



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Ministry Council

Inspection Report

Oak Hill College

February 2009

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LIST OF INSPECTORS

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THE INSPECTIONS FRAMEWORK

On behalf of the sponsoring churches, inspection teams are asked to assess the fitness for purpose of the training institution for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry and to make recommendations for the enhancement of the life and work of the institution.

Within the structures of the Church of England, this report is prepared for the House of Bishops acting through the Ministry Council.

In coming to their judgements, inspectors are asked to use the following outcomes with regard to the overall outcome and individual criteria:

Confidence

Overall outcome: a number of recommendations, none of which question the generally high standards found in the inspection.

Criteria level: aspects of an institution's life which show good or best practice.

Confidence with qualifications

Overall outcome: A number of recommendations, including one or more of substance that questions the generally acceptable standards found in the inspection and which can be rectified or substantially addressed by the institution in the coming 12 months.

Criteria 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 raise significant questions about the standards found in the inspection and the capacity of the institution to rectify or substantially address these in the coming 12 months.

Criteria 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.

Criteria 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.

THE REPORT OF THE INSPECTION OF OAK HILL COLLEGE

February 2009

SUMMARY

Introduction

Oak Hill College describes itself as 'a theological college training men and women for ministry in the Church of England and other spheres of Christian service.' Owned by the Kingham Hill Trust, it is an Associate College of Middlesex University and is accredited by the University to validate its own undergraduate and taught graduate programmes.

At the time of the inspection, 16-19 February 2009, there were 57 ordinands in training, including one woman, and 98 other students following allied programmes of study.

Summary of outcomes

The inspection team regards Oak Hill College as fit for purpose for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry.

CRITERIA	OUTCOME
A. Aims, objectives and evaluation of the institution	Confidence with qualifications
B. Relationships with other Institutions	Confidence with qualifications
C. Governance, Management, Constitution and Organisation	Confidence with qualifications
D. Accommodation	Confidence
E. Community and Corporate Life	Confidence
F. Common Worship	Confidence with qualifications
G. Ministerial, Personal and Spiritual Formation	Confidence
H. Teaching and Learning: Content, Method and Resources	Confidence
J. Practical and Pastoral Theology	Confidence with qualifications
K. Training in Public Worship	Confidence
L. Teaching Staff	Confidence with qualifications
M. Administrative Staff	Confidence with qualifications
N. Students	Confidence

Overall Outcome	Confidence with qualifications
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General observations

Since the last inspection, there has been a change of Principal at Oak Hill College and a consequent change in management style. The well-qualified teaching staff, however, has been largely stable and has continued to deliver high quality programmes at undergraduate and taught postgraduate levels, supported by a dedicated administrative staff team. The inspectors were favourably impressed by much of what they learnt and saw at the College and hope that their recommendations will be of assistance to the Council,

Management, and staff as they seek continuous enhancement of their academic and formational enterprises.

Response to the last inspection

The inspectors were pleased to note that for the most part serious attention had been paid to the recommendations made in the 2002 inspection report. Regular conversations now take place between the College and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands for Chelmsford and London; arrangements for the annual appraisal of the Principal are in place; morning worship in the College Chapel follows for the most part the Church of England's order for Morning Prayer; clear arrangements have been implemented for the assessment of ordinands' leading of public worship; grievance and disciplinary procedures are in place for teaching staff, support staff and students. We also noted, however, that in respect of a small number of the 2002 recommendations further action remains necessary if they are to be regarded as having been adequately implemented. The arrangement for a member of the House of Bishops to be an active member of the Council has not worked out well in practice as the Bishop so appointed is only rarely able to be present at meetings; the number of women ordinands remains far less than the 15% minimum required by the House of Bishops' Guidelines; links with other faith and secular organisations in the local community remain largely undeveloped; and the period of time spent by ordinands in secular or community-based organisations is not in our opinion sufficiently sustained.

Strengths

- Strong sense of community
- Overall institutional commitment to task
- Highly qualified academic staff
- Quality of academic programmes
- Quality of programmes of ministerial formation and training
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Quality of students' academic performance and achievement
- Quality of feedback on student assignments
- Quality of library and learning support resources
- Committed administrative and support staff
- Quality of residential accommodation for married students
- Quality of teaching accommodation
- Quality of communal spaces
- Relationship with Middlesex University
- Level of satisfaction of training incumbents receiving Oak Hill ordinands
- Level of satisfaction expressed by placement supervisors
- Level of satisfaction expressed by students and former students
- The extensive grounds and pleasant location in which the College is set
- The courtesy and warmth of welcome extended to visitors

Areas for attention

- The appointment to the Council of a member of the House of Bishops able to take a close interest in the life and work of the College and willing to represent the College to the wider Church of England
- The small number of women ordinands
- Male imbalance in the academic staff
- The incorporation into worship of a more pronounced reflective dimension
- More extensive use of the authorised offices for Church of England ordinands
- Quality of accommodation for single students
- The setting in place of formal systems of professional development and training for academic staff
- Weekly term-time placements for all ordinands in churches of significantly different tradition from their own
- The amount of block placement time spent by ordinands in a non-parochial setting
- The development of an active partnership with St Mellitus College in the delivery of the regional training agenda
- The development of closer relations with a wider range of secular and faith organisations across the locality in which the College is set
- The systematic consideration of issues relating to gender and race within the context of ministerial training and formation
- The incorporation of compulsory modules from the Theology and World Mission programme into ministerial training
- The adequacy of the administrative and support staff establishment
- Arrangements for ensuring that the student voice is heard at all levels of the College's strategic and operational enterprise

FULL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Oak Hill College is set in extensive and attractive grounds in a suburban area of North London and enjoys an enviable stock of residential and teaching accommodation. According to its prospectus, it is 'a theological college training men and women for ministry in the Church of England and other spheres of Christian service.' The Kingham Hill Trust is the registered charity that owns and supports the College. The Trust, however, has delegated responsibility for the strategic and operational management of the College to the College Council and the College Principal. Oak Hill College is an Associate College of Middlesex University and is accredited by the University to validate its own undergraduate and taught graduate programmes.
- 2 At the time of the inspection from 16 to 19 February 2009, there were at Oak Hill College 57 ordinands (56 full-time and 1 part-time) sponsored by the English bishops along with a further 98 students (76 full-time and 22 part-time) following programmes in Theological and Pastoral Studies, Theology and World Mission, and Youth and Children's Ministry.
- 3 The Senior Inspector visited the College ahead of the inspection on 7 and 8 January 2009 in order to agree arrangements and to ensure that provision would be made for the inspectors to gain the widest possible view of the College's life and work during the period of the inspection. During the inspection itself, members of the inspection team were able to observe teaching at all levels, to check the quality of learning resources and to examine examples of course assignments, dissertations and examination scripts. We held meetings with the Principal, the Vice-Principal, teaching staff, support staff and students. We were present each morning in the College Chapel for the daily corporate act of worship and attended meetings of Fellowship Groups which are the focal point for the College's personal tutorial system. There were meetings between ourselves and representatives of the dioceses of Chelmsford and London, as well as meetings with placement incumbents, training incumbents and former Oak Hill students currently serving titles. In addition, the Senior Inspector had meetings with representative members of the College Council and the Kingham Hill Trust, and with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Middlesex University. Minutes and papers relating to meetings of the College Council, the Academic Board and other principal College bodies were made available to us.
- 4 The inspectors were greatly appreciative of the detailed documentation provided for them by the College ahead of the inspection.

Documentation received was as follows:

- The College's response to the Inspection Questionnaire
- The College's response to the Curriculum Validation Questions
- Oak Hill College Prospectus 2009
- Biblical Training for Youth and Children's Ministry Prospectus
- Biblical Training for Cross-Cultural Mission Prospectus
- Oak Hill College Yearbook 2009
- Oak Hill College *Newsbrief* (Summer 2008)
- Certificate in Ministry: Programme Handbook 2008-09
- Theological and Pastoral Studies (TPS) Undergraduate Student Handbook 2008-09
- Postgraduate Student Handbook 2008-09
- Theology & World Mission Undergraduate Student Handbook 2008-09
- Youth and Children's Ministry Undergraduate Student Handbook 2008-09
- Information, Regulations and Procedures 2008-09
- Guidelines on Presenting Your Essay/Assignment (September 2008)
- Student Beginning of Term Pack (TPS Programme)
- Information Folder (TPS Programme) including Chapel Handbook and Health and Safety Notes
- Spouses Pack (All Programmes)
- Kingham Hill Trust Staff Handbook

5 The inspectors were equally appreciative of the warm welcome extended to us by all members of the College across the time of the inspection and the general willingness of staff and students to engage openly and freely in dialogue and to answer often probing and challenging questions. All this made our task the pleasanter and the easier.

A AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION

Inspectors will consider to what extent the declared aims and objectives, strategies and policies of the institution correspond to the needs of the Churches, to the institution's own curriculum validation proposals and to accepted and legal criteria.

A.i The aims and objectives of the institution should be appropriate to the preparation of ordinands for public ministry within the breadth of traditions of the sponsoring church.

6 The overall aims of Oak Hill College are clearly set out in the Statement of Strategies and Priorities recently drawn up by the College Council. In that document, the Council states that it seeks to serve Christ's Church by:

- Training men and women for ordained ministries in the Church of England and the Anglican Communion

- Training men and women for other Christian ministries both Anglican and non-Anglican in the United Kingdom and the world
- Providing on-going ministerial education and training for the encouragement and development of those in full-time stipendiary and other Christian ministries
- Developing evangelical scholarship in terms of training the next generation of theological educators.

7 The Council's current Statement of Strategies and Priorities asserts an intention to:

- Listen carefully and respond appropriately to the training needs of the Church of England and its ecumenical partners
- Seek to participate fully in the Regional Training Partnership of London and Chelmsford Dioceses
- Develop partnerships with local churches and other organisations and broaden the range of organisations with which [the College has] active relationships
- Continue to provide full-time residential training
- Develop opportunities for mixed-mode training and explore other appropriate means of educational delivery.

The Statement concludes with a list of what will need to be given priority, if its declared aims are to be achieved – quality research, teaching and learning; quality resources for learning; quality teaching and residential accommodation; quality administration; and above all the 'maturation of students in holiness of life and learning' such as will enable them 'to develop godly, biblical ministries appropriate, and rightly responsive, to the diversity of today's world and today's churches.'

8 With regard more specifically to the training of women and men for ordination in the Church of England, Oak Hill College makes a clear statement of its objectives in its validation document. There it states that in training for ordained ministry, the College trains for 'leadership and direction for God's people, proclamation of God's grace in word and sacrament, provision of public worship, prayer and thanksgiving, pastoral care which is parish-wide, and a model of Christian maturity.' In training ordinands for such roles, the College recognises the need 'to produce people who are theologically competent, pastorally discerning and mission-orientated, all within an Anglican polity.'

A.ii There should be evidence that the current, published statements on the training policy produced by various denominational bodies have been suitably integrated into the training programme.

9 It was the view of the inspectors that Oak Hill College shows in the expression of its aims and objectives a due loyalty to its own conser-

vative evangelical tradition, whilst at the same time seeking to pay proper regard to the requirements and expectations of the Church of England regarding the education, formation and training of future Anglican ministers. Moreover, we found in the Council's Statement of Strategies and Priorities a commendable willingness to look forward and outward, to embrace possible changed modes of delivery and to enter into new and wider partnerships.

A.iii There should be evidence taken in response to the previous inspection report and any follow-up.

10 Evidence of the College's willingness to countenance change, to accept advice and to act on it, was found equally in its response to the recommendations of the 2002 inspection, even if there is still significant work to be done on some of the 2002 recommendations (see paras 11-15 below). In the College's response to the Inspection Questionnaire as well as in our conversations and discussions with members of the College, we found evidence that the 2002 recommendations had been seriously addressed by the College Authorities and that significant action had been taken. Hence we noted that:

- conversations between the College and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands, especially from the Dioceses of Chelmsford and London, are now a regular feature
- arrangements for the annual appraisal of the College Principal are now in place, including the involvement of an external senior theological educator
- morning worship in the College Chapel for the most part follows the Church of England's order for Morning Prayer as set out in *Common Worship* and every fourth week in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*
- an external educational consultant has engaged with College teaching staff in a reflection on methods of teaching and learning
- detailed arrangements have been set in place to ensure rigorous assessment of ordinands' leading of public worship in placement parishes
- personal tutors systematically provide feedback to students on their leading of Chapel worship
- clear written grievance and discipline procedures are in place for teaching staff, support staff and students

11 Nevertheless the inspectors were of the opinion that some of the 2002 recommendations need to be further addressed. We noted, for example, with regard to the 2002 recommendations, that a member of the House of Bishops has been appointed to the Oak Hill Council. Council minutes reveal, however, that the Bishop so appointed is only rarely able to be present at meetings. Whilst no criticism of the particular Bishop is intended in this respect – we acknowledge the heavy demands on Bishops' time and energies - it is clear that the intention of

the inspectors' 2002 recommendation was that such a Bishop would be someone able to play an active part in the Council's deliberations and also take on the role of 'champion' of Oak Hill across the wider Church of England.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Council consult with the Ministry Division in order to identify a member of the House of Bishops with capacity to engage actively with the life and work of the College and to represent its interests across the wider Church.

- 12 The inspectors also noted that in terms of recruitment the College still falls far short of the House of Bishops Guidelines that a minimum of 15% of places for ordinands should be taken by women. In the current academic year, 2008/9, there is at Oak Hill only one woman ordinand amongst the 57 ordinands there in training, although it is important to acknowledge that she herself spoke warmly and positively to us about her experience as a woman student at the College. We recognise that the recruitment of women ordinands to a college with a conservative evangelical tradition poses a considerable challenge, as too does the fact that many of the so-called 'sending churches' are not supportive of women's ordained ministry. Nevertheless, we are firmly of the view that a more equal gender balance amongst the College's ordinands would benefit the ordinands themselves as well as Oak Hill as a whole. For that reason, we believe that the College should step up its drive to recruit women ordinands. To assist it to do so, we believe that, as vacancies occur, it should endeavour to achieve a better gender balance across the teaching staff which is at present predominantly male, especially in the teaching posts for traditional theological subjects. It should also ensure that ordained women from a range of traditions are regularly invited to the College to preach and/or to engage wherever possible with the College's life and work.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the College:

- a) **redouble its present efforts to recruit an increased number of women ordinands;**
 - b) **seek, as opportunity arises, to achieve a more equitable gender balance in its academic staff;**
 - c) **avail itself of the widest possible range of opportunities for involving ordained women in the life and work of the College.**
- 13 A further area pinpointed for action in the 2002 recommendations which the 2009 inspection team viewed as deserving attention related to the recommendation made in 2002 that the College should 'reflect on the degree of its detachment from the social and ecclesiological context in which it is set, in order to reassess the opportunity this

provides for learning, dialogue and witness in class, for visits to and from the College and for placements.’ The 2009 inspectors were of the opinion that to date insufficient attention has been given by the College to this recommendation and therefore make further recommendation in this area in para 19, under their comments on Criterion B: Relationships with other Institutions.

- 14 In addition, with regard to the 2002 inspection report, the inspectors of 2009 had reservations relating to the recommendation that ‘the College review the policy and practice of block placements to include for all ordinands supervised experience in a secular or community-based institution.’ Whilst it was noted that the College now makes arrangements for ordinands to have experience in a good range of secular institutions and organisations – prisons, hospitals, the armed services – such experience is short, normally for not more than a single week. This means that the ordinands tend for the most part to be in these institutions in the role of observer and do not have opportunity to become fully engaged with their life and work. We wish to recommend, therefore, that a significantly larger proportion of the block placement – for example, a minimum of two, and preferably three of the five weeks – be spent in a non-parochial setting, given that experience of parochial ministry is well covered by the term-time weekly placements.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that a significantly larger proportion of the block placement be spent in a non-parochial setting.

- 15 Finally, with regard to the 2002 inspection report, the inspectors of 2009 noted that it has not yet been possible for the College to implement the recommendation of the 2002 inspectors that ‘faculty members be encouraged to take advantage of in-service training courses in educational method ... leading to a postgraduate qualification in higher education; and that enrolment on such a course be made a requirement for incoming Faculty if they do not already hold such a qualification.’ The inspectors of 2009 are anxious that the College should not lose sight of this important aspect of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning and make further comment in para 17 under Criterion B: Relationships with other Institutions.

The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion A: Aims, Objectives and Evaluation of the Institution.

B RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Inspectors will examine how the institution relates to other educational provision (including any partner university) and to the Churches and secular organisations in its locality, with particular reference to regional groupings of providers of theological education.

B.i The terms of academic and validation/accreditation arrangements with universities should be fair and appropriate to an institution offering training and formation for candidates for ordained ministry.

- 16 Oak Hill College enjoys an excellent relationship with Middlesex University and it is to the College's great credit that it is the only one of the University's partner colleges to be accredited by the University to validate its own undergraduate and taught graduate programmes. At a meeting with the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor and other university officers, the Senior Inspector heard how Middlesex University holds Oak Hill in high esteem, recognising the College's impeccable academic standards, its expertise in teaching and learning, its robust arrangements for overall quality assurance and its careful and efficient administrative systems and processes. Moreover, Middlesex University, as a relatively new institution, has a keen interest in innovation and is therefore an ideal partner for Oak Hill, as the College seeks to develop new programmes of study, to engage with new modes of delivery and to develop further the accreditation of students' prior learning.

B.ii The institution should show signs of drawing as much benefit as may be possible from the demands and resources of universities in teaching quality assessment, staff development and the promotion of research.

- 17 One further important area with which the University expressed a ready willingness to cooperate with the College is that of academic staff development. As noted in para 15, the 2002 inspectors recommended that Oak Hill faculty members should avail themselves of opportunities to improve their teaching expertise through participation in relevant in-service courses and also, where appropriate, by studying for the post-graduate certificate in higher education. Whilst accepting that the demands made on Oak Hill teaching staff are heavy, the inspectors of 2009 are of the view that the College has a duty to its students to ensure that Faculty members are encouraged to develop a continuously critical and reflective approach to the ways in which they manage their teaching and their students' learning. For that reason, we recommend that the College continue to negotiate with Middlesex University with a view to setting in place appropriate arrangements for the continuing professional development and training of Oak Hill Faculty members.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the College seek to draw on the expertise and experience of Middlesex University in the field of teaching and learning in order to devise and set in place formal provision for the professional development and training of Oak Hill faculty members, including the initial qualification of new members of staff.

B.iii There should be effective engagement with Churches, other faith communities and secular organisations in the locality such as to enhance preparation for public ministry.

- 18 With regard to other external relationships, Oak Hill clearly relates well to the many churches which send students to the College, to the many churches where it sends students out on placement and to those parishes where Oak Hill ordinands go out to serve their titles. Meetings between the inspectors and representatives of placement and training parishes provided evidence of an overall satisfaction with the way in which ordinands were being prepared by the College for ministry. There was a general view that Oak Hill students are pleasant, have well-developed interpersonal skills and are excellent at meeting and getting to know people. In short, they are seen as good ambassadors for the College and its work.
- 19 Whilst impressed by Oak Hill's overall relationships with Middlesex University and with those churches used for student placements, the inspectors were disappointed to find in their conversations with Management and members of the academic staff a limited awareness of the wider social context in which the College is set, even though this same issue had been raised by the inspectors in 2002 and had been the focus of one of their recommendations. Questioned about the ethnic and faith make-up of the local community, for example, Management and Faculty members were only able to give very imprecise answers. Moreover, there was evidence from what we were told that such incursions into the local community as are made by members of the College are invariably related to religious activity – going to church, taking prayers in local schools, street mission etc. We did not find evidence of serious endeavour to engage with local secular organisations or other faith communities. This led us to conclude that the College is overly inward looking and focused on its own relatively restricted religious concerns and on those who share them. And nowhere was this more evident to us during the inspection than in the topics for prayer in Chapel services, in Fellowship Groups and in the College's weekly prayer meeting. We believe that in and through the development of a wider network of relationships with individuals and organisations in the local community outside a church context, Oak Hill students would be helped to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the world in which they are destined to live and work as clergy. We believe it is important that the College should acknowledge

that the future ministers in training at Oak Hill will need to minister in a pluralist society. For that reason, engagement during any programme of ministerial education and formation with not only other Christian denominations, but with representatives of other faiths and of purely secular organisations would seem to us to be an imperative.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the College develop strategies aimed at enabling students in ministerial training to understand and engage with the social realities of the local context in which the College is set.

B.iv The institution should demonstrate commitment to effective partnership with other providers of theological education in the region.

- 20 The inspectors were pleased to note that informal discussions are taking place between Oak Hill College and the newly established St Mellitus College (the ministerial training body for the dioceses of Chelmsford and London). Moreover, in a meeting with the inspectors, the Vicar-General of the Diocese of London and the Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry for the Diocese of Chelmsford expressed the view that Oak Hill could make a valuable contribution as a partner in the St Mellitus enterprise, especially in respect of those St Mellitus students who come from evangelical backgrounds and who will wish eventually to minister in parishes with an evangelical tradition. Yet further, the Vicar-General and the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, noting the increasing cost of full-time residential ministerial training, were of the opinion that Oak Hill could have a significant role to play in what seems to be the likely future development of mixed-mode patterns of ministerial education and formation. We therefore wish to recommend that Oak Hill now move to active exploration of ways in which the College, through partnership with St Mellitus, can begin to develop a role in the regional ministerial training agenda.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the College move without delay actively to explore ways in which Oak Hill, in and through partnership with St Mellitus College, can begin to develop a role in the regional ministerial training agenda.

- 21 Finally, with regard to Oak Hill's relationships with other institutions, the inspectors noted the College's membership of the 'ALSO' group, a London-wide network of centres of theological education – Spurgeon's College, Oak Hill College, The London School of Theology and All Nations Christian College. We also noted Oak Hill's developing international links with the Stavanger School of Theology and Mission in Norway and the Johannelunds Theological Seminary in Sweden, as

well as its important and long-term involvement with Uganda Martyrs Seminary, Namugongo, Uganda.

The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion B: Relationships with other Institutions.

C GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, CONSTITUTION AND ORGANISATION

Inspectors will examine the role of the Governing Body and other bodies in the oversight and administration of the institution, taking particular note of the way decisions are made and implemented at different levels of the institution.

C.i There should be evidence of effective financial, administrative and management structures that facilitate the stated aims and objectives of the institution.

- 22 The inspectors were pleased to note from minutes of meetings of the College Council, as well as from their discussions with the Principal and representatives of the student body, that the Council is currently reviewing and revising the College's governance structures, in order to ensure both greater clarity of purpose and responsibility, and greater strategic effectiveness. We concurred with the view that the membership of Council, currently 25, is in all probability too large and that a smaller Council of some 12 members would lead to greater involvement on the part of its members and greater overall efficiency. The Council will need to take care, however, to ensure that a smaller Council retains across its membership the necessary range of specialist experience and expertise. It must also endeavour to make proper provision for staff and student voices to be heard and considered in its deliberations, a point to which we return in paras 25 and 88.
- 23 Within the context of the review of governance structures and purpose, the inspectors also noted and welcomed the proposal that a smaller Council might usefully be complemented by a larger Consultative Group. Such a group would meet perhaps no more than once per year but would allow the Council and the College to benefit from a wider range of expertise and perspective. The idea that such a Consultative Group might have a rolling membership also seemed to us to make good sense.
- 24 The responsibilities of the present Council are described in the College's 2009 Prospectus and also in the College's response to the Bishops' Inspection Questionnaire. Those responsibilities are stated as being 'senior staff appointments, programme approval, accommodation, domestic arrangements, college financial matters and relations with outside bodies and the wider Church.' In so far as financial

matters are concerned, the inspectors noted the College's current financial strategy as set out in the response to the Inspection Questionnaire along with a statement of actual income and expenditure for 2007/8 and of budgeted income and expenditure for 2008/9. Within that context, we noted an actual and projected subvention of £150,000 in each of those years from the Kingham Hill Trust. We also noted in 2007/8 an actual deficit of £265,987 and a forecast deficit in 2008/9 of £231,899. Both of these deficits, however, included substantial sums in respect of depreciation - £183,315 in 2007/8 and £188,000 in 2008/9. Nevertheless, maintaining the level of student recruitment to Oak Hill's full range of academic programmes is clearly vital in terms of guaranteeing the income stream and the long-term viability of the College.

C.ii There should be evidence of a structured contribution made by the student body so that it plays an effective role in the decision-making policy.

- 25 The inspectors noted provision for regular, informal contact between student officers and Management, as well as provision for student representation on major committees, including the Council. We were informed, however, in conversation with members of the College's Student Committee, that in so far as meetings of the Council are concerned, the student voice is rarely heard or canvassed. We return therefore to this point in para 88.

C.iii There should be evidence that the tutorial and administrative staff are able to fulfil their job descriptions both individually and corporately and are resourced to do so.

- 26 Meetings between the inspectors and members of teaching and support groups evidenced that all carry heavy workloads and are often under considerable pressure to meet both internal and external deadlines. Faculty in general, however, show an outstanding commitment to the life and work of the institution and to the maintenance of the highest possible academic standards. It is to be hoped that concerns they expressed to us about the current perceived lack of communication and openness between themselves and the College's Management can soon be resolved. In so far as support staff are concerned, the inspectors learnt from individual interviews with some of those in key administrative positions that they often find it necessary to work over-long hours in order to manage seemingly ever increasing workloads. The position at the time of the inspection was particularly acute as a result of a vacancy in the post of Academic Dean. We therefore questioned whether the present support staff establishment at the College is adequate to need. For that reason, we wish to recommend that the College review the workload of its administrative and support staff and ensure that support staff functions are adequately resourced and equipped to meet the demands made on their respective services.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the College review the workloads of its administrative and support staff and ensure that administrative and support staff functions are adequately resourced and equipped to meet the demands placed on their respective services.

C.iv There should be a well-designed and operative appraisal system for all staff.

- 27 The Kingham Hill Staff Handbook states that ‘the Trust regards the measurement of personal performance as important.’ The Handbook goes on to state that ‘all members of staff will be annually appraised by their immediate Line Manager or Supervisor. This appraisal will be documented and filed in the staff member’s personal file.’ Support staff confirmed to us that their appraisals take place on an annual basis. Faculty members, however, reported to us that there have as yet been no appraisals for teaching staff during the current academic year but that dates for appraisals have now been set for March 2009. From the information we received, we were satisfied that appraisal systems are in place for all staff at Oak Hill College, but would **urge** the College to ensure that the process of appraisal is at all times kept up-to-date.

C.v The training institution should meet the current legal requirements, for example, with regard to Fire Prevention, Health and Safety and Child Protection.

- 28 The inspectors noted that the College has in place policies relating to current legal requirements in respect of Child Protection, Fire Prevention, and Health and Safety and that through the Staff Handbook and the Student Handbook all members of the College are made aware of first aid facilities and of their individual duties and responsibilities with regard to fire procedures, the reporting of accidents, the use of electrical equipment and manual handling. In addition, we noted that the College now has in place for all staff and students published discipline and grievance procedures, as well as procedures for students relating to plagiarism and appeals against results of assessments.
- 29 Whilst overall the inspectors formed the view that there is much that is commendable in the systems of governance, management and organisation at Oak Hill, we felt concern at the general sense of drivenness at the College, something we see as arising, to some extent at least, out of the College’s under-pinning ethos, as well as out of a palpable sense of competitiveness within a highly able and largely young male community. We found the College to be pervaded by an air of hyperactivity, evidenced in the many comments we received from students about the heavy demands made on them. We felt the sense of overload to be evidenced equally by the way in which there were always some students who arrived late and clearly in a hurry for classes and Chapel

services. All this led us to question where both staff and students find space and time to be reflective or quite simply to relax. Moreover, we did not concur with the view expressed by some members of the College that the over-busy-ness of Oak Hill is a good preparation for the life of parochial ministry. If future clergy are to be helped to survive the relentless pressures and demands of parish life, then an important part of their training and formation must surely be the cultivation of space and time for reflection and relaxation. We therefore recommend that the College keep its work/life balance under close and constant review in order to ensure that the demands made on both individuals and the whole community are carefully monitored and controlled.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the College keep its work/life balance under close and constant review in order to ensure that the demands made on both individuals and the whole community are carefully monitored and controlled.

The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion C: Governance, Management, Constitution and Organisation.

D ACCOMMODATION

Inspectors will examine the suitability of the accommodation for teaching and residence.

D.i The teaching and residential accommodation should be fit for the purpose of enhancing the community and corporate life of the institution and of facilitating good adult learning.

- 30 In so far as teaching accommodation is concerned, the inspectors found that Oak Hill is well provided. The new Academic Centre opened in 2000 has a large lecture theatre with a seating capacity of 150, a large lecture room and a number of smaller classrooms/seminar rooms all of which are light, airy and well equipped. Most of the teaching areas in the College's main buildings are also bright, spacious and fit for purpose. All teaching areas are equipped with white boards and overhead projectors and have IT connections. Our sole reservation about the College's teaching space was in relation to the often formal and rigid configuration of classroom furniture which we felt to be appropriate for traditional lectures but not readily conducive to small group activity and discussion such as are increasingly the norm in good adult educational practice and such as we saw ably employed in teaching observed during the course of the inspection in spite of what appeared to us to be the physical obstacles to it.

- 31 In addition to teaching space, the College enjoys a significant amount of pleasant communal space. The attractively designed dining-room enjoys wide views over the surrounding parkland and provides a valuable focal point for the community, especially on weekday lunchtimes. The adjacent Namugongo Room functions as a large lounge and is also used for meetings and for the children's playgroup. There is in addition a coffee bar in the Academic Centre and staff and student common rooms in the main building.
- 32 The inspectors found that residential accommodation for married couples on the College campus is also of a high standard and much appreciated by students and their families. Single-student accommodation on the campus, however, looks somewhat worn and in need of upgrading, although we heard no serious complaint from single residents. Nevertheless, we **urge** the College, within the context of its structured maintenance plan, to improve the standard of its accommodation for single resident students at the earliest opportunity. Married and single students living in College-provided accommodation off campus spoke appreciatively of the quality of residential provision made for them.

D.ii There should be an awareness of perceived inadequacies, and a policy and programme for addressing them.

- 33 With regard to maintenance of the teaching and residential estate, staff and students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the way in which faults were set right and repairs carried out. We were also pleased to note that the College has in place a structured maintenance plan whereby it seeks to ensure the regular overhaul, repair and, where appropriate, upgrading of the whole of the Oak Hill plant.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion D: Accommodation.
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E COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE LIFE

Inspectors will consider how the institution understands and structures community, and interprets the role of corporate life in training for ordained ministry; also how far corporate life is evident in the relationships between members of the institution.

E.i The institution should offer a clear statement of how it understands its corporate life, including issues of gender, ethnic grouping and disability and other matters of natural justice, in a way which harmonises with its aims and objectives in preparing candidates for public ministry.

- 34 Oak Hill rightly takes pride in the quality of its corporate life. At the heart of that life, as the inspectors saw during their time at the College,

is the daily (Monday to Friday) morning service in the College Chapel at which all members of the College are expected to be present. Also central to the corporate life of the College, as observed by the inspectors, are the weekly meetings of Fellowship Groups where some ten students drawn from all programmes and all years of study join with their personal tutor in prayer, Bible reading and social activity. The sense of community is yet further built through the expectation that all students will participate at some point in the week in community service roles – working in the library, in the dining-room or in the College's extensive grounds – which help to create a genuine sense of both belonging and ownership.

- 35 Evidence of the quality of community life at Oak Hill is also to be found in the wide range of helpful and informative handbooks provided for staff and students, as well as for new-comers to the College. Throughout such documentation there runs a constant concern for the well-being of both the individual student and the wider corporate body of the College. Students are urged to be considerate and to 'look out for one another' and given information on how to access pastoral guidance and support in respect of disability and special needs. Oak Hill clearly seeks to give the warmest of welcomes to all, to women and men, as well as to people of all ethnicities. The College, however, as can be seen from the Oak Hill College Yearbook 2009, is a predominantly white male community. For that reason, we believe that it is important for the College to ensure that diversity issues are adequately and appropriately addressed within the context of its educational and formational programmes.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the College ensure that issues relating to diversity are adequately and appropriately addressed within the context of its educational and formational programmes.

E.ii The institution should show evidence that the structures, requirements and practice of the institution reflect the stated policy.

- 36 The inspectors were also pleased to see that the College takes care to ensure that spouses and children are fully included in the Oak Hill community. A special welcome handbook is produced for spouses coming to take up residence at the College. The handbook gives information about the activities of the Monday Fellowship, the association of Oak Hill spouses, as well as about local amenities, leisure facilities and places to visit. Meeting with representative spouses, the inspectors heard how they, the spouses, feel very much that they are an integral part of the community and that their needs and interests are well catered for.

- 37 With regard to equality of opportunity, the conservative evangelical tradition of Oak Hill means that there is to be found within the College a range of views regarding the rightful role of women both in the ministerial and wider context. That apart, we saw no evidence of any lack of awareness of the need to afford equality of opportunity to all.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion E: Community and Corporate Life.

F COMMON WORSHIP

Inspectors will consider the arrangements for common worship and the policy underlying them, noting the use of the authorized and other forms of worship, and how worship is conducted.

F.i The spaces designated for prayer and worship should be appropriate for their purpose.

- 38 The Chapel at Oak Hill forms part of the main building complex and is large enough to accommodate the majority, if not all, of the College community. It is tastefully furnished and well maintained. The inspectors were unhappy, however, with the way in which students, as they gathered before, or dispersed after a service, indulged in loud chatter. This made any kind of quiet pre-service preparation or post-service prayer at best difficult and in all likelihood impossible. The situation was yet further exacerbated by the music group's persistent use of the period immediately before the commencement of the service as a time for rehearsal, claiming that that was the only time they could get together.
- 39 Equally, whilst the inspectors appreciated the hearty singing of hymns and worship songs in Chapel services and the firm way in which responses were given and psalms and canticles recited, we should like to have seen a better balance between that and a quieter, more reflective style of worship, such as the College is clearly trying to encourage in its student-led meditations on the readings on Monday mornings.
- 40 Finally, with regard to the Chapel, the inspectors regretted that the colourful and attractive hanging on the east wall - the one item providing visual stimulus in an otherwise totally unadorned space - was partially obscured by a screen on to which the words of hymns and worship songs were projected. With that in mind, we would urge the College to give more attention to the aesthetic and visual aspects of the Chapel with a view to enhancing the quality of worship.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the College take steps to inculcate times of quiet before and after Chapel services and adopt at times a more deliberately restrained and reflective worship style.

F.ii There should be a publicly stated policy on, and arrangements for, corporate worship. The policy and arrangements should take account of, and equip candidates to work within, the variety of practice within the sponsoring church.

- 41 Oak Hill College produces each year a comprehensive Chapel Handbook which outlines the pattern of corporate worship and expectations in respect of Chapel attendance. All ordinands are required to attend the daily morning act of worship Monday to Friday. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday the service is Morning Prayer, although on Tuesday and Wednesday with considerable abbreviations. Thursday is Holy Communion and Friday is traditionally a freer form of worship which caters for the significant number of students at Oak Hill who come from free church backgrounds and traditions. Given the need, however, for future Church of England ordained ministers to be fully familiar with the offices, the inspectors wish to recommend that provision be made for Church of England ordinands at Oak Hill to have a wider and more frequent experience of the Church's authorized liturgical forms of worship. Moreover, whilst we acknowledge that the majority of ordinands will wish to go on to serve titles in churches in the conservative evangelical tradition, we cannot avoid questioning whether the number of such churches is in fact sufficient to provide employment for them all, as was pointed out to us in our conversations with representatives of the Dioceses of London and Chelmsford. For that reason, we recommend that the College should expose its ordinands more consistently to mainstream Church of England worship such as would prepare them to serve in parishes of a broader range of traditions.

Recommendation 11

We recommend:

- a) **that provision be made for Church of England ordinands at Oak Hill to have a wider and more frequent experience of the Church's authorized liturgical forms of worship and**
 - b) **that Oak Hill ordinands be given a wider view of the Church of England and be made familiar with a broader range of its traditions, so as to equip them for ministry in a wider range of settings.**
- 42 Whilst staff members normally preach at the Tuesday service and preach and preside at the Thursday celebration of the Holy Communion, weekly worship is planned and led in turn by each of the fellowship groups. The Chapel Handbook gives full and helpful

guidance for worship leaders on the importance of appearance, the reading of lessons and the offering of intercessions. Robes (cassock and surplice) are normally worn by officiants at Morning Prayer on Mondays and at the service of Holy Communion of Thursdays. The inspectors noticed no apparent provision in the programme of worship, however, for students to experience other than their own preferred and familiar worship styles. This we found regrettable, given the need already mentioned in para 41 for the College to look to giving to its ordinands a fuller view and appreciation of the breadth of tradition and practice across the Church of England into which they are preparing to be ordained.

F.iii There should be a policy concerning balance of worship, including authorized and innovative forms, and of denominational worship in ecumenical situations.

- 43 The College has a clearly stated policy regarding the use of authorized forms of worship of the Church of England, the order of service normally used being *Common Worship*. Every fourth week, however, orders of service are taken from the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. As stated in para 41, on Fridays there is a freer approach which leaves room for innovation.

F.iv In the light of preparation for public ministry, there should be provision to address the tension between worship as an activity of the Church and as a vehicle of professional training.

- 44 With regard to differentiating between worship as an activity of the Church and as a vehicle of professional training, the Chapel Handbook makes clear first and foremost that corporate worship is an activity in which the people of God gather to hear the word of God and to express love for him and for one another. Only when those purposes of worship have been stated does the Chapel Handbook turn to addressing issues relating to proper conduct of worship within the context of ordained ministry.

F.v There should be a policy about expected attendance at public worship and evidence of its outworking.

- 45 As stated above in para 41, all Church of England ordinands in training at Oak Hill are required to be present at the morning service in the College Chapel Monday to Friday during term-time. From our observation during our time at the College, this requirement is adequately observed.

<p>The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion F: Common Worship.</p>
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G MINISTERIAL, PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION.

Inspectors will consider how the institution helps candidates in their ministerial, personal and spiritual formation, and how candidates are encouraged or enabled to deepen their spiritual life and their self-awareness.

G.i The policy regarding ministerial formation should be easily available to candidates.

- 46 A copy of the handbook for the Oak Hill College Certificate in Ministry – a two-year programme of study followed by all ordinands – is distributed to all students on arrival. The handbook outlines how the Certificate runs in parallel with the College’s Theological and Pastoral Studies programme and seeks to enable students ‘to turn Theology into the practicalities of Church leadership in the Church of England.’

G.ii The institution through its common life and through the way it guides and supervises candidates should enable them to grow in Christian discipleship with a view to exercising a public role in ordained ministry.

- 47 The institution, through its common life and through the way in which it guides and supervises students, clearly helps them to grow in Christian discipleship. It was evident to the inspectors that the whole College community, taking a lead from Management, Faculty and support staff, seeks to live out lives of commitment to Christ and to the modelling of Christian values. Students repeatedly expressed to us their gratitude to the College for unfailing help and support received. Moreover, there was palpable evidence in the way in which students interacted with each other, as well as with outsiders, that here was a place where Christian discipleship could be learned and developed as a vital part of training for exercising a public role in ordained ministry.

G.iii The institution should enable candidates to be immersed in the traditions of their own churches, together with an empathetic understanding of strands other than their own. It should also increase candidates’ understanding of other churches and deepen their sense of ecclesial identity.

- 48 It was abundantly clear to the inspectors from our conversations and meetings with members of the College, that Oak Hill is deeply loyal to its conservative evangelical tradition and sensitive to the needs and expectations of the churches from which the majority of its ordinands come. Hence, ordinands at the College are well prepared for ministry within conservative evangelical contexts. At the same time we noted that the College endeavours to give to ordinands a wider view of Church of England practice by arranging for ordinands to undertake one of their weekly placements in a church of somewhat different

tradition from their own. Following on, however, from our comments in para 41, we believe that the College needs to do more than at present to give to ordinands a wider and deeper appreciation of the breadth of tradition to be found within the Church of England. To that end, we recommend that it should be compulsory for all ordinands at Oak Hill to undertake at least one of their weekly placements, during their time of formation and training, in a church of non- evangelical tradition. We also suggest that the College should consider whether the first placement during the period of formation and training might not be best used to this end, in order to give to ordinands coming from conservative evangelical backgrounds early experience of the breadth of Church of England tradition and practice.

Recommendation 12

We recommend:

- a) that for all students in ministerial formation at least one weekly placement church should be of non-evangelical tradition and**
- b) that the College consider whether the first placement might not be best used to this end.**

G.iv The institution should provide corporate and individual guidance and supervision for candidates. There should also be encouragement to seek confidential spiritual counsel.

- 49 The inspectors observed with considerable admiration the work and purpose of the Fellowship Groups at Oak Hill, each of the four inspectors spending time with a different tutor and group of students. All students are allocated to a Fellowship Group on arrival, the groups themselves consisting of around ten students drawn from all programmes and all years of study. The groups meet socially each Monday at the end of the afternoon and then often go on to a time of Bible study and prayer together. Such regular meetings ensure that the students get to know their tutor well and also each other. In that way the Fellowship Group provides for each student an important source of professional guidance and supervision from the tutor and at the same time a source of valuable peer support. Across the academic year there are in addition set times when students have individual meetings with their tutor to review progress and development. Also for ordinands, it is the tutor who drafts the College's final report to the sponsoring bishop. Here is a personal tutorial system which works well and for which students, in their conversations with us, showed a genuine appreciation.
- 50 Fellowship Groups are not, however, the only source of student guidance and supervision at Oak Hill. Students spoke to inspectors with gratitude about the readiness and willingness of all College faculty and staff to give advice and support when requested. In this way,

support provided by the Fellowship Groups is supplemented by a more informal approach to pastoral care.

51 In so far as corporate guidance is concerned, we observed that Chapel services, through sermons and intercessions, address issues of importance relating to personal, ministerial and spiritual formation. One thoughtful sermon by a member of the academic staff which we heard at Morning Prayer, for example, sought to engage students in reflection about how Christians should endeavour to relate to those of other faiths, and especially to Jews and Muslims as people of the Word. Here was surely a subject on which future Church of England ministers needed to reflect ahead of engaging in public ministry.

52 Given the tradition of Oak Hill, there is no general expectation that ordinands will automatically seek confidential spiritual counsel on a regular basis. Some ordinands, however, did share with the inspectors that the College is content for individual students to seek spiritual guidance and direction, if that is something they personally believe would be helpful to them.

G.v The institution should enable candidates to reflect on the breadth of Christian spiritual tradition and its engagement with the world, and to work with the personal issues arising out of the whole process of training.

53 In the second year of the Certificate in Ministry programme there is a segment (half-semester module) in Spirituality which is followed by all ordinands. The aim of the segment is described in the programme handbook as being to 'equip ordinands to maintain and develop both their own spiritual health and that of those for whom they will care.' The segment focuses on historic and current models of prayer, biblical meditation and the use of silence, the pursuit of holiness, and maintaining spiritual health. For ordinands going on to a third year of study for the BA Honours degree in Theological and Pastoral Studies, there is a further optional module entitled 'Christian Spirituality – Past and Present.' Ordinands are also offered a range of options in the field of Public Theology through which they are able to develop an understanding of the engagement of the Christian spiritual tradition with the wider world.

G.vi The institution should enable candidates to develop as people, as future public ministers and as life-long learners, able to look forward to working effectively in the context of traditions other than their own, both within and beyond their own church.

54 At Oak Hill College, the inspectors found amongst ordinands a highly positive attitude towards learning and a marked commitment to ministerial formation and their own personal and professional development. We were also pleased to learn from training incumbents with whom we met that Oak Hill ordinands at the outset of their parochial ministry are

seen as having been well prepared for public ministry, being prayerful, good preachers, hard workers and respectful of authority. Oak Hill ordinands are further seen by training incumbents as possessing good communication skills and as being intellectually resourced by what they have learnt. To that, however, must be added that Oak Hill ordinands go out to serve in largely conservative evangelical parishes with whose tradition they feel comfortable. It would be difficult to predict just how capable they might be of working effectively in the context of traditions other than their own. Hence the concerns we have expressed in paras 41 and 48.

G.vii Candidates should be encouraged to make time for private prayer and to explore the expectations on the ordained in the areas of corporate and individual prayer, or general conduct and lifestyle.

- 55 Notwithstanding our comments about the want of a prayerful atmosphere before and after Chapel services (para 38), Oak Hill is a markedly prayerful place. In addition to the corporate prayer offered in Chapel services and in Fellowship Groups and the weekly timetabled voluntary Prayer Meeting, the inspectors observed the frequent use of extempore prayer in meetings and at the conclusion of teaching sessions. Students are also encouraged to acquire sound habits of personal prayer. They are expected to observe a time of quiet reflection and Bible study at home early each morning ahead of the daily Chapel service and to attend a Quiet Day organised by the College during the course of each semester. As already stated in para 19, however, we noted a tendency for the College's prayer to be rather more inwardly than outwardly focused and would urge the College to seek to achieve a more even balance between praying for purely Christian concerns and praying for the wider world. The College's expectations in terms of general conduct and lifestyle are high.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion G: Ministerial, Personal and Spiritual Formation.

H TEACHING AND LEARNING: CONTENT, METHOD AND RESOURCES

Inspectors will attend a representative sample of different teaching and learning activities, noting their quality and effectiveness and the methods used. They will examine the adequacy of educational resources, especially libraries, and will look at samples of students' written work.

H.i The content and process of the educational programmes should equip candidates for beginning public ministry in line with denominational guidelines.

- 56 The inspectors were able to examine detailed descriptions of all compulsory and optional course modules taught at Oak Hill and were impressed by the range of what is taught by way of ministerial education, formation and training. We were equally impressed by the clarity of the rationale behind the content and process of the College's educational programmes as set out in the responses of December 2008 to the Curriculum Validation Questions. Moreover, comments made in meetings with placement tutors and receiving training incumbents made clear that ordinands prepared at Oak Hill are well equipped to begin public ministry.

H.ii Principles concerning what is included in pre-ordination/authorisation training and left to post-ordination/authorised training should be available and consonant with any denominational requirements.

- 57 The Oak Hill College Certificate in Ministry Programme Handbook sets out in commendable detail the extent and content of the training which all Oak Hill students proceeding to ordination might be expected to have received. Hence training incumbents may be clear about what training has taken place at the College and what training will remain to be done in the parochial setting. The two-year Certificate Programme, which all ordinands follow, is made up of two parts – parish and other placements, and a taught element on Theology and the Practice of Church Leadership. The latter part, taught over two years, includes four segments on Ministry Strategy and Perspectives, plus single segments on Worship Skills, Fresh Expressions and Pioneer Missional Leadership, Youth and Children's Work Skills, and Spirituality.

H.iii Teaching and learning programmes should serve the aims and objectives of the institution and of the educational programmes of which they form a part. They should demonstrate a proper balance between the academic, formational and practical aspects of training.

- 58 Course documentation provided by the College for the information of the inspectors showed a close relationship between the College's stated aims and objectives and the educational programmes of which they form a part. The documentation also indicated a proper balance between the academic, formational and practical aspects of training, with all candidates for ordination following robust academic courses – DipHE, BA, MA, MTh, PGDip - as well as formational and training programmes.

H.iv Units of teaching and learning should have clear and appropriate aims, be well structured and enable students to achieve appropriate learning goals. Teaching programmes should introduce students to appropriate knowledge and learning processes, whilst drawing on student experience.

59 As already stated in para 56 above, the inspectors were provided with detailed descriptions of all modules taught at the College. All students following a particular module receive a statement of that module's aims & objectives, threshold learning outcomes, module content, assessment, method of delivery, study hours per week and indicative bibliography. What was not, however, evident to us was any formal policy on the part of the College in respect of the provision of support for the very few students at Oak Hill who come with limited experience of academic study and may therefore need additional learning support. In what is for the most part a highly able and intellectually gifted community, it is important that the needs of such students should not be overlooked.

H.v The educational methods employed, and the balance of methods within the educational programme, should underpin the stated aims of the programme.

60 During the significant number of teaching sessions we were able to attend, we observed the employment of a pleasing variety of teaching and learning strategies other than the formal lecture, with lecturers in the majority of observed sessions drawing on students' personal experience and employing open discussion, pair-work and on occasion student presentations. We also noted that during teaching sessions, time and space were generally made available for student questions and comment. All of this created a lively, stimulating and active learning environment for students such as seemed likely to make a positive contribution to the attainment of the College's stated aims and objectives for Church of England ordinands.

H.vi Teaching programmes should be complemented by structured opportunities for students to learn, as individuals and as groups.

61 As published programme and module descriptions show, all teaching at Oak Hill is reinforced and complemented by additional learning activities. The provision of indicative bibliographies evidences an expectation that students will undertake an amount of additional reading and for all modules there is a written or practical assessment requirement. Some modules also employ group work as a means of initiating and underpinning learning, whilst placements provide all ordinands with valuable and significant experience of work-based learning.

H.vii Staff should provide formal and informal feedback to students and assessment of work and of candidates' progress, both in terms of academic progress and in terms of preparation for public ministry. There should be both affirmation and constructive criticism, as appropriate, of student work.

62 A good range of assessed course assignments, dissertations and examination scripts was made available for scrutiny by the inspectors. In all cases it was evident that tutors provide excellent, structured and

detailed written feedback to students on their work. Tutors' comments were judged by the inspectors to show a right balance between affirmation and constructive criticism, as well as giving clear indications of how the quality of a piece of work might have been improved.

H.viii Published assessment criteria should be used by the teaching staff and be available to students.

- 63 The inspectors noted the careful use of detailed, published assessment criteria in the marking of all course work, dissertations and examination scripts.

H.ix The educational programme offered should be supported by an appropriate learning environment. This should include adequate provision of resources, library and ICT, placements and practical opportunities to learn.

- 64 Oak Hill enjoys an excellent library facility which, in the view of the inspectors, is very well run on a modest budget of £22,000 per annum. Housed in light, spacious and attractive accommodation on the first floor of the relatively recently built Academic Centre, the library offers the usual range of facilities including study carrels for a limited number of, largely married, students who do not have private study facilities in their own homes. The library is fully computerised and is part of the national network of theological libraries. The library also houses a number of open-access computers, although the vast majority of students now have their own PCs and personal internet access.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion H: Teaching and Learning: Content, Method and Resources
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J PRACTICAL AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY

Inspectors will consider the way in which the institution understands the relation between theory and practice, how it enables students to develop skills in their integration, and how the overall programme of training is effective in preparing candidates for ordained ministry.

J.i The training institution should have a policy on how the curriculum integrates theory and practice and should communicate it to students.

- 65 Programmes of study for ordinands at Oak Hill leading to the award of the Diploma and BA Honours degree in Theological and Pastoral Studies have three components, described in the College's Undergraduate Student Handbook as 'Biblical Studies', 'Theology and Church History', and 'Church and World'. Through compulsory and elective modules in the area of 'Church and World' the College seeks to achieve a proper integration between theological theory and

practice. The Handbook, available to all students, lists the full range of 'Church and World' modules available – eg 'Christians in the Contemporary World', 'Cross-Cultural Studies', 'Pastoral Ministry', 'The Biblical Basis of Mission' – and also provides students with clearly articulated programme outcomes. Such outcomes are stated as being, for example, that learners at the end of their programme of study will 'be able to formulate their own responses to ethical issues and evaluate alternative responses,' or will have the 'ethical and counselling skills to pastor individuals from a biblical perspective.'

J.ii The structures for learning – courses, seminars, groups, placements, private study, marking, feedback – should be configured so as to facilitate this integration.

- 66 We also noted in the teaching sessions we were able to observe during the course of the inspection, that efforts are frequently made by lecturers to relate theory to practice, and to draw inferences for the exercising of practical ministry from the material being taught. In similar vein, Oak Hill ordinands are encouraged to reflect on the way in which their placement experiences allow them to draw together theoretical and practical aspects of their education and formation, it being made clear in the Certificate in Ministry Programme Handbook that 'the purpose of placements is to help students discern and make links between the theological and pastoral understanding they gain from their studies and the practice they observe and participate in while on placement.'

J.iii The institution should demonstrate how it is enabling candidates to develop an appreciation of the pluralist and multifaith/cultural society in which we live. There should be evidence in the work of students that they are becoming theologically reflective practitioners within it.

- 67 Academic modules developed by lecturers in Public Theology, in Theology and World Mission, and in Youth and Children's Ministry provide opportunity for ordinands, on an elective basis, to acquire an appreciation of the pluralist and multifaith/multicultural society in which they live and into which they will go out to serve as ministers of the Gospel. It was, however, the view of the inspectors that this aspect of future ministers' formation and training does not receive the fullness of attention implied in the criterion. We were not convinced, from our conversations and observations, that Oak Hill ordinands are being sufficiently enabled or encouraged to develop multifaith and multicultural understanding. For that reason, the inspectors wish to recommend that the College consider making appropriate modules from the Theology and World Mission programme compulsory for all students preparing for ordination.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that the College make appropriate modules from the Theology and World Mission programme compulsory for all students preparing for ordination.

- 68 With regard to theological reflection, we noted that students at Oak Hill are encouraged to develop the habit and skill of relating their theological understanding to their own experience and observations. An appendix to the Certificate in Ministry Handbook is devoted to explaining to students the concept of theological reflection, whilst in practical terms all students are required to keep a reflective diary based on what they have seen and done and learnt in their weekly parish placements. Moreover, in our examination of written assessments and dissertations, as well as in our many conversations and discussions with Oak Hill students during the period of the inspection, we found clear evidence of a thoughtful and reflective approach to all matters relating to ministerial education, formation and training.

The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion J: Practical and Pastoral Theology.

K TRAINING IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

Inspectors will note the way in which students are trained to plan, prepare and conduct public worship.

K.i The institution should have a policy, available to candidates, on Training for Public Worship. It should ensure that candidates plan, prepare and effectively conduct public worship, including preaching.

- 69 The Oak Hill Chapel Handbook, made available to all students on arrival, sets out in helpful detail the College's policies and procedures relating to Public Worship. Fellowship Groups are required in turn to plan and lead the weekly acts of worship in the College Chapel, a practice which enables all students to gain a measure of experience in the conduct of Public Worship. The Chapel Handbook emphasises the importance of careful preparation for all acts of worship and outlines expectations regarding appearance, the reading of lessons, the leading of intercessions, choice of hymns, worship songs and music, the use of Psalms and the delivery of the weekly Monday meditation.
- 70 Oak Hill students also gain significant amounts of experience in the leading of Public Worship through their respective weekly parish placements and the five-week compulsory block placement which takes place out of term-time. There is a requirement that whilst on placement, ordinands will be given opportunity to preach and also to plan and lead a limited number of services. There is yet further an expectation that,

wherever possible, they will observe the conduct of funerals and other occasional offices.

K.ii The institution should ensure that the policy is adhered to and that proper oversight is exercised over this part of the programme of formation.

71 From what the inspectors were able to observe during their time at Oak Hill, there was adherence to the College's policy regarding the conduct of worship in respect of services in the College Chapel. Our meeting with placement incumbents provided evidence that the policy is equally adhered to by ordinands conducting worship in placement churches. Adherence to the policy was yet further evidenced in placement supervisors' written reports made available to us.

K.iii There should be an appropriate policy and practice for reviewing and assessing leadership of worship.

72 We found that the College places a proper emphasis on the importance of students receiving regular and constructive feedback on their delivery of Public Worship. In so far as student conduct of Public Worship in the College Chapel is concerned, the Chapel Handbook states that Fellowship Groups are expected to take time with their personal tutor during their regular weekly meeting after the week during which the group has led Chapel worship 'to review their efforts and to benefit from each others' observations and constructive comments.' Review guidelines are issued to Fellowship Groups in order to facilitate the process, although we did not ourselves have opportunity to see the process in action. With regard to the conduct of Public Worship during placements, the College's Guidelines for Placement Supervisors place stress on the need for students to receive regular feedback on the full range of their activities – 'preaching/speaking, the way they plan and lead worship, relate to different people, assess pastoral needs etc.' To that end, Placement Supervisors are supplied by the College with assessment forms for preaching/speaking and worship-leading which the Supervisors are asked not only to complete themselves but also to make available for completion to members of their congregations.

K.iv The student should receive critical and constructive comment, attending to performance, content and process from staff and peers.

73 As stated above in para 72, arrangements are in place at Oak Hill to ensure that ordinands receive critical and constructive comment on their leading of Public Worship from staff, peers and Placement Supervisors.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion K: Training in Public Worship.

L TEACHING STAFF

Inspectors will consider the provision of teaching staff and the policy underlying it, the procedures for appointment of teaching and other staff, and provision for staff development.

L.i Appointments should involve appropriate consultation with the relevant sponsoring churches and partner institutions, and the method for making appointments should be clear and fair to all concerned.

- 74 Oak Hill has clearly set out procedures for appointments to teaching posts. Vacancies are publicly advertised and open to all suitably qualified candidates.

L.ii Recruitment and selection should be in line with current good practice. Job descriptions and conditions of service should be clear at the time of appointment and should be revised at regular intervals.

- 75 Interview panels consisting of the Principal, other members of the teaching staff, representatives of the Council and, where appropriate, Middlesex University, interview candidates against clearly stated job and person specifications. Conditions of service and employment are set out in the Kingham Hill Trust Staff Handbook and all teaching staff have contracts. Some teaching staff told us, however, that their contracts had not recently been updated, something which we **urge** the College to investigate and, if need be, to rectify.

L.iii The number, field of expertise, scholarly and teaching competence of the staff should enable the educational programmes of the institution to be offered at the appropriate levels, both in terms of academic achievement and of preparation for public ministry.

- 76 There are some fifteen members of the teaching staff at Oak Hill College, including the Principal and the Vice-Principal. The overall level of academic qualification is enviably high, with the majority of tutors holding doctorates or other higher degrees and being actively engaged in their own research. Also across the body of the teaching staff there is a wide range of specialisms, with all areas and levels of the curriculum adequately covered by appropriate expertise and experience. Moreover, as the inspectors observed during our time at the College, the high level of staff and professional qualifications across the teaching staff is complemented by teaching skills which are never less than satisfactory to good, and often outstanding.

L.iv The gender, lay/ordained and denominational balance among staff members should enable the institution to offer appropriate models of learning and of ministry, and should comply with denominational guidelines.

77 Whilst the overall quality and range of expertise in the Oak Hill teaching staff must be judged as outstanding for an institution of its size and nature, it remains, as mentioned in para 12 above, predominantly male. Of the fifteen members of the academic staff, only two are women. Such a gender imbalance in a College looking to attract women to train for ordination is, in the view of the inspectors, regrettable and in need of remedy as and when staff vacancies occur. The ratio of ordained to non-ordained teaching staff, however, which currently stands at 8:7, is nicely balanced.

L.v The institution should have in place an effective framework and programme for the continuing professional development of staff. All staff are to have annual appraisals.

78 The inspectors were encouraged to note from minutes of the weekly Faculty Meeting that members of the academic staff regularly share examples of best practice in teaching and learning, proof that the continual drive for enhancement of standards in teaching and learning is an on-going and important part of the College's educational enterprise. Nevertheless, as expressed above in para 17, we were of the view that there is a need for a more structured and formal approach to continuing professional education for teaching staff if the highest possible quality of teaching and learning is to be assured and they are to be kept up-to-date in their awareness of most recent pedagogical development and innovation.

79 The inspectors were satisfied that an appraisal system for teaching staff is in place. We noted, however, as already mentioned in para 27, that no academic staff appraisals had taken place during the current academic year (2008/9) but were assured by the academic staff that the necessary arrangements have been set in hand and that appraisal meetings with the College Principal have been scheduled for March 2009. That said, we cannot emphasise sufficiently the importance of appraisals as a means of helping staff to reflect on performance and to plan ways and means of addressing their professional developmental needs and ambitions.

L.vi Staff should model an appropriate pattern of spirituality, continuing learning and reflection on practice.

80 Notwithstanding our comments in para 29 on the general drivenness of the College, it was evident to the inspectors that teaching staff at Oak Hill, both lay and ordained, seek earnestly to model appropriate patterns of spirituality, professional commitment, life-long learning and theological reflection. We observed this in the quality of the teaching,

the conduct of the Fellowship Groups, the care taken with the marking of assignments and in the informal and formal encounters we enjoyed with faculty members.

The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion L: Teaching Staff.

M ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Inspectors will consider the provision of administrative staff, the policy underlying it and procedures for their appointment.

M.i There should be an adequate number of administrative staff for the type of institution and its way of working.

- 81 During the course of the inspection the inspectors met with a group of administrative and support staff members and also had individual meetings with the Bursar, the Librarian, the Admissions Officer, the Academic Registrar, the Development Manager and the Principal's P.A. We gained the impression of a committed administrative and support staff group, hard-working and dedicated to the service of the College. However, it became obvious to the inspectors that the administrative load at the College is heavy and that some members of staff find it necessary to work beyond normal hours in order to meet the demands made on them. It is with that in mind that under Recommendation 6 above, we recommend that the College review the workloads of its administrative and support staff to ensure that administrative and support functions are adequately resourced.

M.ii The institution should establish and make known clear lines of responsibility and accountability for administrative staff.

- 82 All administrative and support staff at Oak Hill College are employees of the Kingham Hill Trust and hence subject to the Trust's Staff Conditions of Employment and Service. As Head of the College's administrative function, the Bursar is accountable to the Trust for ensuring that all support staff are clear as to where their individual responsibilities lie, and to whom they are individually accountable for the effective and efficient discharge of their respective duties. There is an appraisal system in place for all support and administrative staff which the inspectors were assured by staff members works well.

M.iii Recruitment and selection should be in line with current good practice. Job descriptions and conditions of service should be clear at the time of appointment, be revised at regular intervals, and include opportunities for professional development. Staff contracts should be provided.

- 83 As with the appointment of teaching staff, the appointment of administrative and support staff is in line with good practice. Oak Hill staff all have job descriptions and contracts of employment. Conditions of Service are comprehensively set out in the Kingham Hill Trust Staff Handbook which outlines the full range of the Trust's policies in respect of absence from work, conduct, health and safety, paid leave, appraisals, disciplinary and grievance procedures etc. Training and professional development are provided as needed.

M.iv The institution should ensure that administrative staff know how they can contribute to the decision-making processes.

- 84 Our conversations with members of the administrative and support staff brought to light that the College does not make provision for them all to meet together as a group on a regular basis. We think this regrettable, as regular meetings of the whole administrative and support staff group would provide a useful channel of communication between them and Management. It would also provide a means of canvassing administrative and support staff opinion and provide them with a forum in which they could express collectively any issues or concerns. We **urge** the College, therefore, to consider setting a regular administrative and support staff meeting in place.

<p>The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion M: Administrative Staff.</p>
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N STUDENTS

Inspectors will examine procedures for admission and suspension and dismissal, for assessing progress during training, for reporting to the sponsoring Church, and for arranging first appointments.

N.i Written information for students about admission, welfare, complaints, discipline, assessment, reporting to sponsoring Churches and arrangements for first appointments should be publicly available.

- 85 Students at Oak Hill College are provided from their first contact with the College with a wealth of written information relating both to their personal and academic needs. Information regarding admissions to programmes of study at the College is to be found clearly set out in the Oak Hill College Prospectus. Information for students on how to access pastoral care and other support services is published in documentation handed out to all students on arrival. Information about academic programmes, including assessments, is to be found in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks where policies and procedures relating to plagiarism, appeals, discipline, grievance, harassment and equal opportunities are also published. In addition, the handbook produced by the Monday Fellowship for Oak Hill spouses, as mentioned in para

36, gives wide-ranging information on essential amenities in the area – schools, supermarkets, post offices, doctors’ and dentists’ surgeries, cafés and leisure facilities.

N.ii The institution should show evidence of compliance with its own policies, and denominational policies where they exist.

86 From the documentation to which they were given access and from their observations and conversations during the period of the inspection, the inspectors were satisfied that the College seeks at all times to be compliant with its own policies and procedures and with those set out for the formation and training of ordinands by the Church of England.

N.iii The decision-making structure of the institution should enable students to take an appropriate part in the institution. Students should take responsibility for their own participation in the institution.

87 There is at Oak Hill an elected Student Committee which acts as the interface between students and Management and provides a channel of communication between the two. The Committee has a written constitution and is responsible for the management of all its affairs including finance. It receives no financial subvention from the College, such modest funding as it has being raised from membership subscriptions.

88 Communication between the Student Committee and College Management is aided by fortnightly meetings between the Principal or Vice-Principal, the Bursar, the Senior Student and the Secretary of the Student Committee, and by student attendance at meetings of a range of committees and bodies including the College Council. On examination of Council meeting agendas, however, the inspectors saw no place for the regular reporting of Student Committee business. Neither did we see evidence in Council minutes of recorded student contribution to Council discussion and debate, something which was further corroborated in the inspectors’ meeting with the Student Committee where we were told that student contributions to Council business are rarely sought or encouraged. Given that the College exists for its students, it seemed to us that the Council should ensure that Council members are made aware of student views and opinions on a regular basis. To that end, we recommend that the Council should have ‘Student Business’ as an agenda item at all its meetings and that during the course of Council meetings, the Chair should make sure that the student voice is fully and regularly heard.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the Council have ‘Student Business’ as an agenda item at all its meetings and that the Chair, during the

course of Council meetings, adopt measures to ensure that the student voice is fully and regularly heard.

The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion N: Students.

O CONCLUSION

- 89 In concluding this report, the inspectors wish to thank the Council, Management, staff and students of Oak Hill College for the warm welcome we received during the course of the inspection and for the graciousness, courtesy and patience with which our questions and requests for further clarification were invariably answered. We left the College greatly encouraged by much of what we had heard and seen and felt that Oak Hill has much to offer to the Church of England and to the ordinands who come to the College for ministerial training and formation. We hope that our recommendations will help the College to build on all that is good and worthy in its enterprise.
- 90 As a supplement to this report, the inspectors have written a short annex relating to a staffing issue. The annex is confidential to the College and the Ministry Council.
- 91 It is the considered judgment of the inspection team that Oak Hill College is, with the qualifications mentioned, fit for the purpose of preparing women and men for ordained ministry in the Church of England.

Overall outcome: The inspection team has confidence with qualifications in Oak Hill College for preparing candidates for ordained ministry.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Council consult with the Ministry Division in order to identify a member of the House of Bishops with capacity to engage actively with the life and work of the College and to represent its interests across the wider Church. (para 11)

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the College:

- a) redouble its present efforts to recruit an increased number of women ordinands;**
- b) seek, as opportunity arises, to achieve a more equitable gender balance in its academic staff;**
- c) avail itself of the widest possible range of opportunities for involving ordained women in the on-going life and work of the College. (para 12)**

Recommendation 3

We recommend that a significantly larger proportion of the block placement be spent in a non-parochial setting. (para 14)

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the College seek to draw on the expertise and experience of Middlesex University in the field of teaching and learning in order to devise and set in place formal provision for the professional development and training of Oak Hill Faculty members, including the initial qualification for new members of staff. (para 17)

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the College develop strategies aimed at enabling students in ministerial training to understand and engage with the social realities of the local context in which the College is set. (para 19)

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the College move without delay actively to explore ways in which Oak Hill, in and through partnership with St Mellitus College, can begin to develop a role in the regional ministerial training agenda. (para 20)

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the College review the workloads of its administrative and support staff and ensure that administrative and support staff functions are adequately resourced and equipped to meet the demands placed on their respective services. (para 26)

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the College keep its work/life balance under close and constant review in order to ensure that demands made on both individuals and the whole community are carefully monitored and controlled. (para 29)

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the College ensure that issues relating to gender and race are adequately and appropriately addressed within the context of its educational and formational programmes. (para 35)

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the College take care to allow for a time of quiet before and after Chapel services and adopt at times a more deliberately restrained and reflective worship style. (para 40)

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the College:

- a) make provision for Church of England ordinands at Oak Hill to have a wider and more frequent experience of the Church's authorized liturgical forms of worship and**
- b) give to ordinands a wider view of the Church of England and make them familiar with a broader range of its traditions, so as to equip them for ministry in a wider range of settings. (para 41)**

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the College:

- a) provide for all students in ministerial formation at least one weekly-placement church of non-evangelical tradition and**
- b) consider whether the first placement might not best be used to this end. (para 48)**

Recommendation 13

We recommend that the College make appropriate modules from the Theology and World Mission programme compulsory for all students preparing for ordination. (para 67)

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the Council have 'Student Business' as an agenda item at all its meetings and that the Chair, during the course of Council meetings, adopt measures to ensure that the student voice is fully and regularly heard. (para 88)