



DIOCESE of OXFORD

A Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world

TRAINING INCUMBENTS' SUPERVISION SKILLS RESOURCE BOOK 2023–2024

The purpose of this booklet is to gather together a number of resources to assist those who undertake the role of Training Incumbent across the Diocese. The resources will be enhanced by the times we spend together. For us all to gain the maximum benefit of our first session together, please look through the first 16 pages and prepare a topic to share in the peer observation exercise (see pp.10–11) before we meet.

Grant Bayliss
April 2023

Contents

Supervision of curates in IME 2	2
Establishing a good framework for supervision	5
A model for supervision	6
An approach to supervision	7
Peer observation exercise (Preparation needed for Session 1 & 2)	9
Some tips for online supervision	11
The role and handling of feedback	13
Reflecting on our training incumbent and curate relationship (Preparation needed for Session 2 only)	16
A short bibliography	18

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)

The Purpose of Curacy Supervision

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

The Appointment & Training of Training Incumbents (2017)

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*.

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. Although the Diocese of Oxford training sessions commend Michael Paterson's approach, 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.

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; 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. 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.

May 2022

ESTABLISHING A GOOD FRAMEWORK FOR SUPERVISION

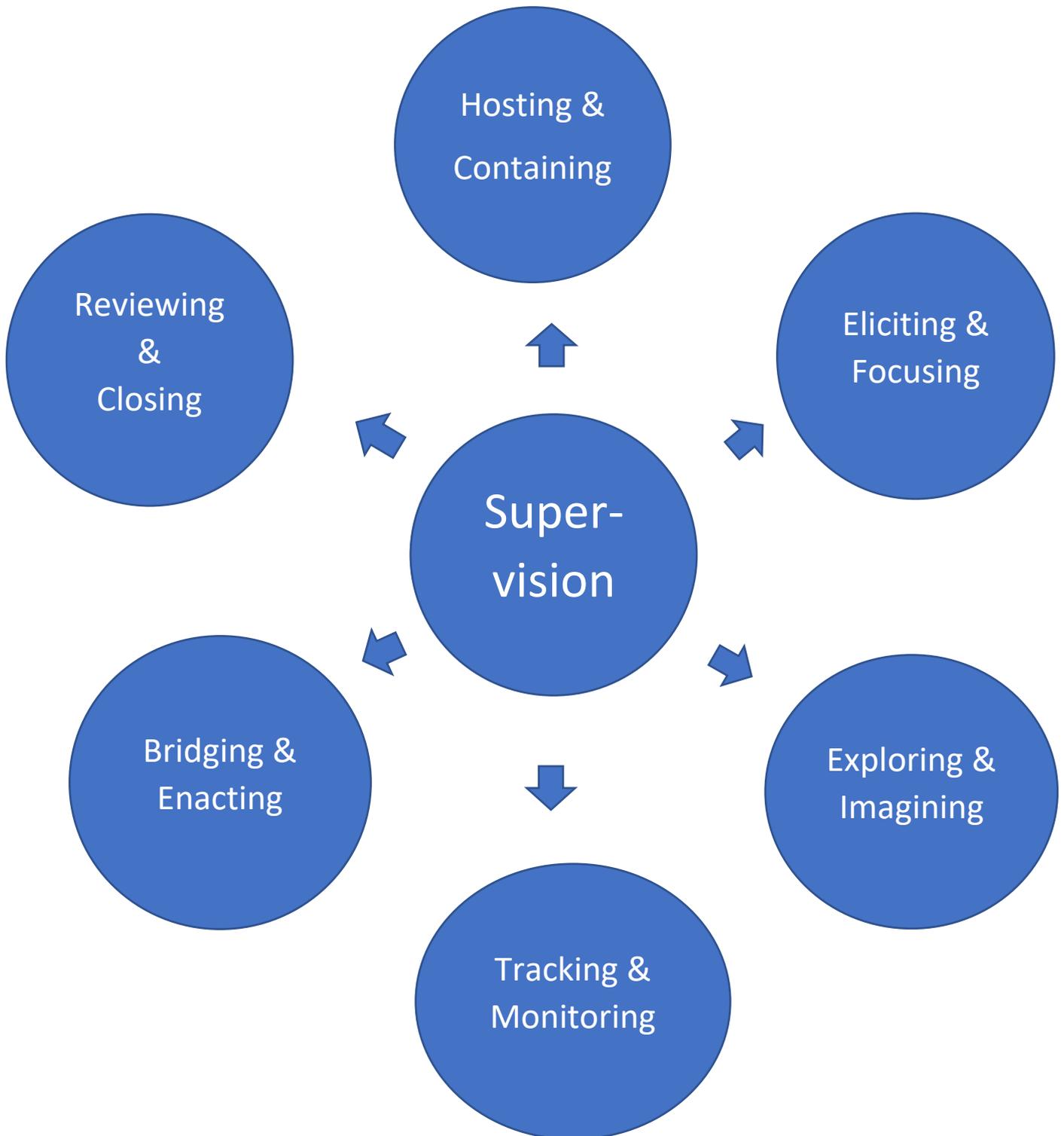
Drawn from: *Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook* (Leach and Paterson, 2010)

Training Incumbents and new curates should agree the framework for regular supervision as part of the curate's Learning Agreement and may find the following outline helpful.

Aims	<p>What is my understanding of the purpose of supervision?</p> <p>What experience of supervision does my curate have?</p> <p>What hopes and fears does s/he bring?</p> <p>What is s/he looking for?</p> <p>How do our perceptions fit in with what the diocese is expecting from supervision?</p>	
Practicalities	<p>How often will we meet?</p> <p>How long will the sessions last?</p> <p>Where will we meet?</p> <p>How will the room be arranged?</p> <p>Will notes be taken and by whom?</p>	
Structure	<p>Who sets the agenda?</p> <p>What will the pattern of the sessions be?</p> <p>What tools for supervision has my curate encountered?</p> <p>What might s/he like to try?</p> <p>What preparation will my curate need to do before they come to each session?</p>	
Boundaries	<p>What are the criteria for assessment?</p> <p>To whom is this confidential?</p> <p>What records will be kept?</p> <p>Might there be any conflicts of interest because of other roles either of us hold?</p> <p>If I am worried about my supervisee's fitness to practise for any reason, how will we proceed?</p> <p>Can we handle these? If so, how?</p> <p>If either of us needs to cancel a session, how will this be done?</p>	
Arrangements for Review	<p>How often shall we review our work together?</p>	

A MODEL FOR PASTORAL SUPERVISION

(Derived from Michael Paterson)



Revd Dr Michael Paterson is a psychotherapist, pastoral supervisor, spiritual director, Episcopalian priest in Scotland and Director of the Institute of Pastoral Supervision & Reflective Practice www.ipsrp.org.uk

AN APPROACH TO SUPERVISION

(Some potential structured questions for examining a particular incident or issue)

Focus

What is the specific incident or issue in view?

Facts

What happened? When was this? Who was there? What was said?

What was the context? What details may be important or significant?

Facts include Feelings

What feelings were you are aware of at the time? In others? In yourself?

What evidence was there for feelings present? Were they stated?

Physical reactions or bodily sensations?

What feelings are you aware of now as you tell the story?

Thinking

What were you thinking?

Were you aware of taking particular decisions to speak in a particular way or follow a course of action?

(Do not pursue or evaluate possible reasons or outcomes at this stage, simply note what thought processes were involved)

Assessing

What was positive in the experience?

What was not?

Understanding

What sense do you make of the situation?

How do you understand or interpret what was happening?

Reviewing

What might you have done or said differently? What were your reasons?

What implications or outcomes might or might not have resulted?

Connections

What images, similar experiences, memories, encounters or ideas are evoked for you?
What reminders emerge?
In what ways might these have influenced you?
(they will have done – consciously or otherwise!)

Learning Review

What would you do differently in a similar situation?
Have you learnt things which could be applied to other situations?
What have you learnt about yourself?

Responsibilities

Is any follow up action in the situation appropriate?
What will this be, who will do it and when?

Future Learning

What learning needs have been highlighted?
How could they be addressed?
Is there someone it would be worth talking with about this?

And Finally... (take care not to gloss over this stage by assuming all is well!)

How do you feel now?
Is there anything else you want to say?
Do we need to talk about this again?

For TI Reflection

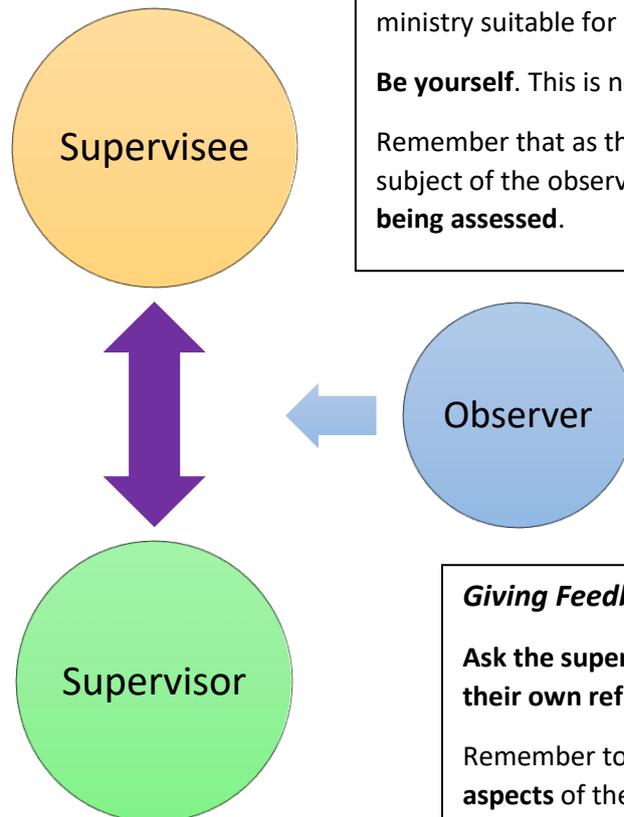
How do you respond to this sort of step-by-step approach?

Which steps might you be temperamentally inclined to miss out?

PEER OBSERVATION EXERCISE

(Drawn from ideas produced by Queens College Cambridge)

In both training sessions we shall be undertaking a peer observation exercise in which the main group will be split into trios, with each member of the trio taking it in turn to be supervisee, supervisor, and observer. The aim of this is to provide an occasion in which we may all practice our supervision skills, share ideas and reflect together.



Being the Supervisee

Please come prepared with a topic from your own ministry suitable for a supervisory conversation.

Be yourself. This is not role play.

Remember that as the supervisee you are not the subject of the observation and that **you are not being assessed.**

Observer

Giving Feedback as the Observer

Ask the supervisor who has been observed for **their own reflections** on the supervision first.

Remember to **comment on strengths and positive aspects** of the supervision observed.

Avoid bland, vague comments.

Comment on techniques, processes, and behaviours: avoid speculating on motivation or intent.

Conclude on a positive note.

Receiving Feedback as the Supervisor

Consider your own assessment of your supervision before you begin the discussion of the observation, including what you think worked well and what might have been done differently.

Remember to **listen to positive comments.**

Attend to practical ways of engaging with any difficulties or challenges which your observer identifies.

Identify two or three points that you would like to develop in the future.

For TI Preparation

Topic for Session 1

Feedback notes as supervisor

Topic for Session 2

Feedback notes as supervisor

TOP TIPS FOR ONLINE SUPERVISION

We hope that these may not be as necessary for 2023–24 as they were through the pandemic lockdowns but here are some reflections from previous TIs, curates and the IME 2 Team on how to make the most of supervision when it is limited to online.

1. **Get Stuck In!**

The task of building such a key relationship from scratch online is immense but all our TIs recognised that it was vital to invest heavily in the TI-curate relationship early on. So for all the likely problems and flaws of online supervision, if that's all that's possible, please do make time for it, especially in the first half of the year. There will be countless excuses that could crowd supervision out, please don't let them.

2. **Video, More than Audio**

Most people found it was best to use Zoom / FaceTime / MSTeams /WhatsApp or other video conferencing call, rather than phone or voice only, so you each can read at least some facial expressions, especially when getting to know one another. However, at various points in the year, especially when 'Zoomed out', some felt that switching to a simple phone call for a low-key supervision could make a refreshing change and take off pressure in a busy online week.

3. **Little & Often**

'Zoom fatigue' is real and most people find video calls more demanding and exhausting than in-person meetings for a whole range of reasons. Many TIs with established stipendiary curates found it helpful to move to shorter, more frequent supervisions during lockdown. So for those with new stipendiary curates, 30mins once or twice a week at the start might be wise and, where possible, 30 mins fortnightly with self-supporting curates. Everyone has been very alert to the cumulative effect of many online meetings in a day, so do ensure some sort of break for both of you before and after the call and that supervision isn't your only regular 1-2-1 contact.

4. **Be Focused**

A number of TIs and curates stressed the value of having a clear task, plan or focus for the supervision agreed in advance. Screensharing facilities and annotation or whiteboard options on some platforms like Zoom had proved very helpful and offered a neutral third party, allowing a sense of shared work/response. Looking at aspects of the learning agreement like this might help early on.

5. **Name What's Been Lost**

Several people reported how valuable it was to hear the other saying how odd this felt and reflecting on what had been lost and what was different from usual. For all that we have adapted over the past year or more, this is not how most of us normally work and there is no harm in saying so from time to time.

6. Give Permission, Clarify Expectations & Find What Works for You

Although there were many common themes, there has been a huge diversity of response. Some have found online supervisions easier than face-to-face, a few almost impossible. If you do use online formats, give one another permission to be honest, reflect together on how things are working and change to what works best for you both. Permission-giving is particularly important for TIs as you have even more power in the online dynamic than usual. Developing shared expectations around things like dress, punctuality and approach for online supervisions early on through reflection and permission-giving will probably avoid many potential frustrations on either side.

7. Recognise How You Each Feel

Psychologists and theologians of community trauma have repeatedly stressed that the phases of the pandemic and the cycle of lockdowns has left us on a rollercoaster of emotions and levels of energy through this crisis. Be attentive to where you each are in these cycles of activism and disillusionment, of energy and withdrawal and try to work with where you both are on a supervision day, rather than where you wish you were. Be gentle.

8. Be Extra Careful with Feedback – Try Appreciative Inquiry

Almost everyone noted that criticism comes across more bluntly on screen despite best intentions. Our images often come over as impersonal and even when there were just two people in a video call, a number report feeling less chance to come back on something than in person. Focusing on what went well and appreciative inquiry may be vital approaches to review while still building trust and relationship.

9. Keep Supervision Separate from Other Online Meetings

Just as with face-to-face supervision, online supervision is something different from checking in or a staff meeting (even when there are only the two of you in your staff team). Some benefices have found a v short daily check-in with the team of 5-10mins is helpful in avoiding long meetings and maintaining communications and awareness. In other meetings online, give some thought to how you might help your curate engage at first and draw them into the various groups or teams.

10. Make the Most of Other Forms of Supervision when they are Allowed

Most TIs and curates have found that socially-distanced supervisions are better in all sorts of ways than a purely online approach. Where the government regulations and guidance have permitted, side-by-side walks or else meeting in one another's gardens have been highly effective. Obviously it's important to be aware of the potential confidentiality issues in public or semi-public space but most TIs and curates have found that a good proportion of what they want to say in supervision can be covered outside, as long as there are clear opportunities for fully confidential discussion online or on the phone as well.

THE ROLE AND HANDLING OF FEEDBACK

Feedback has been defined as:

- “Information about reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, etc. which is used as a basis for improvement.”

Parts of the NHS work with this definition:

- “Feedback is an essential part of education and training programmes. It helps learners to maximise their potential at different stages of training, raise their awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance.”

For TI Reflection

If asked, how would you define ‘feedback’?

What do you think its purpose is?

Consider a time when you received helpful personal feedback.
What made it constructive or helpful for you?

Consider a time when you received difficult or damaging personal feedback.
What made it damaging or destructive for you?

When you have chance, discuss with your curate what they think the purpose of feedback is and how their experience of feedback has shaped them so far.

Offering feedback in supervision sessions needs careful consideration, it is helpful to be aware of good practice in this area.



Twelve Commandments for Giving Feedback

1. **Be generous** and positive **at the start and at the end** of giving feedback.
2. Use constructive feedback **regularly** to **acknowledge real achievements and success**.
Showing appreciation is of value.
3. Remember there may be a **strong emotional charge** present in both parties. **Remain calm**. It's not easy to give critical feedback and it is important to retain control over your own feelings. Being either too aggressive or too nervous to communicate well will not help. Remember to maintain an even tone in our voice and to keep appropriate eye contact.
4. **Seek permission**. Getting the time and location right are important. Feedback works best when both parties are ready.
5. **Gain their perspective**.
6. **Be succinct and specific**. Being generalised in one's comments doesn't help. Keep to the situation you have raised. Remember it's the specific behaviour or action you are discussing.
7. **State observations**, not your analysis or opinion of what you have seen taking place.
8. **Engage them with constructive questions** regarding learning.
9. Use those aspects of whatever it is you are discussing that could be altered and **focus on behaviour that can be changed**. It is never good giving people feedback that appears to condemn them as a person.
10. **Let them do the thinking**.
11. **Check with them** what they have heard.
12. **Keep notes** on all the feedback that you give.

Some Characteristics of Beneficial Feedback



For TI Reflection

What else might you add?

REFLECTING ON OUR TRAINING INCUMBENT AND CURATE RELATIONSHIP INCLUDING THE SUPERVISORY DIMENSION

For TI Preparation in advance of Session 2 (Spring 2024)

Please work through the following review questions and be ready to share some of your answers in small groups in Session 2 (dates to be confirmed but likely late Jan/early Feb).

- What are the aspects of being a training incumbent that you believe you are doing well?
- What are the aspects of being a training incumbent that you think you are doing less well or cause you some concern?
- What has surprised you about the relationship you have with your curate: both positive and cause for concern?
- What have you learnt from your curate?
- Is it as you thought it might be?
- What role might supervision be playing in facilitating growth, reflection, new insights and development, in you and your curate?
- What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of your supervisory relationship?

- What impact, if any, might your supervisory relationship be having on other relationships?
- How do you prepare for supervision sessions?
E.g. Beginnings and endings – length of time- creating the agenda.
- What is the current pattern of meetings?
Regular or fixed, changeable – balance of formality and informality.
How is time allocated between support, education, management and mediation?
Do you think the balance is right?
- How are you assessing the process within each supervision session and discerning what might be happening ‘below the surface’? Including by noting the balance of speaking and listening – the quality of giving and receiving feedback, and the ability to be open and vulnerable.
- What ways, if any, have you devised to handle differences between you and your curate? These may include learning preferences, theology, personality, approach to issues, work-life balance, expectations and assumptions you each have of yourselves and one another, and those being made by others.
- How are you handling any ‘noises off’ that are making an impact in your situation?

A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Helen D Cameron	<i>Living in the Gaze of God</i>	SCM	2018
M Carroll	<i>Effective Supervision for the Helping Professions</i>	SAGE	2014
J Foskett & D Lyall	<i>Helping the Helpers</i>	SPCK	1988
P Hawkins and R Shohet	<i>Supervision in the Helping Professions</i>	OUP	2012
J Leach	<i>A Charge to Keep Reflective Supervision and the Renewal of Christian Leadership</i>	WFB	2020
J Leach and M Paterson	<i>Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook (2nd ed.)</i>	SCM	2015
M Paterson	<i>Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Pastoral Supervision Revisited & Revisioned</i>	Ind	2020
S Pickard	<i>Theological Foundations for Collaborative Practice</i>	Ashgate	2009
J Rogers	<i>Coaching Skills</i>	OUP	2004
F Ward	<i>Lifelong Learning</i>	SCM	2005