to change that overall judgement. We have made a number of recommendations that are more tweaks than matters of great substance. If we have introduced a little more qualification than last time that is largely to flag up issues such as continuity (what would happen if the current personnel moved on?) and wider strategy (what new opportunities are there with fresh diocesan leadership and with potential new partners?). These may not be matters for urgent consideration but, we would suggest, they should be placed on the strategic agenda.

### PER Process

The team of reviewers representing the Church of England’s Ministry Development Team visited the Rochester programme in February 2023. They observed part of a students’ residential weekend near Sevenoaks and held a bespoke series of meetings with staff, students, governance personnel and others with a role in students’ formation including placement and home-context supervisors. The lead reviewer also met the director and assistant director of formation online in December 2022.

The reviewers appreciated the Rochester team’s hospitality, timely provision of documentation and access to online resources, and positive engagement with the PER process.

### Summary of Outcomes

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

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



## Section A: Formational Aims

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

1. The formational aims of the Bishop's Certificate and LLM programme are clearly stated in the publicity material available via the diocesan website and in the course handbook. We found them to be clearly understood and articulated, at least implicitly, by students and other stakeholders we interviewed. In particular the students shared enthusiastically about their own vocational and spiritual journeys in the context of both their theological learning and the very supportive community of prayer and growing friendship. One or two were surprised how quickly they had to move in making decisions about their future ministerial pathway - something that perhaps needs further signposting - but all were positive about the process and felt supported in it both by the staff and by their cohort.
2. The overall aims of the programme – and the diocesan strategy for licensed lay ministry – have not changed since the last review of 2016. The stakeholders, including the new Bishop, seemed clear on this. The diocesan website still refers to Readers, Pastoral Assistants, Evangelists – partly because, we understand, such roles remain from previous training programmes and are valued. Anna chaplains and Licensed Lay Funeral Ministers are also listed as separate ministries. There is still a sense, in looking at the diocesan website (<https://www.rochester.anglican.org/everyday-faith/gods-plan-for-you/lay-ministry/>) that LLMs are differentiated from the list of other ministries. It is not clear, for instance, whether the role of evangelist is still available to the potential LLM enquirer. This suggests that the communication within the diocese is not wholly consistent.
3. The learning outcomes for the second, LLM-specific, part of the programme include an emphasis on leadership. There is a compulsory module in Christian Leadership and congregational studies and some, though not all, of those licensed are invited to participate in a Lay Leadership programme.
4. The structuring of IME2 limits the opportunities for new LLMs as well as those in training to learn alongside clergy and ordinands. We encourage further consideration of how such collaborative learning opportunities might be provided when LLM strategy (and IME2) is reviewed.

#### Commendation 1

**We commend the programme for the clarity of its aims and for ensuring they are firmly embedded in its processes.**

#### Recommendation 1

**When the diocese next reviews its strategy for licensed lay ministry we recommend that it considers how collaboration in leadership between lay and ordained may be furthered by greater opportunities of sharing in formation pre- and post-licensing.**

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

5. The current Lay Formation Programme was initiated in 2012 in response to a review of lay ministries in the diocese. The previous categories of Reader, Pastoral Assistant and Evangelist were set aside in favour of a single, licensed lay ministry programme. This was at least in part to move away from a three-tiered system of licensing, authorisation and commissioning towards a single and less hierarchical system of licensing alone, although this is somewhat compromised by those who have a limited permission to minister based on their completion of the Bishop's Certificate. The current programme has a clear rationale in its vocational discernment and in its provision of specialist modules. It is well structured and, evidenced in our conversations, equips and empowers its candidates for the ministries to which they are called.
6. The PER of 2016 had Confidence in the programme overall and we see no reason to doubt that judgement or to suggest that there has been any change to the quality of provision since then. We heard unreserved support for and confidence in the excellent leadership of both the Director and Assistant Director of Formation and Ministry from those both within and outside the diocese.
7. One major change from the national Church has been the development of a new formation framework, replacing the previous formation guidelines. These are used termly in the students' formation groups for identifying and measuring formational development. The effectiveness of this depends on how well the formation groups operate – we heard some evidence that there is inconsistency here - see below, paragraphs 20, 120 and **Recommendation 23** - but there is at least a theoretical continual use of the framework built into the programme.
8. There is clear evidence of responding to new church thinking and reviewing the programme accordingly. Notably, the 'Addressing Bias' training has had its effect in developing a sensitivity to issues of diversity. We saw the positive fruits of that in the areas of race and disability. Statistics are kept of the students, including information about age, gender, sexuality and ethnicity (17% UKME, 15% disability, 5% LGBTQI+, 8% under 40). Methods of assessment had been revisited to meet the needs of those with different learning styles and academic abilities.
9. Like many LLM courses, though, there is a lack of younger candidates. We heard from one incumbent who suggested that Saturday commitments prevented some younger paid staff from participating in the programme. That may be a lost opportunity. Those with young families and work responsibilities may also find the length and intensity of the course daunting. Intentionally widening access to younger cohorts may require considerable consultation and rethinking. It is for the Bishop and wider diocese to decide on the priority and urgency of this. (It should be said, however, that in the last two years three students have had babies and - with a range of arrangements provided - that has not prevented their full participation in the programme, including the Saturdays.)

10. It is now eleven years since the programme was last reconfigured in the light of a new diocesan strategy. It may well be argued that as the programme is still of high quality and therefore not ‘broken’, there is no need to fix anything. On the other hand with the arrival of a new diocesan bishop and with possible new opportunities for collaboration with a neighbouring diocese, now or in the next few years may be a good time for the diocese to review its strategy for lay ministry.

## **Commendation 2**

**We commend the programme for its promotion of diversity and inclusion and for its Addressing Bias module.**

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

11. We heard nothing but a high regard for the programme and its staff, paid and voluntary, from the stakeholders whose comments we received either in person or in writing. Inevitably those we spoke to had some connection with - and therefore knowledge of - the programme. There was some reporting of lack of awareness in the diocese of the nature of the programme. That is difficult for us to gauge. There is nothing beyond the initial flyer to be found on the website and nothing in the annual report, but the route to LLM is well signposted. Perhaps this report provides an opportunity for some publicity.
12. One thing we heard more than once, but only second hand, was the concern that the programme is too academic. From what we have seen and read, we do not believe that to be the case. It may be that such an impression is given by the style of module descriptors and the requirements for assessment that are usual for accredited courses but not so common in schemes that do not have academic accreditation. Perhaps also the work required – at least two assessments and a theological reflection per term – adds to the impression. The addition of the termly Addressing Bias sessions has also increased the time commitment and there may need to be further accommodation to make up for this. The introduction of different types of assessment may already be helping to relieve pressure.
13. Overall numbers entering the programme are good – averaging 15-20 per year and evenly spread from the three archdeaconries, two-thirds proceeding to LLM. That seems good evidence that the message is being heard.

**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.**

14. The PER report of 2016 noted that ‘The Foundation for Ministry team has close links with the South-East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE), with several core members of staff, key associates, and tutors having either trained or taught there. The Director for Formation and Ministry at Rochester is also on the Council of SEITE. It is possible that closer connections will be forged when the two organizations move into shared accommodation at Malling Abbey.’
15. The Rochester Diocesan LLM Course no longer has formal links with SEITE's successor body, St Augustine's College, although some tutors teach for both course and college, and the St Augustine's principal is a formation programme board member and external moderator for the course.. The accommodation used by the Course at Malling Abbey also provides for a sharing of library resources. A more formal structural relationship has been explored but ruled out because of the high potential cost.
16. There is potential for extending co-operation with the Diocese of Canterbury. Their Director of Mission & Ministry has recently become the External Quality Advisor of the Course. Both IME2 and a Spiritual Direction programme are shared with Canterbury Diocese and there are tentative discussions about closer links in the future in the training of lay ministry. This may depend on the encouragement or otherwise of their new bishops.
17. Regret was expressed that no Regional Training Partnership exists, which would otherwise provide a further means to engage with other dioceses.
18. We did not see evidence of links with other denominations or faith bodies.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend that the programme continues to explore its collaboration with the diocese of Canterbury and other local partners.**

19. The cost of accreditation is a significant factor in the decision not to pursue this route, together with a fear of being ‘too academic.’ Much, though, would be gained from closer attention to study skills, alternative means of assessment and staff training such as Common Awards and validation would provide. Common Awards may not have a more ‘academic’ approach than is presently experienced.

#### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that course leaders keep under review the question of seeking validation of the programme from an external body, including the possibility of adopting Common Awards.**

20. There is a well-established procedure for arranging placements across churchmanship traditions for the purpose of exchange of ideas and habits. As the placement supervisors suggested, this could be improved by clearer guidelines about the expectations of the students in terms of hours and activity and an informal report being requested from the tutors about their students.
21. Placements with ecumenical partners are possible within the optional ecumenism and chaplaincy modules.
22. The placements appear to be the place in which most encounter with communities outside the students' usual experience takes place. The reviewers heard that many students had experienced the presence of Ukrainian and/or Iranian refugees in their own or placement churches and encountered social deprivation not previously known to them in placement settings. Those from rural communities, where the Anglican church was the only Christian presence, experienced other denominations for the first time while on placement. These cross-churchmanship placements are brief. Further consideration could be given to how these encounters can be anticipated, prepared for and reflected on so that the learning about witness and mission in these settings is enhanced.
23. The reviewers did not see direct evidence of placements in or visits to mosques, synagogues or other places of faith (or non faith) but we understand they are offered as part of the elective interfaith module in the LLM year. The Chaplaincy module provides an arena for the informed discussion of shared faith space. The Public Theology module stimulates consideration of faith in the workplace and community.
24. The lack of partnership or relationships with other faith communities is especially significant in considering the appropriateness of this Course for those from the parts of the diocese which are London boroughs, and in order to develop a more outward-facing perspective for the whole student body.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend wider engagement within the Course with other faiths, through visits, placements and invitations to address the student body.**

25. Chaplaincy is an optional module for the LLMs in training. Those chaplains responsible for delivering the course invite chaplains in other institutions to contribute their perspectives and this is to be encouraged. We heard of several licensed LLMs whose main area of ministry was as a chaplain, in the ambulance service or in a hospital.

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

26. There was strong evidence of a healthy community life and it was clear that considerable effort was taken, particularly by the Assistant Director of Formation and Ministry to cater for the needs of

the students. It was not so apparent this ethos was contained in written policies, nor were existing policies widely known by tutors, Learning Advisers and supporting Incumbents.

27. The Learning Advisers provide assistance with study skills and their advice is appreciated. Their job description includes the provision of ‘a programme of study skills workshops, covering topics such as assignment writing, referencing, IT skills, time management etc’, though it was not apparent when this occurred in the timetable. Closer connection with the tutors’ requirements for assessment and delivery of further study skills course for the whole body of students at intervals throughout the Course would ensure accessibility for a wide clientele.

### **Recommendation 5**

**We recommend a programme of study skills for all students throughout the duration of the Course on varied aspects of study skills.**

28. The sessions on Addressing Bias are led by tutors who are well grounded in their fields and expressed impressive insight and commitment. One of them, also the Internal Quality Examiner, helps to monitor the student background, according to age, ethnicity, dis/ability and gender. The geographic or socio-economic background of students is not so well known.
29. No policies on student interactions or, for example, the use of gender-neutral language in presentations and written work were seen.

### **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend that written statements on issues of gender and ethnicity are included in the course handbook and on the online Learning Space.**

30. The tutors represent an impressive range of practical experience and academic qualification. They are strongly motivated and committed to delivering an enriching programme. They are all volunteers and invited to participate, largely by the Assistant Director of Formation and Ministry, rather than there being a selection procedure. There is no stated level of qualification required for them to offer these services.
31. The Course follows the policies and procedures of the Diocese of Rochester in regard to safeguarding. The diocesan safeguarding team oversees this aspect of the course. A Confidential Declaration is required before beginning the Bishop’s Certificate and a DBS before the LLM modules. There is mandatory safeguarding training within the Bishop’s Certificate (Basic Awareness and Foundational Level); Domestic Abuse Awareness and the Leadership module is provided and required prior to licensing (LLM).
32. Throughout the Course the language of training is rejected in favour of the language of formation. Students report on a very good network of support, which includes both access to tutors and excellent peer to peer learning.

33. The encouragement to converse, in the Addressing Bias sessions, aims to establish curiosity, honesty and respect as key features of Christian formation. The tutors report satisfaction in the growth that they observe and the evidence that LLMs at local and diocesan events are engaged in debate on contentious topics.
34. There was some evidence that those studying online had a reduced level of input: one student saying it was hard to follow group discussions midweek and to join in at residentials. Further technology has been purchased which may assist this, though communication after sessions to check that follow up work and preparation have been understood could benefit all the group, and those online in particular.
35. The Learning Space is an excellent resource and appeared well used by tutors to share instructions and resources. There was less evidence of student-student interaction.

### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that attention is given to the full inclusion in community life of those attending the Course online.**

36. Module feedback feeds into module evaluation and reform, and the students had seen evidence that this was effective. The student representative on the Programme Management Group (PMG) is a good link between those designing modules and the student body and the minutes of PMG demonstrate good engagement with student concerns.
37. The Addressing Bias Programme was, apparently, a response to student requests for input in this area. The feedback on how the module had affected their development (the Student Formational Development Form) is not part of this process, which as the Course aims to promote formation, could represent a missed opportunity to revise modules in the light of their formational impact.

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

38. Both the Holiday Inn, at which weekend residentials take place, and St Benedict's Centre at Malling Abbey provide a good environment for worship, study and socialising. They are very different from each other and reflection on this, the effect of study and worship in each place, would be a valuable prompt for student consideration.
39. The Handbook contained in the Learning Space appears only to cover the Health and Safety aspects of venues, not access, etc. Wheelchair users were, however, seen to be accommodated at the Holiday Inn. No information was published about access issues at St Benedict's Centre, either in the handbook or on the St Benedict's Centre website.

### **Commendation 3**

**We commend the use of accommodation and the learning environment provided.**



## Recommendation 8

### **We recommend that information about access and wheelchair use is made more explicit in the Course information and St Benedict's website.**

40. The site at St Benedict's Centre within the abbey of West Malling is beautiful and, in addition, the presence of the community of Anglican Benedictine nuns who pray for those on the Course adds a special dimension to the venue. On the basis of the worship observed by the reviewers, more could be done to encourage the students leading worship to adapt the space at the Holiday Inn. There is, perhaps, even more to be learned here about space in worship than at the Abbey so that, through the use of music, art, fabric and candles, worship in a contemporary setting might take place.
41. At present good environmental practice is demonstrated in the venue's own procedures.
42. Students are encouraged to think before printing, to consider car sharing and other practical actions which contribute to environmental care. Creation features in a number of modules, particularly the truth of a creator God constantly involved in the creative process of the environment. Creation care is offered as an LLM elective module.

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

43. Students are given guidance on the leading of worship and there is a clear policy about respect for diversity. They would, we were told, be expected to attend all services, though this is not a written policy. There is a short time of worship at the beginning of the midweek sessions. The observed session was felt to be very brief. There are longer services at the residential, led by students and staff. Feedback is provided to the students.
44. Students have the opportunity of joining the offices with the sisters at Malling Abbey.
45. It was not possible to observe the full range of services offered. The BCP Morning Prayer was well led, though with a service sheet that included all possible rubrics, most of which were ignored.
46. If all worship is led by staff or students it is hard to see how the range of services can be intentionally inclusive, rather than depending on the make-up of those present. There should be consideration of the value of inviting some outside input into worship, perhaps from a tradition not represented, or to experience a more outward-facing, missional, spirituality.
47. As noted, students are expected to attend all services. Issues of conscience are accommodated within this parameter so that, for example, someone opposed to the priesting of women would attend, but not receive the sacrament if a woman was presiding.



## Recommendation 9

**We recommend that consideration is given to the invitation of people outside the traditions and experience represented amongst the student body to preach, preside or lead worship (note also Recommendation 25 at E5).**

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

48. There is strong evidence of good interaction between staff and students. Students have the opportunity to form valuable relationships with staff and look to them for guidance and direction. The dedication and effectiveness of the Assistant Director of Formation and Ministry is particularly to be commended.
49. The enthusiastic commitment of each of the tutors and of the Learning Advisers was evident. This itself communicated the significance of their respective subjects. They spoke with a depth of theological understanding and reflection and a desire to enthuse the students with their passion.
50. Several tutors who were interviewed met with students in different ways, in the Anna chaplaincy, or Programme Management Group, for example, and so were able to extend their relationship with the students beyond their allotted time.

## Commendation 4

**We commend the Course for the exemplary culture of care, wisdom and spiritual depth promoted by the staff.**

51. As noted under B4, in order to enhance an outward-facing perspective in prayer and worship, it would be valuable to include tutors, particularly those with experience of non-church settings, in leading worship and in guiding students in leading worship. The insights of chaplains working in multi-faith spaces, in non-faith institutions and in places antagonistic to faith would strengthen their influence.
52. Several of the tutors interviewed had been invited to contribute to the Course as a result of a Ministerial Development Review or Extended Study Leave and so this activity was part of their ongoing ministerial development. The Annual Self-Evaluation review notes that 'Where appropriate, students and tutors are informed of national opportunities to develop their own learning, e.g. tutors attending Festival of Preaching. Tutors are either clergy or Lay Ministers and receive diocesan support, expenses reimbursed and training. CMD is offered to all tutors, and some deliver diocesan CMD.'

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

## Section C: Leadership and Management

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

53. Documentation provided clearly demonstrates the position and significance of the programme within the life of the Diocese of Rochester.
54. The Board of Reference meets annually whilst the Programme Management Group meets termly. Membership of these bodies reflects the stakeholders, with relevant experience and roles.
55. Reports provided by the Assistant Director of Formation and Ministry (ADFM) and minutes of meetings show that these are well conducted with discussions that are wide-ranging and well facilitated. Student representatives from each year group attend Programme Management Board meetings together with a range of tutors, learning advisers, quality assurance personnel and staff. This ensures comprehensive contributions, drawing on experience, professional expertise and concerns.
56. The Board of Reference is appropriately constituted and addresses its business effectively.
57. Engagement with the Bishop's Senior Staff, Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod happens through the Director of Formation and Ministry and the ADFM.
58. A principal focus of the Board of Reference is consideration of the annual review of the programme. As a result of this scrutiny the Board of Reference may make recommendations for changes to be made or be asked to accept recommendations made by the Programme Management Group.
59. The termly meetings of the Programme Management Group have a largely operational focus, considering student feedback, comments from tutors, learning advisers, placement clergy and quality assurance personnel. In addition to reflecting upon module content, this group appraises assignment requirements, assessment methodology, learning outcomes and evaluation documentation (see also paragraph 85 and **Recommendation 20**).
60. The Board of Reference has a newly appointed Chair with a passion for and experience in Adult Education underpinned by an impressive theological and ecclesiological understanding. This will enable a deepening and broadening of strategic thinking in relation to the programme as well as providing a highly professional support framework for staff. Consideration of the strategic, relational and operational nature of the role has yet to be developed. In connection to this, and as a result of documentation received together with some conversations, we perceived a lack of clarity in relation to how the leadership and governance of this programme are accountable to the wider diocesan family in terms of strategy and potential for growth.

### **Commendation 5**

**We commend the constitution and working of the Board of Reference.**

### **Recommendation 10**

**In order to provide greater clarity and shared understanding of the role, we recommend that a role description for the Chair of the Board of Reference is produced and shared with all stakeholders.**

### **Recommendation 11**

**To enable a further developed perception of the immense value and potential of the programme, we recommend the development of an ‘Accountability Chart’ that clearly defines where and how the Board of Reference and Programme Management Group relate to each other, the staff team, the Diocesan Department for Formation and Ministry, the Bishop’s Senior Staff, Bishop’s Council and Diocesan Synod.**

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

61. The Director of Formation and Ministry and the ADFM share a deep commitment to their roles in relation to the programme with a clear intentionality for excellence and an openness to further development. They bring a wealth of experience, professional knowledge and a profound focus on spirituality and formation in everything they offer. They are highly respected and much valued. In addition, the administrator and other members of the delivery and quality assurance team strive to emulate the characteristics and qualities lived out by the leaders. This is impressive, with all students and stakeholders interviewed keen to articulate their deep appreciation and affection for the ADFM.
62. There is much evidence to confirm that organisational, pastoral and spiritual leadership is strong and highly effective. The ADFM demonstrates passion, dedication and clarity of purpose thus providing the diocese with a secure and robust formational programme for aspiring lay leaders.
63. Mutuality of purpose is evident with a motivational climate where students and staff feel supported and encouraged. Many of those interviewed spoke of the ‘safe space’ created which generates trust and openness.

### **Commendation 6**

**We commend the strong, professional and inspirational leadership provided by the Ministry Formation staff.**

### **Recommendation 12**

**In order to ensure continuity of excellence, we recommend that the Board of Reference together with Bishop’s Senior Staff consider leadership succession planning so that the depth and breadth of experience and understanding might be sustained beyond the current post holders.**

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

- 64. Reporting to the Bishop's Senior Leadership Team and Bishop's Council, the Board of Reference exercises governance and strategic oversight of the programme. It meets annually and consists of five members.
- 65. The Programme Management Group meets termly to focus upon operational factors and potential for development.
- 66. Meetings are recorded effectively and attended well. Minutes do not show the engagement level or contributions of individuals, and specific action points with dates and names are not shown.

#### **Recommendation 13**

**To ensure that actions agreed at each meeting are carried out in a timely fashion and followed up at subsequent meetings, we recommend that the minutes annotate actions, person responsible and date for completion. These would then be commented upon at the following meetings or by email as soon as possible thereafter.**

#### **Recommendation 14**

**To celebrate and share the hugely positive programme and to generate even greater interest and engagement, we recommend that what is presented to the Bishop's Council in the Annual Report of the formation and ministry team is made available on the diocesan website, and that attention be given to the mode of presentation: a written document, an on-line video clip with attachments, or another visually attractive and stimulating format appropriate for parishes.**

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

- 67. This programme is held within the portfolio of the diocesan Formation and Ministry department. As such, there is currently no requirement for separate business and financial planning and reporting.
- 68. Bishop's Certificate Students are required to pay a fee of £400. Some students pay this sum themselves whilst others are offered partial or full financial support from their own parishes. This appears to be dependent on a number of factors, including the financial resources of a parish. We detected some lack of understanding that this might be an option. The following LLM programme has no student fee for those students continuing from the Bishop's Certificate.
- 69. All expenditure, apart from the student fees received, covers staff costs, and operational and resource requirements. The full amount is met by the Department for Formation and Ministry. In 2020/2021, student fees received were £5,000 and the sum paid by the Department for Formation and Ministry was £39,417.
- 70. There is a Risk Register that covers a good range of areas. There are no indications of the likely impact of each risk nor clearly identifiable actions to be taken (with dates).

#### **Recommendation 15**

**In order to ensure that all parishes and potential students are fully apprised of the funding options for the Bishop’s Certificate Programme, we recommend that consideration is given as to how to make this more widely known and understood.**

#### **Recommendation 16**

**To ensure that the Board of Reference has a secure understanding of the financial implications of the programme, we recommend that a business and financial management plan is produced that indicates all staff costs (including on-costs), as well as projected and actual expenditure. This would enable the Board of Reference to embark upon strategic developments with clarity of the financial position.**

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**To ensure that the Board of Reference has a clear understanding of all potential risks and to be confident of possible mitigation, we recommend that additional information is included in the Risk Register, covering likely impact of risk, clear actions (with dates) to mitigate against each risk. This would then be reviewed at the annual meeting of the Board of Reference with advice taken from the relevant Diocesan Risk Assessment personnel.**

**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.**

71. Rochester Diocese took a conscious decision about a decade ago to re-shape its understanding of Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM), and therefore also the training that is required for those seeking to exercise this ministry. It has articulated well the rationale for this development. LLM in Rochester therefore includes roles that in other Church of England dioceses might be segmented between 'Readers', 'Pastoral Assistants' and 'Evangelists'. Correspondingly the training that is offered needs to be sufficiently flexible to cover the training requirements for a wide range of lay ministerial roles. Considerable attention has clearly been given to enable this, particularly through the choice of optional modules that are theoretically available during the third and fourth year of training.
72. Not all these modules seem to be available during any particular given year, due to the need to ensure that the size of the group is numerically viable, although we were given to understand that if a module is not available in one year it is likely to be so in the following year. Looking at the overall choice of such optional modules it may even be that those aimed at preparing people for 'traditional' church-focused Reader ministry are slightly underrepresented within the whole.
73. The LLM training pathway includes and continues from the Bishop's Certificate in Christian Ministry programme, which is what learners are initially admitted to in their first year, during which the possibility of acceptance onto LLM training is explored. Some do not progress to the dedicated LLM formation and training that begins after five terms and leave with the Bishop's Certificate in Christian Ministry, which gives permission to exercise a local ministry under the supervision of their incumbent.
74. Given the reality that the primary focus of the programme is on preparing people for LLM, there may be some questions as to whether the certificate taken by itself provides a fully rounded initial educational experience for those who do not progress further into the LLM pathway, but that is not the focus of this review.
75. There is a very conscious effort to draw links both between the educational/training and the formational aspects of the course, and between Christian faith and the contemporary world. This is articulated not least by the titles given to various modules e.g. Bible and Belief; God's Word in the World; Pastoral Ministry and Christian Discipleship.
76. This integrative process seems to be a particular focus of the Ministry in Context Modules, which unlike the other modules run through the whole of the academic year. The 'integrative' vision seems to be well understood by the student body who have clearly caught the formational vision that motivates those who have overall leadership of the course. There is an excellent summary

table available which ‘maps’ the most recent national ‘Formational Development Qualities’ against the core modules of the course.

77. It may be that the various competing demands – linking together learning and faith, the Church and the world – mean on occasion that aspects of inductive learning are sacrificed to the overall vision. It is not clear, for example, to what extent the first module that clearly focuses on the Bible (‘Bible and Belief’) encourages direct exegetical engagement on the part of students with the biblical texts themselves – though this is partially rectified in the second biblically focused course, ‘Opening God’s Word’, which comes towards the end of the second year. Conversely it might be questioned how helpful it is to present as a starting point during the first teaching session of the ‘Bible and Belief’ course Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles, important though this is within the overall framework of an Anglican understanding of Scripture.

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

78. The tutors for the various modules all undertake their roles in an honorary capacity, receiving expenses and a small gift, but not a professional fee. Inevitably this may limit the pool of those from which the teaching staff may be drawn, although we are assured that in practice it does not, and all the current staff seem to us well qualified for, and enthusiastic about their roles. The (admittedly fairly limited) experience of teaching sessions on the part of the reviewers suggested that the tutors undertook their roles well, enjoyed them and offered a relaxed environment in which to enable learning.
79. As well as including a number of suitably qualified local clergy, the tutors include several lay people who are past ‘graduates’ of the course themselves. Their willingness to be involved in this way offers a clear endorsement of their commitment to and enthusiasm for the course, and for the ministry of lay people, and is to be commended.

**Commendation 7**

**We commend the course for its recruitment of tutors, particularly for the inclusion of a substantial number of lay people.**

80. A feature of the course is that most of the compulsory modules have a team of two as tutors. This provides the opportunity for different viewpoints to be offered. In one or two modules the ‘team’ splits the teaching sessions between them, and only one teacher is present during any given session. This is very understandable given the other time pressures likely to exist for voluntary staff. However it does provide a helpful model for collaborative ministry when both teachers are present together and share complementary insights into a particular topic.

## **Commendation 8**

### **We commend the practice of using two tutors, modelling collaborative ministry and encouraging diversity.**

81. There is a small library for student use available at the St Benedict's Centre, West Malling, where the Tuesday evening classes are held. Both library and some of the module reading lists feel slightly theologically or ecclesiological selective in the perspectives offered. Students also have some access to the library collection of St Augustine's College based at the same Centre. Students, tutors and learning advisers have access to 'The Hub' resources administered by the national Church.
82. The Moodle site 'Rochester Learning Space' is also a helpful educational resource. Some teachers make greater use of it than others do. It is quite complicated to navigate, in part because material relating to several earlier years still seems to show up at points on the site.

## **Recommendation 18**

### **We recommend the tidying and archiving of older material on the Learning Space.**

83. One distinctive feature of the teaching sessions is the regular presence within them of what are called 'learning advisers'. There are two learning advisers for each year group, at least one of whom is expected to sit in on every teaching session. It is also an honorary (and time-consuming) role, and the advisers are to be commended for the commitment they offer to the course and the students. Their role seems to be intended to be particularly supportive of students who are unfamiliar with or nervous of academic forms of learning and as such is an important contribution in this area.
84. It may be that the role of learning advisers needs to be better defined – in some ways they are a 'cross' between an educational and a pastoral mentor. It is clearly important that they do not formally report on individual students. However there exists some scope for confusion: the reviewers were told of one student who took the advice of the learning adviser in relation to their written work only to be told by the tutor that they had not really dealt with the question. Perhaps some wider discussion about the role of learning advisers, drawing in the teaching staff and the course leadership would be helpful.

## **Commendation 9**

### **We commend the provision of Learning Advisers and the support they provide.**

## **Recommendation 19**

### **We recommend a clarification of the role of Learning Adviser.**

85. The Programme Management Group, which has immediate oversight of the teaching programme, meets regularly, and draws in both teaching staff and student representatives. However, any given



meeting of the PMG seems to focus primarily on the modules being taught at that time. It is also unclear how far those teaching a module in one curriculum area really are aware of the content of other modules in the same general area. It would be helpful if the PMG could see its role as enabling wider conversation between the various members of the teaching staff as well as possible review of the educational components of the course as a whole. Given that the course (and most of its modules) has now been operating in its present iteration for almost a decade it is probably approaching the time for a group to reflect collaboratively on its educational structure and give some overall attention to the specific content of individual modules.

## Recommendation 20

**We recommend that the Programme Management Group consider how to involve the whole tutorial body in reviewing their modules and the structure of the whole programme.**

86. Although the course was previously validated by Canterbury University, this validation has not been renewed since the course assumed its present structure nearly a decade ago. Nor is it validated by the Durham Common Awards. That was a conscious decision made by those involved in the leadership of the course. Those who are responsible for this speak eloquently of the freedom this offers to tailor the course to the specific needs of the student clientele. It is however possibly something that needs regular review rather than being an absolute long term 'given'. It also means that the processes referred to in the previous paragraph relating to the PMG need to be taken seriously.

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

87. There seems to be a good mix of teaching styles and ways of learning offered, facilitated in part by the comparatively small size of the teaching groups. Small group discussion provides a regular component. The reviewers noted a warmth and helpful informality in the sessions that they attended in person and online.

88. At present the Tuesday evening sessions are working on a hybrid model in which most students now seem to be physically present, but some are participating via Zoom. This is obviously due in part to the experience of the COVID years, and recent emergence from them. In the evening teaching session attended by one of the reviewers the hybrid model worked reasonably well. It is however something to keep under review and possibly revisit within the next year (see also **Recommendation 7**).

89. Although the teaching centre at West Malling is justifiably cherished and prized by the course, it is not easily accessible for some. It will be essential, if the hybrid model is to continue, that the importance of most students being physically present is maintained.

90. There are several ways of feedback available to students, both through student representatives on the PMG and through individual feedback. This is taken seriously by the course leadership and has resulted in recent changes to the assessment processes for several of the modules, which now incorporate other, very creative, forms of assessment as well as ‘straight essays’. It may still be good to look at the suggested length of the essays in cases where essay assessment still continues. These days a maximum length of 2500 words seems to be more widely normative than 3000 words.

#### **Commendation 10**

**We commend the programme for creatively increasing the diversity of modes of assessment.**

#### **Recommendation 21**

**We recommend a review of the length of assessments in line with current norms.**

91. The course leadership is also clearly committed to enabling the participation of those who find difficulty with any written form of assessment. Sometimes the desire to support students who find difficulties with the assessment process may produce inadvertent consequences. The reviewers were told that some tutors took longer than desirable to grade and return written work. However, not unfairly, many tutors, especially those with considerable additional commitments outside the course, like to mark all the assignments from a particular group at one point in time. This means that if one or more students are given time extensions for submitting their work, it is likely to delay the return of work to the rest of the cohort as well. We picked up that this is genuinely an issue for some markers, despite being assured that late work, as well as alternative methods of evidencing learning are assessed by the ADFM, so that in theory it should not be.

#### **Recommendation 22**

**We recommend that a policy decision be made and practice clarified around marking late assessments, having consulted with both tutors and students.**

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

92. Although it is likely that some modules enable experiential learning more than others, taken as a whole the curriculum provides a healthy and balanced incremental way of learning that enables students to develop their learning skills and critical thinking.
93. The number and variety of optional modules in the latter part of the course is a positive feature but it also raises possible concerns as there may not be enough students to run a module in any particular year. We were glad to be reassured, therefore, that such modules would always be programmed in during the following year (and that some still run though the cohort may be small).

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

94. This area is a real strength of the programme, at least ideally. Most students were deeply appreciative of the way in which, especially through the design and content of the modules ‘Ministry in Context’ 1 and 2, the programme intentionally sought to integrate academic and practical learning, both via placements as well as via support from their sponsoring parishes. The programme’s leaders clearly are deeply committed to such a formational aim and process. The qualification ‘ideally’ is made simply because we heard testimony that not all sponsoring parishes are as proactively supportive of their candidates as they could be; that is something that the programme will need wider diocesan support in addressing (see **Recommendation 23** below).

**Commendation 11**

**We commend the programme for the integration of academic and practical learning.**

**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.

95. The Course is to be commended on its emphasis on formation, rather than training, as a preparation for and foundation of ministry.
96. The criteria for Selection and for Formation follow the national criteria established for Readers in the Church of England.
97. Each module which is studied for the Bishop's Certificate and for Licensed Lay Ministry is formational in design and purpose and the Formational Development qualities are matched to modules in the module information provided to the reviewers. Students are asked to assess the effect of the module on their relationship with God and their developing discipleship through the completion of a Formational Development form. One supporting incumbent commented that completing this form was itself influential in encouraging growth. The feedback from students is clear evidence of a lively faith, nurtured throughout the course.
98. The student's spiritual life is developed through the modules in the Bishop's Certificate on the Bible and on worship and spirituality and through consideration of God's mission in the world. Students lead short acts of worship at midweek sessions and longer services at residentials.
99. The example of marking given for the assignment in the Worship and Spirituality module showed sparse feedback, and there may be value in considering how doubt and the devotional challenge of studying the Bible in a formal and quasi academic setting is handled.
100. The students have small parish formational groups involving their incumbent and two or three members of the congregation. Interviews with supporting Incumbents indicated that many of these are either effective only as pastoral support and do not discuss formational qualities, or have ceased to meet. Placing pastoral formation in the hands of supporting Incumbents and local groups appears precarious.

### Recommendation 23

**The reviewers recommend that attention be paid to the establishment of pastoral tutors, so that each student has an identified person who can offer confidential mentoring and direction during their period of training.**

101. The LLM elective modules - Caring for God's Creation, Christianity in the World, Foundations in Faith: Doctrine in Dialogue, Interfaith Engagement and Theology for Public Life - offer good opportunities for exploration of these themes.

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

102. The Course declares as an aim that participants ‘clarify their vocation and identify their giftings and calling to specific expressions of ministry.’ The reviewers saw good evidence of this, in interviews with students and sight of their feedback to modules, and in the commitment of tutors and staff to help individual students on their vocational journey.

### **Commendation 12**

**We commend the programme for its intentional and consistent accompaniment of its students in their vocational journey.**

103. In the Learning Space, the Course’s VLE, there is a clear statement of the role of LLM in the diocese of Rochester. It was less clear how widely this was disseminated and owned in the diocese. The leadership role of LLMs is, apparently, key to understanding their vocation and it would appear that the changing situation in the parish and diocesan structures has introduced confusion about how this relates to, for example, the authority of Incumbents. The expectations of LLMs could clash with other ministers, ordained and lay.
104. The supporting incumbents interviewed expressed a firm expectation that LLMs served in their ‘home’ church while it was clear that some became chaplains in other institutions and that there was a growing desire to deploy LLMs in a more strategic way, as those who hold the bishop’s licence. The Course could produce able but frustrated LLMs.
105. The arrival of a new diocesan bishop will itself be a catalyst for renewed thinking about ministry.

### **Recommendation 24**

**We recommend a public statement that not only clarifies the role of LLMs but also locates their ministry in relation to other lay and ordained ministers exercising leadership in the church.**

106. The elective modules of the LLM track provide a rich variety of ways in which LLM students can develop their leadership skills in diverse ways. The Addressing Bias module, requested by the students, provides a model of good listening, engaged debate and healthy disagreement.
107. Feedback from students is evidence of the friendship and mutual support gained from participation on the Course, resulting in a renewed appreciation of the collaborative nature of ministry.

### **Commendation 13**

**We commend the programme for instilling a strong sense of mutual support and a valuing of collaborative ministry.**

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

- 108. We detected a very strong sense of community among the students (and with staff). In our conversations with students of the same year group it was clear that they had developed very strong bonds of pastoral and spiritual support, including a regular pattern of prayer between gatherings. The spirituality module (and St Benedict's) had given them tools for exploring patterns of Christian community and care.
- 109. The five marks of mission are taught from the beginning of the programme and examples of mission work that are focused on care for people are explored. We encountered students exploring ministries focused on pastoral care in different specialisms, and all the students complete a pastoral care module as part of the Bishop's Certificate.

**E4 Students are helped to grow in wisdom.**

- 110. The programme speaks the language of 'formation' rather than training and we were impressed by how the students were able to articulate their learning in a way that demonstrated an integration of head, heart and imagination.
- 111. The St Benedict's centre is held in great esteem and affection. Students spoke of how simply entering the premises took them into another world of prayerful wisdom. They also spoke of how the leadership of the programme set the tone and provided an example of mission and ministry rooted in holy wisdom.

**Commendation 14**

**We commend the programme for instilling the importance of prayerfulness and wisdom.**

**E5 Students are helped to grow in fruitfulness.**

- 112. Documentation, interviews and teaching session observations confirmed that the programme intentionally encourages engagement with 'difference'. 'Addressing Bias' is a significant contributory factor that is taken seriously. Students commented positively on the powerful impact this has had for them individually.
- 113. Modules and assessment methodology are constantly scrutinised and have been amended and developed to ensure that diversity and difference feature strongly. This occurs in curriculum design, assessments and outcomes.
- 114. Students are encouraged to visit churches of different traditions. Placements are also arranged to offer a range of experiences.
- 115. Worship at the beginning of each teaching session is prepared by a student designated on a rota system. The result of this is that a range of styles emerges each year.

## Recommendation 25

**In order to ensure that all students are offered a wide variety of worship styles, we recommend a greater intentionality and level of planning so that the experience is less dependent on the ‘make up’ of each cohort.**

### **E6 Students are equipped to continue to develop their potential.**

- 116. There is an evident hunger to learn about all that God might do and to engage with how to respond to that.
- 117. The strong collegial networks created and nurtured within year groups are spiritually and personally supportive. Students articulate how important and ‘lasting’ these formational relationships are for them.
- 118. The contact with and support offered to students, particularly noting the dedication and gifting of the ADFM, is hugely appreciated. Many students note that their experiences would be significantly inferior without her input, care, understanding and love.

## Recommendation 26

**To give further opportunity for developmental and formational learning experiences for LLMs, we recommend that they be given more opportunity to engage with IME2 as well as other potential learning experiences.**

### **E7 Students are able to demonstrate trustworthiness.**

- 119. ‘Trustworthiness’ as a virtue is clearly modelled for the students by the key leadership of the course. The student body as a whole seem to realise this, and it acts as an example and incentive. Specific areas in which trustworthiness needs to be demonstrated by individual students e.g. safeguarding concerns and academic integrity, are clearly taken seriously by the course with due processes in place.
- 120. It is interesting that there does not appear to be a formal system of pastoral tutors in place. Some aspects of such a role are currently met by the learning advisers and others by the Director of the course, but it might be interesting for the course to explore whether a system of pastoral tutors could be helpful to enable students integrate, learning, worship, spirituality and pastoral dimensions (see **Recommendation 23**).

### **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.**

- 121. These procedures all seem to be in place. Clearly their efficient execution partly depends on the administrative support available to the course. It would be helpful to have clarity as regards the job description of the course administrator (which the reviewers did not have sight of) and the

proportion of time that the post holder was expected to devote to the work of the course alongside other commitments.

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

## Conclusion

**The review team has Confidence in the Rochester Diocese LLM Formation Programme in preparing students for licensed lay ministry in the Church of England.**



## Summary of Commendations

### **Commendation 1**

We commend the programme for the clarity of its aims and for ensuring they are firmly embedded in its processes.

### **Commendation 2**

We commend the programme for its promotion of diversity and inclusion and for its Addressing Bias module.

### **Commendation 3**

We commend the use of accommodation and the learning environment provided.

### **Commendation 4**

We commend the Course for the exemplary culture of care, wisdom and spiritual depth promoted by the staff.

### **Commendation 5**

We commend the constitution and working of the Board of Reference.

### **Commendation 6**

We commend the strong, professional and inspirational leadership provided by the Ministry Formation staff.

### **Commendation 7**

We commend the course for its recruitment of tutors, particularly for the inclusion of a substantial number of lay people.

### **Commendation 8**

We commend the practice of using two tutors, modelling collaborative ministry and encouraging diversity.

### **Commendation 9**

We commend the provision of Learning Advisers and the support they provide.

### **Commendation 10**

We commend the programme for creatively increasing the diversity of modes of assessment.

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We commend the programme for its intentional and consistent accompaniment of its students in their vocational journey.

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**Commendation 14**

We commend the programme for instilling the importance of prayerfulness and wisdom.

## Summary of Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1**

When the diocese next reviews its strategy for licensed lay ministry we recommend that it considers how collaboration in leadership between lay and ordained may be furthered by greater opportunities of sharing in formation pre- and post-licensing.

### **Recommendation 2**

We recommend that the programme continues to explore its collaboration with the diocese of Canterbury and other local partners.

### **Recommendation 3**

We recommend that course leaders keep under review the question of seeking validation of the programme from an external body, including the possibility of adopting Common Awards.

### **Recommendation 4**

We recommend wider engagement within the Course with other faiths, through visits, placements and invitations to address the student body.

### **Recommendation 5**

We recommend a programme of study skills for all students throughout the duration of the Course on varied aspects of study skills.

### **Recommendation 6**

We recommend that written statements on issues of gender and ethnicity are included in the course handbook and on the online Learning Space.

### **Recommendation 7**

We recommend that attention is given to the full inclusion in community life of those attending the Course online.

### **Recommendation 8**

We recommend that information about access and wheelchair use is made more explicit in the Course information and St Benedict's website.

### **Recommendation 9**

We recommend that consideration is given to the invitation of people outside the traditions and experience represented amongst the student body to preach, preside or lead worship (note also Recommendation 25 at E5).

### **Recommendation 10**

In order to provide greater clarity and shared understanding of the role, we recommend that a role description for the Chair of the Board of Reference is produced and shared with all stakeholders.

### **Recommendation 11**

To enable a further developed perception of the immense value and potential of the programme, we recommend the development of an 'Accountability Chart' that clearly defines where and how the Board of Reference and Programme Management Group relate to each other, the staff team, the Diocesan Department for Formation and Ministry, the Bishop's Senior Staff, Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod.

### **Recommendation 12**

In order to ensure continuity of excellence, we recommend that the Board of Reference together with Bishop's Senior Staff consider leadership succession planning so that the depth and breadth of experience and understanding might be sustained beyond the current post holders.

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To ensure that actions agreed at each meeting are carried out in a timely fashion and followed up at subsequent meetings, we recommend that the minutes annotate actions, person responsible and date for completion. These would then be commented upon at the following meetings or by email as soon as possible thereafter.

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