



SUPERVISION OF CURATES IN IME 2

The supervision of a curate is a structured process which enables the work, learning and support of the curate, not just for the curacy itself but in building up habits and practices for the rest of their ordained life. It is part of a wider framework of accountability and oversight shared with the Area Bishop and Head of IME 2 but for many curates the relationship with their Training Incumbent will be the most central element of their training – the place where they learn most and are most influenced in their hopes and their daily practice of ministry.

Curacy supervision has some overlap with other forms of professional supervision in medicine, teaching, counselling, coaching and work consultancy. However, it is also distinct: partly due to its context within the covenant of shared ordination vows; partly due to the practical dimensions of the close working relationship and need for mutual support in vocation; partly due to the responsibility of the TI to discern the readiness of the curate to be ordained priest (where appropriate)

and later to move to their first post of responsibility. We will also naturally look to biblical models, such as Jethro and Moses, Samuel and Eli, Elijah and Elisha, Mary and Elizabeth, Paul and Timothy, as well as Jesus' own ministry to the disciples, such as his taking Peter aside after their breakfast on the beach in *John 21*.

The Purpose of Curacy Supervision

- Planning and managing the curacy
- Supporting the curate
- Reflection and learning

*The Appointment & Training
of Training Incumbents (2017)*

Finding the Right Model for Supervision

Regular, focused supervision and reflection with the TI is vital to the curate's formation, development and ministerial practice. There is no one way to do this. Many in the Diocese of Oxford have found Michael Paterson's approach to pastoral supervision helpful as a starting point. TIs and curates are encouraged to explore a range of possibilities and discover what works for them. They will be different people with different expectations, communication styles and learning preferences; all of which may be temporarily thrown into a little turmoil by the beginning of the curacy, with all the emotional and personal challenges and changes that brings. Therefore one of the earliest supervision priorities should be opportunity to spend time understanding one's own and each other's disposition and ways of working and communicating.

Key Skills for Supervision

- Listening
- Giving feedback
- Enabling reflection
- Giving space for curates to explore their feelings and responses to challenging incidents

However it is framed, curacy supervision is a process – one in which both parties have a voice, but where one person is given responsibility for the development, management and support of another person who continues in training for public ministry. Important words to describe the process might include accountability, competence, stewardship, care, education, mediation and validation. A TI is charged with exploring the ministerial practice and competence of the curate. This is a weighty and demanding task. It requires mutual openness, honesty,

trust and confidentiality. The work needs to be underpinned by prayer and study. It is expected that the supervisor will monitor ministerial performance, helping the curate understand their ministerial role and tasks. The supervisor will need to create a safe climate in which feelings can be explored, practices can be considered in a reflective manner, support can be offered (and received), educational needs can be addressed, learning reinforced, and feedback given (and received). The supervisor will also be ready and able to deal with matters when things go wrong, offering mediation when necessary and drawing on the resources of others when need demands.

Frequency of Supervisions

Supervision sessions should be distinct from staff meetings, diary planning or other parts of parish life. Typically for curates whose ministry is full-time in the parish (stipendiary/incumbent/ pioneer), supervision should take place at least fortnightly for 60–90 minutes (over time this may shift to monthly for 90–120 minutes). For curates whose ministry is not based full-time in the parish (SSM/MSE/OLM), this may be monthly, depending on the amount of time given to the parish but TIs are encouraged to make extra time where possible at the start of the relationship. The expectations around frequency and style of supervision are to be included in the Learning and Ministry Agreement signed by the curate, TI and Head of IME 2 and reviewed each year.

Records of Supervisions

At present there is no requirement for all curates to keep a formal learning journal or supervision log but often it will be helpful for them to make a few notes of the shared reflection on a particular theme, ready to be included in the Annual Report and Ministry Development Folder (MDF); and TIs may find the same. By structuring key supervisions around aspects of the Formation Qualities during the year, the work of the report can be spread out and avoid becoming too large a task in March/April of Year 1 or June of Y2.

After most of the IME 2 Training Days the curate attends, a ‘homework’ is usually set which involves some element of reflective conversation with the TI. For many of the ‘optional’ days, it is often a case study or set of questions about how the topic relates to your particular local

context, which may be expected to take 30–45 minutes of a supervision in the following weeks; the curate is expected to record key points of the conversation on a Supervision Homework pro forma and ask their TI to sign it. For the core days and the third year Mission and Ministry project, there will be some supervision preparation with the TI which leads in to a longer reflection the curate writes and on some occasions there may be a form for the TI to fill in as part of the feedback.

Supervision and Annual Assessment

Each curate and TI submits three main reports over the curacy – one at the end of the first year, usually with the recommendation for priesting; an Interim report mid-way through (often in June of Year 2); and the End of Curacy Assessment when the TI and curate both judge the curate is ready for their first post of responsibility as an Associate Minister or new Incumbent. These reports should always be considered at a supervision together, with opportunity for discussion, challenge and reflection, rather than simply written by each party independently.

Where a curate is undertaking a longer curacy over perhaps five or six years, the curate and TI should submit a ‘short report’ on a separate form which is much briefer and notes particular circumstances, as well as areas of growth. During maternity leave or extended time off due to illness, the short report might be written by the TI alone.

The reporting process and submission of the Ministry Development Folders is supervised by the Head of IME 2 and feedback given by an independent Assessor, appointed by the Bishop, who has not been involved in the supervision of the curate up to that point.

Supervision Training

Orientation to the IME 2 Programme and support in the annual assessment of curates is offered to new TIs by the Head of IME 2. Supervision training for TIs is the work of the CMD team, who offer courses each year, usually with one session prior to the curate’s arrival and one mid-way through the first year. New TIs are required to attend these events. TIs who have trained curates in the Diocese of Oxford in previous years are usually expected to attend the supervision training for every other curate.

Academic Supervision & Common Awards Qualifications

Curates in the Diocese of Oxford have the option of doing a Durham University validated award (Common Awards: BA or PGDip) as part of their training. These typically involve six modules (two per year), focused on reflective practice and based in the experience of ministry in their context (eg. Preaching, Leadership & Collaboration or the Mission & Ministry Project) and, as such, need an element of supervision and feedback which the curate can include in his/her assessed academic portfolio. For each module the TI is asked to either be the

nominated practical supervisor or to delegate this to another suitable minister. Typically there is a fair degree of overlap between this professional academic supervision and routine ministerial supervision but the module supervisor may also need to sign forms, agree proposals or offer written feedback for the curate's summative assignments.

Interim Supervision during Vacancies, Sabbaticals or Periods of Illness

It is the normal practice to require TIs to commit themselves to staying in the benefice for at least the first year of a curacy, and hopefully for most of it. TIs are also not normally permitted to take sabbaticals within the first eighteen months of the curacy. In all cases they should liaise with the Head of IME 2 and Area Bishop at an early stage to ensure arrangements are in place for the Area Bishop to delegate supervision to a suitable Interim Supervisor.

Where a TI is absent for an extended period of time for reasons such as illness, maternity or compassionate leave, the Curate (and TI, where possible) should inform the Head of IME 2 who will consult with the Area Bishop about the appointment of any Interim Supervisor. The Area Teams aspire to putting interim provision in place any time the TI is absent for more than two weeks, except during planned annual leave.

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