



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

## **Ministry Council**

# **Inspection Report**

**St Stephen's House Oxford**

November 2008

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## **GLOSSARY**

BTh	Bachelor in Theology
CTh	Certificate in Theology
CTG	Certificate in Theology for Graduates
DDO	Diocesan Directors of Ordinands
ELQ	Equal or Lower Qualification
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IME	Initial Ministerial Education
MTh	Master of Theology
ODM	Oxford Diploma in Ministry
ODMTG	Oxford Diploma in Ministry for Theology Graduates
OPTET	Oxford Partnership for Theological Education and Training
PPH	Permanent Private Hall
RTP	Regional Training Partnership

## **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.



# THE REPORT OF THE INSPECTION OF ST STEPHEN'S HOUSE OXFORD

November 2008

## SUMMARY

### Introduction

St Stephen's House was founded in 1876 with the aim of providing ministerial training in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England. It is now located in the former monastic buildings of the Society of St John the Evangelist in East Oxford. In 2003 the House became a Permanent Private Hall of the University of Oxford.

At the time of the inspection, 16-21 November 2008, there were 25 ordinands (21 men and 4 women). In addition there were 35 other students, 2 of whom were part-time. Of the 35 there were 22 PGCE students, 5 people completing the BTh course, 5 general students and 3 people on sabbatical.

### Summary of outcomes

The inspection team regards St Stephen's House as fit for purpose for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry.

CRITERIA	OUTCOME
A. Aims, objectives and evaluation of the institution	Confidence
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
G. Ministerial, Personal and Spiritual Formation	Confidence
H. Teaching and Learning: Content, Method and Resources	Confidence with qualifications
J. Practical and Pastoral Theology	Confidence with qualifications
K. Training in Public Worship	Confidence with qualifications
L. Teaching Staff	Confidence
M. Administrative Staff	Confidence
N. Students	Confidence

Overall Outcome	Confidence with qualifications
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### General observations

The inspection team were quickly aware of the presence of two contrasting currents. On the one hand, the last two years has seen a greater sense of internal confidence about the

House and an organisational strengthening. On the other hand, contrasting with this growth in internal confidence, a number of external factors combined to create an atmosphere of uncertainty about the future

The inspectors' overall judgment of 'confidence with qualifications' in the institution is based on the evidence of the progress in internal organisation made so far, showing a capacity to face new challenges. The inspectors hope that their recommendations will encourage the House towards realising a vision of its future, adopting an outward facing stance to both church and world, taking the opportunities for working with others in the University, with partners in theological education; and in seeking allies and partners in the wider church.

### **Response to the last inspection**

Reviewing the recommendations of the previous Inspection Report of 2003, the inspectors noted several that had been fully implemented, the drawing up of job specifications and the implementation of an agreed system of annual appraisal for all members of the House's establishment, the review of administrative needs, the up-grading of the St Stephen's House plant with the installation of facilities for disabled access in hand, and the computerisation of the Library catalogue. In other cases progress had been made but there was still further work to be done, the use of the local context, helping students to experience a wider range of spiritualities and traditions in worship, and the development of a forward strategy by the House Council. Two of the recommendations, for various reasons had been considered but not implemented, the appointment of an ordained woman on the staff and a rescheduling of Sunday Mass to enable Sunday mornings to be used for placements.

### **Strengths**

The strengths of the House lie in

- its expression of the variety, richness and depth of the Catholic tradition within the Church of England and the commitment to its distinctive insights and values;
- the House's strong ecclesial identity in the Catholic tradition which provides students with a firm grounding in the devotional and liturgical life;
- the clear emphasis on priestly formation within a parish model of ministry;
- the staff in maintaining excellence in liturgical performance and training;
- the quality and scholarship of the staff, and in its presence in the University of Oxford;
- the quality of the teaching both by the University and the core staff of the House in the basic courses which is very good;
- the statement of aims and objectives in the Validation document, and the commitment set out there to an integrated approach which is excellent;
- the senior staff in carrying forward the refurbishment of the buildings and their more effective use for income generation;
- the renewal of the membership of the House Council and its support for the internal strengthening of the House.

## **Areas for attention**

The areas for attention are:

- the need for the Council to develop a vision for the future to secure the House's future in the wider context;
- the need to adopt an outward facing stance to both church and world, taking the opportunities for working with others in the University, with partners in theological education; and in seeking allies and partners in the wider church;
- for the staff and students to find more ways of giving more concrete expression in the worship, prayer and corporate life to God's mission in his world;
- for the staff and students to explore further the breadth of Anglo Catholic worship, as well as other Anglican traditions;
- to develop the range of placements and general engagement with the local community, in intercessions in worship, and in exposing students to other spiritualities;
- to appoint an ordained woman to the staff;
- to translate the stated aims and objectives of an integrative educational programme into practice and for the teaching staff to review the educational design and delivery to achieve greater integration across the curriculum;
- the teaching and administrative staff to develop a leadership style which models collaboration
- for the concentration on preparation for parish ministry to be complemented by awareness of other patterns of ministry, especially an effective modelling of collaboration;
- to work in cooperation with members of OPTET to develop existing collaborative work.



# FULL REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 St Stephen's House was founded in 1876 with the aim of providing ministerial training in the Catholic tradition. Its founders were Edward King, Regius Professor of Pastoral Theology in the University of Oxford and later Bishop of Lincoln, Henry Scott-Holland and William Bright, all leaders in the movement for Catholic revival. In 1980 the House moved from its previous site in Norham Gardens to take over the former monastic buildings of the Society of St John the Evangelist (Cowley Fathers) in East Oxford. The new site provided not only ample accommodation for teaching, study and student residence within the building, but also space for the development of housing for married students in the grounds. With the new property came responsibility for the adjacent St John's Church, the Cowley Fathers' conventual church, an impressive Grade One listed Bodley edifice built in 1896, and the care of its small congregation.
- 2 Since 2003 the House has been a Permanent Private Hall of the University of Oxford.
- 3 At the time of the inspection from November 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> 2008, there were 25 ordinands (21 men and 4 women). In addition there were 35 other students, 2 of whom were part-time. Of the 35 there were 22 PGCE students, 5 people completing the BTh course, 5 general students and 3 people on sabbatical.
- 4 The Senior Inspector held a preliminary meeting with the Principal in June 2008. On November 16th the Senior Inspector attended the Sunday Morning Mass and was joined later in the day by the other members of the team. During the course of the week, the inspectors had meetings both individually and as a team with the Principal; the core teaching staff, the Bursar and administrative staff had separate meetings with at least one of the inspectors; and the domestic staff were also consulted. One inspector attended a joint meeting with the Chair of the Theology Faculty Board in the University of Oxford together with colleagues from the Regents Park College and Wycliffe Hall inspection teams. One inspector observed the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and two Inspectors sat in on the governing body meeting, the House Council, and the Senior Inspector met separately with the Chair of the Council. There was a meeting with the two spiritual directors who make themselves available to the House. A number of meetings were held with students, one with the whole community, several with different groupings, and several with individual students and a student spouse. Inspectors observed a number of teaching sessions in the House, the Group meetings and the Group convenors' meeting. They examined samples of students' work. They had a written submission at their request from a small group of students, convened by the senior student, setting out briefly their response to the first two validation questions concerning the mission and ministry the church requires. They had evidence from three placement supervisors (one

was visited), from three recent students, and two incumbents who had recently received ordinands from the House.

- 5 The Inspectors wish to record their thanks for the hospitality they received. The many easy and open conversations with both staff and students were much appreciated, as was the readiness to respond to the frequent requests for further information.
- 6 Like a photograph an inspection provides a view of an institution at a particular point in its history, and the result is affected by factors specific to that moment. We were quickly aware of two contrasting currents running which were shaping present understandings and feelings.
- 7 On the one hand it was clear that the new Principal's arrival in September 2006 marked the beginning of a period of considerable development, particularly evident from reading the minutes of the House Council. The appointment of a new Bursar in October 2006, followed by the creation of a new post of Assistant Bursar in 2007, brought much greater sense of proactive management of the financial affairs of the House, with an increasing revenue stream coming from the use of the premises for conferences. A benefactor had recently given £1m with the promise of a further £1m if matched by the House's own fund-raising efforts. This had allowed work to be done on the refurbishment of the accommodation, the teaching rooms and the creation of a number of en-suite study bedrooms. The House Council membership had been reviewed resulting in the appointment of six new co-opted members. Each Council member now carries a lead responsibility for a particular area of work. All these factors together with the authoritative character of the Principal contribute to a sense of internal confidence about the House and what it stands for.
- 8 The contrasting current over against that positive one arises from five main sources. First, there is the anxiety about the proposed statutory Code of Practice which will make provision for those who do not agree with the General Synod's decision to proceed with the ordination of women to the episcopate.; secondly there is a need for a clearer steer as to how the Church of England sees the Hind process working out; thirdly, the direction of ministry as a whole, not least in terms of the future of the parish system; fourthly, the ongoing discussion about the relationship between the House and the University of Oxford. This partly arises from the continuing discussions about the status of the Permanent Private Halls and the proposed new revised licence, partly from questioning the extent to which the courses offered by the University continue to meet all the requirements for ministerial training, and partly from changes in fee levels. Finally, the recent government decision not to fund Equivalent and Lower Level Qualifications provides a serious challenge in general to the church's ability to fund the training of ordinands on degree programmes.
- 9 We gained the impression that this combination of external factors had more than cancelled out the growing sense of confidence arising from the internal

reorganisation and renewed leadership. One Council member suggested that he believed that St Stephen's House was fortunate in its Principal, but that he was not offered the degree of affirmation he should normally have received, from a university that was questioning the legitimacy of some students, and a church that was struggling to fund the consequences of new government policy and one in which a major 'feeder tradition' (Catholic tradition) was under threat of extinction.

- 10 We very much appreciate the force of these external pressures. Notwithstanding the efforts made by the college to address some of these issues, especially the Principal's work in leading the OPTET response on ELQ to Parliament and HEFCE, we did detect a certain sense of paralysis. Several times we heard that such and such a thing could not be done until we know what the Church of England wants. "We cannot make the weather" was a comment made to us at one point. The most recent Moderator's report addresses the question of the smallness of overall ordinand numbers, and refers to a student describing the experience "as 'a siege mentality' the impact of which is reinforced by the House's perceived position on a number of current issues within the General Synod and the Anglican Communion". It is understandable that the most potent of these forces, certainly at an emotional level, is the sense of threat to one strand of the Catholic tradition within the Church of England. Although not all the students are against the ordination of women to the episcopate, all feel the anxiety of those who cannot accept it, and their sense of rejection by the Church of England. Although it only occasionally broke the surface, the issue was a strong undercurrent throughout the House Council meeting, inevitably therefore affecting the wider deliberations.
- 11 This experience led us to emphasise, as we do throughout this report, the importance of encouragement to the House to recognise and be confident about its strengths, to build on them and realise the potential. Its strengths lie in the variety, richness and depth of the Catholic tradition within the Church of England and the commitment to its distinctive insights and values, in the quality and scholarship of the staff, and in its presence in the University of Oxford. We believe that those strengths carry with them a responsibility to the Catholic movement in the Church of England, and through that to the wider church, and indeed to shaping the way theology is taught in the University. The House may not be able to make the weather but it needs to form alliances and develop strategies that work with it and where necessary counter it.
- 12 This experience also pointed up the extent to which the confidence with which the House can look outwards and forwards is being diminished by these external factors. We therefore hope that the discussions around the statutory code of practice can be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible with adequate safeguards for those who do not agree with the General Synod decision.
- 13 No doubt these uncertainties may have affected recruitment. The recent Moderator's report commented that the "House continues to face the issue of critical mass with respect to the overall number of ordinands over and against other members of the student body". We comment more on this in other sections

of this report, but we were concerned about the smallness of the number of ordinands, 25 compared with 33 at the last inspection in 2003. Whilst we feel that the current number works effectively enough, we also believe that it must be on the edge of viability both educationally and financially.

- 14 It is against the background set out set out in the preceding paragraphs that we make our recommendations. They are based on a belief in the potential that the House possesses, and encourage the House Council, staff and students, to make a gift of it to enrich the wider church from the Catholic tradition. The first two recommendations are pre-eminent, they ask the House Council to take the lead in setting out a vision of where they wish to see the House in five years time, especially in the light of the opportunities presented by the likely changes of license for being a Permanent Private Hall, and then through the collective action of their members to develop a strategy for realising it. The other recommendations in this Report all seek to assist the House in delivering what its published documents state it hopes to deliver. Two main themes run through them. The first is about being more consciously structured in relation to the delivery of the educational programme, pastoral care, the use of the placement experience, and the community life. The second has to do with continuing to work on integrating the various aspects of whole experience.
- 15 It is primarily because we recognise the progress which has been made since the appointment of the present Principal, that we are able to say that we believe the House has the capacity to move forward and to work on the recommendations we are making, all of which are set in the context of believing in the potential which the House possesses, and encouraging it to make a gift of its capabilities to enrich the wider church from the Catholic tradition. If this development process is successfully carried through then we would expect to have no hesitation in expressing full confidence in the House as fit for purpose of training candidates for the ordained ministry in the Church of England. However until we see substantial progress our overall judgement at this point in time must be of confidence with qualifications. Our final recommendation of the production of an action plan within six months is designed to enable this full confidence to be expressed as soon as possible.
- 16 The Report that follows is written, and the paragraphs follow, in relation to the Criteria for Inspections (Inspections Handbook 2008, pages 50-55). The Criteria are printed in *italic* type. The Inspectors' comments are printed in normal type. The Recommendations are in **bold** type. In places we also **urge** or *suggest* that action be taken.

## **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 public 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.*

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

*A.iii There should be evidence of action taken in response to the previous inspection Report and any follow-up.*

### **Aims and Objectives**

- 17 The last Inspection Report recommended that “given the granting of PPH status by the University of Oxford, and having regard to the content and recommendations of the Hind Report, that the House urgently address the development and implementation of a clearly defined strategy for securing its future”. We have already referred in the Introduction to this Report (para 7), to the good progress which has been made in renewing and tightening up the internal organisation of the House. We are also aware that as a consequence of becoming a Permanent Private Hall, the first cohort of PGCE students was admitted in 2005, and that there are currently 25 PGCE students resident in the House.
- 18 However we understand that previous recommendation to be about more than internal organisation, important though that is, but rather asking the House Council to consider where the House needs to position itself within the changes in patterns of theological education as a result of the Hind Report, and in relation to the opportunities which a revised licence for PPH status brings. We did not see much evidence of this wider envisioning. We heard of the efforts made to engage with the emerging Regional Training Partnership and the difficulties encountered, and of the proposed changes in the relationship of PPHs to the University which begin to call into question some of the advantages of that status. (We refer in more detail to these issues in section B). Nevertheless we believe that a viable future for the House does depend on engaging with that wider context, and indeed as we say in the Introduction, the wider one still of the Catholic Movement within the Church of England, drawing from those different contexts and contributing to them.
- 19 This is not to challenge the core purpose of the House in training ordinands, but rather to suggest that there needs to be an overarching set of aims and objectives within which that core purpose sits comfortably and creatively. For instance, whilst it is very good to have the PGCE students resident, and to hear about the Summer Schools, we wondered how at the moment those things fit within a wider framework and serve the wider purposes of the House.

20 In order to develop that broad vision we encourage the House Council to identify allies within the wider church, its region, the diocese and city of Oxford and the University. We draw attention to some possible allies in the development of partnerships. There are clearly good links with Pusey House. The Centre for Muslim Studies is based at the House. There are good links with the Nottingham Centre for Theology and Philosophy. A research fellowship has recently been awarded to the Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. Two Archbishops from the Armenian Orthodox Church doing research in the University were resident during our stay and reflect another relationship with might be nurtured for mutual benefit. We refer elsewhere in this Report to the importance of developing OPTET (see para 39) which provides a major opportunity for developing partnership working.

### **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that the House Council:**

- i. develop a vision of how the institution can make a gift of its wider aims and objectives to the Church of England and the mission of God.**
- ii. through its members develop and align a strategy for the institution to realise the vision**

21 The staff are to be congratulated on the initiatives taken to hold external lectures and conferences, and particularly the Summer Schools. These might be key components in fulfilling a broader vision for the House. We encourage this development which both provides useful experience in building the broader vision, by testing the market, and could be the means whereby other partners are drawn in to the enterprise.

### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend to the staff and Principal that the developing programme of lectures and conferences is built on for the benefit of the wider church and region.**

22 The aims and objectives of the core purpose of the House are clearly stated. They are “to nurture Christian faith, life, and discipleship, in the context of a prayerful and worshipping community in order to prepare candidates for an ordained ministry which is directed to mission and pastoral care; collegially understood and practised; liturgically defined and oriented; and rooted in virtuous habits of prayer, wisdom and true professionalism”.

23 Referring to the ‘Structure and Funding of Ordination Training’ Report, the Validation document sets out an understanding of ordained ministry, elaborating this in relation to the Catholic tradition. “In the catholic tradition, this ordained ministry (whose vocation is to focus the four marks of the Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic) is understood to dwell pre-eminently in the bishop. It

includes the faithful preaching of God's word, care for the poor, prayer for the world and oversight of the Church, but it has always been centred upon and ordered to the liturgy of the Church. In the liturgy, the Church becomes the Church, sharing in the eternal thanksgiving of the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit. ... The ordained ministry, therefore, is an authorised ministry of authority, which is a visible embodiment of Christ's continuing ministry as prophet, priest and king."

- 24 There is clear recognition too in the Validation document of the need to set an understanding of ordained ministry within the context of the mission and ministry of the whole people of God. There is "an increasing demand for the Church to be exhibiting imaginative leadership and collaborative forms of authority and ministry", seen amongst other places in "initiatives designated as *Fresh Expressions (Mission-Shaped Church 2004)*". "Ordinands should appreciate the particular responsibility which the clergy have for the vocations of other Christians. They need to be equipped to take their part, carefully and prayerfully, in discerning, encouraging and enabling the gifts and ministries of groups of Christians and of individual Christian women and men".
- 25 The Validation document also recognises the wider context of the mission of God. They hope that "our students will enter more deeply into their identity as Christians and members of the catholic Church", for "to participate in the identity of the Church is thus to learn to live more fully in the mission of God." This demands attention to understanding the world, and deepening one's own spiritual awareness through "learning virtuous habits of ordered prayer, thoughtful study". "The acquisition of such habits demands of the education programme an integrative structure, in which prayer, study and relationships come together at the deepest level. Our aim is that the acquisition of knowledge and discernment through educational programmes, the life of prayer and worship, and the lessons learned through a 'full' experience of community living should continually feed into one another."
- 26 We enthusiastically endorse the aims and objectives set out in the Validation document; the various elements in this very much abbreviated summary, the broad context of the mission of God, the specific role of ordained ministry, including its task of encouraging and enabling the gifts of lay people, collaborative forms of ministry, the attention to understanding the world and to the personal and spiritual formation in virtuous habits of wisdom.
- 27 We did not however always find it easy to identify the 'follow through' in the validation document from the statements on mission and ministry, to the educational programme and practice. We shall *suggest* where attention might be given to this issue under the different sections of the report.

## **Achievements of the Institution**

- 28 We have already referred in the Introduction to this Report (para 7), and above (para 17) to the progress in the internal organisation of the House and coming into residence of PGCE students. In addition, the promotion of the wider use of the premises has led, amongst other conference uses, to summer schools organised by the House staff being mounted in 2006, 2007(2) and 2008(2). The job of the assistant bursar is to generate income from lettings; the summer school for children was one of these; the upgrading of the food service has also made an important contribution to this process. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primate of the Western diocese of the Armenian Orthodox Church of North America accepted Honorary Fellowships, whilst the college elected two benefactors to Edward King Fellowships in 2008.
- 29 Reviewing the recommendations of the previous Inspection Report of 2003, we noted that several had been fully implemented, the drawing up of job specifications and the implementation of an agreed system of annual appraisal for all members of the House's establishment, the review of administrative needs, the up-grading of St Stephen's House plant with the installation of facilities for disabled access in hand, and the computerisation of the Library catalogue. We were disappointed however that a number of the recommendations of that Report did not appear fully to have been followed. It would have been good to see a more thoroughgoing approach to the recommendations about the use of the local context and helping students to experience a wider range of spiritualities and traditions in worship, and to the recommendation concerning the development of a forward strategy by the Council. In some cases whilst we were aware of discussions having taken place, for various reasons the recommendations had not been implemented, particularly in relation to the appointment of an ordained woman on the staff and a rescheduling of Sunday Mass to enable Sunday mornings to be used for placements. Accordingly we found ourselves reiterating some of the points made in those previous recommendations and in two significant cases repeating them verbatim thus challenging the decisions made.

<p><b>The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion A, Aims, Objectives and Achievements of the Institution.</b></p>
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## **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.*

- 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.*
- B.iii There should be evidence of effective engagement with Churches, other faith communities and secular organisations in the locality such as to enhance preparation for public ministry.*
- B.iv The institution should demonstrate commitment to effective partnership with the other providers of theological education in the region.*
- 30 The principal external relationships for the House are with the University of Oxford, the Ministry Division of the Church of England, the Oxford Partnership in Theological Education and Training (OPTET), the Regional Training Partnership and the Dioceses that send ordinands.
- 31 The relationship which the House has had for many years with the University of Oxford, whereby it has been able to matriculate students, and enjoyed a close relationship with the Faculty of Theology, achieved a further level of integration when the House became a Permanent Private Hall in 2003. Core members of the academic staff are members of the Faculty of Theology, engaged in teaching and examining, serving on a variety of University and Faculty Committees, and often teaching and supervising students from other colleges. Students taking University courses are fully matriculated members of the University, with access to the full range of University facilities and societies. Those following other programmes are able to attend University lectures and use library facilities as appropriate.
- 32 Since the House achieved PPH status in 2003 the University has carried out a “Review of the Permanent Private Halls associated with the University of Oxford” published in July 2007. The Principal made a substantial submission to the Review Group. It was the view of the review panel that the “relationship between ‘church and academy’ is a constructive one, has a long historic context for the University and has parallels with other professions that involve a ‘fitness to practice’.” The panel concluded that certain reforms needed “to be made to deal specifically with anomalies caused by structural issues between the institutions.” A consequence of the Review was the establishment of a PPH Supervisory Committee to implement the recommendations. One of the key outcomes will be the devising of a new licence between the University and each PPH.
- 33 One of the original hopes for PPH status was that it might enable a diversification of activity for the House. It would be possible to attract some school-leaver undergraduates as well as people doing postgraduate degrees and research. The PPH Review however recommended that the right of PPHs to matriculate school-leaver aged students should be withdrawn, with the result that the first cohort of such students admitted to the House in September 2007 will also be the last. Another weakness to emerge has been the restriction on PPHs only to deliver those courses offered by the University of Oxford. This has the effect of not only

- preventing the House negotiating validation arrangements with other providers, as Ripon College Cuddesdon has done with Oxford Brookes University, but also makes it difficult to develop some more flexible routes to ordination for less academically able candidates because these would need to fit the University's requirements. A further blow to the hope for a greater diversification was made by the collapse of the Hind proposal to fund postgraduate study. There had been a proposal to develop a credit-rated B.Min award in association with the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education. This had not met with approval from the university.
- 34 The House Council had an initial discussion on a draft of a new agreement and licence proposed by the University, concerns being expressed about the increased tightness of terms.
- 35 A major financial issue for the House also emerges in this context. First, independent of local considerations the government is proposing to cease funding students who take higher education courses at the same level as or lower than qualifications (ELQ) they already hold. This would remove financial support for almost all St Stephen's House BA candidates and indeed for a substantial proportion of all candidates reading for degrees at the colleges in Oxford and Cambridge. Second, the University's systems for allocating monies between the centre and the colleges are being revised with as yet unknown impact on the House. Third, the University is to increase sharply the fees for its degrees for ELQ students, potentially settling upon the Island (Channel and Man) rate for PPHs.
- 36 In the light of all these issues, the Inspectors found themselves questioning the extent of the benefit to the House in being a PPH. On the other hand there are the clear advantages which the closer relationship with the University brings in terms of extra resources for students and staff. There are also already clear gains from having 22 PGCE students within the House community, and the presence of research students. We **urge** the Council to set their consideration of these issues, which we appreciate are complex and problematic, within the framework of developing a vision for a future for the House. We believe strongly that on the right terms the future viability of the House can only be strengthened by developing stronger links with the University through the PPH route, enabling greater interaction between ordinands across the University and students from other disciplines, and drawing post-holders within the Faculty of Theology more closely into teaching in the House.
- 37 The close relationship between the Oxford theological colleges and the University has existed for many years and is mutually beneficial, especially in terms of student numbers, the boosting of the size of the Faculty, and the challenge to the colleges to work at a high academic intellectual standard. The academic quality and achievement of St Stephen's House students is acknowledged and valued by the Faculty, indeed the BA candidates from the House have gained a disproportionate number of first class degrees.

- 38 The Oxford Partnership in Theological Education and Training (OPTET) was established in 1994. Its role is to promote: the efficient sharing of resources; consultation, collaboration and co-operation in the delivery of academic and other programmes; shared acts of worship; and formal and informal meetings of staff. Its 10 full members are all institutions associated with the University, via the Faculty of Theology or the Department for Continuing Education.
- 39 We were pleased to hear of the recent development of increased provision of joint OPTET BTh lectures to take place on Thursday mornings in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms. These are valued by students for the shared learning which takes place. We were encouraged to hear at the meeting with the Chair of the Faculty of Theology, the view being strongly expressed that as far as the BTh is concerned, OPTET is seen as a crucial instrument for achieving greater integration between PPHs and the Faculty, with significant potential for more collaborative delivery of the curriculum, shared teaching and greater student mix. We support this view which is very much in line with our own comments in paragraph 36 above. This could result in a better use of the staff resources, increase the range of teaching made available and the range of student experience.

### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that the staff in co-operation with the other members of OPTET seek further ways in which the existing collaborative work on the BTh can be extended.**

- 40 The House has played an active role in the conversations discerning the way forward in the establishment of the South Central Regional Training Partnership (RTP), providing a staff member's time and experience to serve as a representative of the Oxford training institutions on the Steering Group. A Partnership has now been formed between the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church, the Southampton District of the Methodist Church, and the Anglican Dioceses of Guildford, Oxford, Portsmouth, Salisbury and Winchester.
- 41 St Stephen's House has joined the Partnership, but the House has reservations about the future activity of the RTP, and in particular the levying of a subscription without a budget having been set. There are also questions about how many other institutions will join, whether OPTET as a whole should be a member, and the effect on the validation processes of the national institutions.
- 42 We gained the impression that this was another area affected by the kind of paralysis we referred to in paragraph 10. We hope that the House will take the opportunity of greater involvement in the RTP, since it is clearly a potential vehicle for realising an aspiration it expresses in its validation document. "We believe that we have much to offer the region in terms of training opportunities for a range of people, and that there could be significant benefits to engaging in some joint ventures." In line with our comments in paragraph 11, we would want

- to add the opportunity of bringing the gifts and strengths of the Catholic tradition into the region.
- 43 There is another issue in relation to the implementation of the Hind Report. The agreed policy which flowed from that report is that initial ministerial formation should be seen as a continuous process through seven years, the first three in college or course and the last four (IME 4-7) within the dioceses. This raises questions about the link between studies at St Stephen's House and the requirements of IME 4-7. (See para 104)
- 44 The documentation says a great deal about the importance of the setting of the House in multi-cultural East Oxford. We shall say more about this in Sections H & J. We found evidence of good relationships between St Stephen's House and those parishes in East Oxford and elsewhere that have students on placements. But we also felt that there was still more potential to be tapped in relating to some of the range of different agencies in the surrounding area. We noted the first recommendation from the previous report and felt that whilst there had been some attention given to placement procedures, the spirit of that recommendation to do with an ethos of 'greater openness to those living and working in the surrounding area' had not been addressed. (See also Section J)
- 45 The relationship with the Ministry Division of the Church of England is expressed through the validation process and the appointment of a Moderator, and through the financial support arrangements. We were grateful to the Moderator for his annual reports on the educational programme and his other insights into the life of the House as he perceived it. We had cause to quote his most recent report several times. We have already referred to the issues around the government decision on ELQ, and the changes in fee levels in the University, and their impact on cost and thus on the church's capacity to continue to fund theological education as in the past.
- 46 The final dimension of the House's external relationships is with the dioceses who send ordinands and the incumbents of parishes who receive them after ordination. We received varying views from the three Diocesan Directors of Ordinands we consulted about the effectiveness of this relationship. Some were more positive than others about the training the House provided; some were concerned about students needing to fit a particular mould and the perceived difficulties the House has in handling difference. The common strand in the responses was that the liaison when problems occur could be improved, being more up-front earlier on when problems arise, and that the formal reporting could be clearer and firmer and related to the learning outcomes.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend to the Principal that reporting, to the dioceses in particular, takes account of their desire to have as clear evidence as possible, especially relating to the extent to which the student is meeting the learning outcomes.**

- 47 From the point of view of those receiving students as deacons, the two incumbents we consulted were warm in their praise for the preparation which the House was providing, in particular the grounding in all the necessary areas of pastoral and liturgical formation enabling them to be very well-prepared to 'hit the ground running' as soon as the diaconate began, and the well-established spiritual life, based in the Daily Offices, Mass, traditional Catholic spiritual devotions, and personal prayer.

**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.*
- C.ii There should be evidence of a structured contribution made by the student body so that it plays an effective role in decision-making processes.*
- C.iii There should be evidence that tutorial and administrative staff are able to fulfil their job descriptions both individually and corporately and are resourced to do so.*
- C.iv There should be a well-designed and operative appraisal system for all staff.*
- C.v The training institution should meet the current legal requirements, for example, with regard to Fire prevention, Health and Safety and Child Protection.*
- 48 The House Council, technically the Committee of Management, is the House's Governing Body. The Chairman is the Rt Rev Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe. The Council meets approximately once per term, with a residential meeting each summer. Its sub-committee, the Financial and General Purposes Committee meets more frequently. There are currently 16 voting members of the Council, including an elected student and an elected member of the academic staff. There are four vacancies. The Council also has as non-voting members, a representative of OPTET, the Vice-Principal, the Senior Student and the Bursar.

- 49 We have already referred to the review of the membership of the Council, resulting in six new co-opted members being appointed in 2006-7, and the designation of particular responsibilities to Council members. These changes bring a wide range of experience and expertise to bear on the development of the House's policy and financial management. In common with a number of charitable organisations the House is exploring the possibility of taking advantage of new legislation creating a new charitable category of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This would bring greater protection to the liability of the Trustees. We observed an excellent and succinct initial summary of some of the issues by one of the lay Council members in preparation for a further discussion at a subsequent meeting.
- 50 The contrasting currents we referred to in the introduction were naturally evident in the Council meeting we attended. On the one hand a sense of a firm grasp and direction to the internal organisation of the House, and on the other the uncertainties created by the external pressures of decisions in the wider church, changes in government finance and issues affecting PPHs as a result of the review.
- 51 We appreciate how these latter pressures create a certain defensiveness, but we were disappointed to pick up at the Council a tendency for other theological positions, other providers, the recommendations of the moderator for media training, other routes of ministry formation to be too lightly disparaged. We were encouraged at that same meeting by the references to recent articles in the press by members of the House which not only raised the profile of the House in the wider church but also reflected greater confidence in the Catholic tradition.
- 52 These positive signs were evident too in the responses from recent students and from our meeting with the group of students who had prepared their comments on the Validation questions. The former referred directly to the confident Catholic ethos within the Church of England which they had picked up from their time at the House. The latter were clearly looking forward to beginning their ministry with confidence in their Catholic tradition. We encourage the Council to build on these positive signs, and to take the responsibility which they have, not only for the maintenance of the current position, but the development of a vision for a sustainable future. We repeat here the recommendation made at the end of paragraph 20.

### **Recommendation 1**

#### **We recommend that the House Council:**

- i. develop a vision of how the institution can make a gift of its wider aims and objectives to the Church of England and the mission of God.**
- ii. through its members develop and align a strategy for the institution to realise the vision**

- 53 We have already referred to the ‘authoritative character’ of the Principal and the essential contribution this has made to the recent progress on the internal organisation (para 7), and through such things as the substantial submission to the PPH Review panel, to the profile of the House in the University. We were not surprised that when we asked about the Council’s role in setting strategy to be told by the Principal that they had accepted the strategy he came with. It is of course part of the Principal’s role to help the organisation to move forward by presenting and analysing the issues and challenges, but it must be the Council’s responsibility to make the decisions about appropriate directions. We were slightly concerned about what could be interpreted as too easy an acquiescence by the Council to plans put before them.
- 54 The Principal obviously has day to day responsibility for the running of the House. It was clear that certainly in his early days he had to act very quickly and decisively on some difficult issues involving certain individual students. It was clearly right and proper that he should have done so, reflecting a strong strand in the Catholic tradition of authoritative leadership. But as our stay passed we also found ourselves reflecting on the degree of dominance of the role of Principal within the organisation. We were told, by both staff and students, on several specific issues which came up during our stay that the Principal’s permission would be needed, or the Principal needed to be consulted. Time and again it seemed as if the decisions went back to him. These reflections raised for us the question of what model of leadership was being presented. We were made aware by staff that from their point of view the single most important development at the House since the last inspection, and one which they felt underlay all the other improvements and innovation, is the way in which the Principal and staff team now work more closely together than hitherto. The Principal has an open communication policy, is felt by staff to consult, listen, delegate and support.
- 55 Whilst we welcomed these developments our assessment was that within a spectrum of leadership styles with ‘directing’ at one end and ‘full collaborative working’ at the other, there has been a good positive movement to around a position of 3/4 on a five point scale. We encourage the House, within the context of the Catholic tradition, to take this process further, becoming clearer about the distinction between ‘working together constructively’ and ‘collaborative leadership’. We had in mind some of the excellent words in the Validation document, quoted in paragraph 24 above, about the an increasing demand for the Church to be exhibiting imaginative leadership and collaborative forms of authority and ministry”, seen amongst other places in “initiatives designated as *Fresh Expressions (Mission-Shaped Church 2004)*”. “Ordinands should appreciate the particular responsibility which the clergy have for the vocations of other Christians. They need to be equipped to take their part, carefully and prayerfully, in discerning, encouraging and enabling the gifts and ministries of groups of Christians and of individual Christian women and men”. This is one of the areas where we had difficulty in identifying the ‘follow-through’ in the Validation document from statement of principle to their outworking in practice. Accordingly:

## **Recommendation 5**

**We recommend that the academic and administrative staff work with the Principal to develop a leadership style which models a collaborative process for the benefit of the institution and those who study and work in it.**

- 56 A further aspect of modelling for a college training men and women for ordination has to do with the provision of both male and female models of priesthood. We appreciate the difficulties of achieving this at St Stephen's House. We took the point that women seeking ordination have a number of other options open to them where they can be more sure of finding themselves in a community equally made up of men and women. It is very likely therefore that those women who come to the House will always be few in number. Our conversations with some of the present female students suggested that they were at the House because their desire to have the particular experience the House offered overrode any consideration of being in a more mixed community.
- 57 We also understand the difficulty which was put to us of appointing a female ordained staff member on the fairly rare occasions that a post becomes available. However we were not convinced by the argument that St Stephen's House could not attract capable female staff; but if it is the case then this would give the House cause to examine itself in this matter. Nevertheless we feel ourselves bound to repeat with some emphasis the recommendation made at the last inspection which has not been followed through.

## **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend the earliest possible appointment of an ordained woman to the core tutorial staff so as to ensure conformity with the Church of England guidelines for colleges and courses training women for ordination.**

- 58 We reviewed the "Statement of Main Terms of Employment" for employees. We had some concerns about the grievance and appeal procedures, in particular how the grievance procedure seemed to come after the section dealing with dismissal and appeal, and omitted any reference to the right to have a friend alongside in any grievance meeting. In the light of recent difficulties experienced elsewhere in the area of employment law:

## **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that the House Council ensures that the grievance and appeal procedures are legally defensible.**

- 59 All the necessary policies to meet the current legal requirements are in place and information on them is set out in the Handbook.

**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.*

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

60 The teaching accommodation is very good. There are three reasonably sized teaching rooms, two with interactive whiteboards, which provide good spaces for the number of students being taught. There are comfortable chairs and tables.

61 The residential accommodation is in the course of being improved. The smallness of some of the rooms is being addressed, with some rooms being converted to have en suite facilities. Students had favourable comments about the accommodation. There is good internet access provided, Ethernet in all rooms and wireless in the computer room and library.

62 There is an ongoing programme of improvement. A disability access audit has been carried out and is being actioned. Planning permission has been obtained for the installation of a lift.

63 There is plenty of accommodation for families, 14 flats and 4 houses. 3 houses have 3 bedrooms and one house has 2 bedrooms. The student spouse with whom we spoke said that this was one reason for going to St Stephen's House. Maintenance issues and problems are quickly sorted out, and whilst it would be preferable to have individual heating systems that would be more expensive.

**The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion D, Accommodation.**

## **E COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE LIFE**

*Inspectors will consider how the institution understands and structures community life, 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.*
- E.ii The institution should show evidence that the structures, requirements and practice of the institution reflect the stated policy.*
- 64 The student community, which includes the non-ordinands, has its own Common Room Committee with elected officers, which include a president of the common room and a senior student. The Common Room Committee organises a variety of activities and events. We wish to record our thanks for the invitation to join in the social event on the Thursday evening of our stay in the House. Although it was quite late by the time we had finished our necessary deliberations, the welcome was warm, refreshing and encouraging and very pleasant relaxing break for us.
- 65 The Student Handbook contains a statement on how it understands its corporate life, including equal opportunities. It also sets out clearly the structures for student representation and consultation, including academic and domestic committees, group convenors' meeting and the weekly house meeting.
- 66 A key element in the life of the House is a Group system. Every student is assigned to a small group. Each group has a student convenor and a member of staff designated to look after the welfare of the students in each group. The Groups have several functions. The Group works together on some of the chores, cleaning and tidying the chapel or working in the garden. On a scheduled termly timetable a Group takes responsibility for organising the Mass on the Wednesday evening. They provide a place for mutual learning, playing a key role within the process of formation (See para 78), and a channel of communication whereby concerns and comments can be registered and dealt with.
- 67 Good though these channels of communication are as a means of consultation, our observation of the Groups and the Group Convenors' meeting raised questions for us about the way in which it works in practice, echoing for us our concerns expressed elsewhere about what style of leadership is being modelled. (para 53) We gained the impression that it was very much a hierarchical structure of representations made through the senior student or the Group Convenors' meeting to the Principal. The House meeting we attended saw the process in the opposite direction, consisting largely of the Principal giving out information; and others in various representative roles being invited to do likewise. It was not a meeting inviting general discussion.
- 68 We shall be making further comments on some of these issues under section G, "Ministerial, Personal and Spiritual Development", for how the community

works, as a complete entity, or through the Groups has an impact on those three elements of a person's development.

**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.*
- 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.*
- F.iii There should be a policy concerning balance of worship, including authorized and innovative forms, and of denominational worship in ecumenical situations.*
- 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.*
- F.v There should be a policy about expected attendance at public worship and evidence of its outworking.*

69 The daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer are the heartbeat of this worshipping community. The House Chapel is appropriately well located in the heart of the college buildings. It is ideally furnished for this purpose, having been inherited from the Society of St John the Evangelist, which had the chapel designed for this very activity. The sacrament is reserved here to provide a focus for prayer throughout the day. St John's Church, inherited within the suite of the monastic buildings, is very generously proportioned for the present size of the college community, but it affords a number of distinct spaces for varied liturgical expression. It is here that the Mass is generally celebrated at a nave altar, the chancel screen's doors closed against an impressive sanctuary furnished for an eastward-facing celebration. The Founder's Chapel, at the top of the main house, is cold, not very accessible and consequently little used.

- 70 The policy and arrangements for corporate worship are clearly explained to ordinands and other students in the College Handbook. Both the Common worship and Book of Common Prayer Offices are used daily to provide that rhythm of prayer required of the clergy by canon to undergird their ministry in the world. A daily Eucharist commemorates the saints' days in turn and the rite for this is generally *Common Worship Order One in Modern Language*, though there is occasional use of the *Book of Common Prayer*.
- 71 Provision is made once a week for the daily Mass to be celebrated by a woman priest. On this day an alternative celebration by a male priest is provided at another time.
- 72 The House is clear about the occasions on which innovative forms of liturgy may be used and extent to which innovation is acceptable. Consistent with the Catholic tradition particular attention is given to ordered liturgy so that authorised forms of worship predominate and innovation is likely to be derived from the ordered practice of another province or communion, though not including the use of unauthorised Eucharistic prayers. We saw no evidence of innovative forms of worship beyond this framework. Each Wednesday one of the three Groups into which the community as a whole is divided for various purposes (see para 78) is responsible for planning the Mass. The one we experienced was an expression of what was described to us as part of a movement in Catholicism which is concerned to stress continuity with the tradition, and reflects the direction in which some thinking is now moving. The eastward facing celebration was very well done, with excellent intercessions. They were the only ones during our stay which were not extremely brief and formalised and which acknowledged in a clear fashion the concerns of the external world (see para 121). We understood that the Group Mass planned for the following week would include a multi media presentation.
- 73 Whilst appreciating the strengths of the grounding provided by the rhythm of Daily Offices, Mass and Catholic devotions, commented on positively by one of the receiving incumbents, we echo some comments from the last inspection "that those preparing for Anglican ministry would benefit from a more regular modelling of a wider range of traditions and on occasion from a greater informality of approach". Their recommendation is one of those which we did not feel had been sufficiently followed through.

### **Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that the House explores the breadth of Anglo Catholic worship and spirituality as well as other traditions of Anglicanism.**

- 74 Ordinands are prepared, through guidelines in their Handbook, for the experience of critical comment upon their leadership of worship within the House community. Similarly, students are led to expect peer criticism of preaching. We found students to have clear expectations about how liturgy should and should not

be critically observed and commented upon. The observance of boundaries appears to leave students accepting of comment, but deeply appreciative of the rhythm of prayer that structures the day.

- 75 There is a very clear published policy about expected attendance at public worship and inspectors found it to be observed by students and staff alike. Ordinands are required to be present at the daily offices and encouraged, but not required, to be at a daily celebration of the Eucharist. The exception is the Group Mass on Wednesday evenings, which is 'of obligation' for members of the group, not least because it is the occasion when the predominating style and content may be varied. We noted that only a minority of students appeared to avail themselves of the period of 'protected' silence in the House Chapel for private meditation before Morning Prayer.

<b>The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion F, Common Worship.</b>
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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 and communicated to candidates.*
- 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.*
- 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 the traditions of other churches and deepen their sense of their ecclesial identity.*
- G.iv The institution should provide corporate and individual guidance and supervision for candidates. There should also be encouragement to seek confidential spiritual counsel.*
- 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.*
- 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.*

*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, of general conduct and of lifestyle.*

- 76 The House's understanding of ministerial formation is very clearly expressed in the Validation document. It uses as a framework the "learning outcomes statement for ordained ministry in the Church of England". It stresses the Catholic tradition of the "importance of learning virtuous habits of ordered prayer, thoughtful study and charitable relations as the necessary underpinning of *koinonia* and mission". It "demands of the educational programme a integrative structure, in which prayer, study and relationships come together at the deepest level. Our aim is that the acquisition of knowledge and discernment through educational programmes, the life of prayer and worship, and the lessons learned through a 'full' experience of community living should continually feed into one another. It is interesting the Student Handbook does not contain such a clear integrative statement. It details rather the practical processes, Groups, different kinds of placement etc. without setting them in the wider context of the overall aim (see para 106).
- 77 We believe that in practice too much is left to chance. It is too often assumed that simply living together, ideas and attitudes rubbing up against one another will assist relationships, or that the work on placements will automatically feed into the academic study and worship and vice versa. We gained the impression that many of the components are in place to enable this cross-feeding between the different elements of the life of the House, but that they need more structured attention. This not at all to deny all the benefits gained from informal arrangements, the discussion over coffee or a glass of wine, but just to emphasise that if the House is to make the most of its potential as a learning community, that requires as much thought as other parts of the curriculum. It is one of the other areas where we hope that our recommendations will provide for a better 'follow-through' from the excellent words in the Validation document to the practice with regard to students' formation.
- 78 The Group system referred to above (para 66) plays a key role in formation. The small mixed gender groups of about eight members, each with a convenor and a staff tutor. During our stay one of these took place in a study bedroom, one in a married student's flat, and the other, the group preparing the Group Mass, in St John's Church. We believe that students take it in turns to host these meetings and that therefore they often take place in study bedrooms. We were concerned about the appropriateness of the use of study bedrooms. They are the private spaces of individuals, so were not in any educational sense furnished in a manner that could accommodate nine people in appropriate seating (some on chairs, some on the bed, and others on the floor). Further it could be said to be highly inappropriate for a staff member to attempt to work with the complexities of small groups, let

alone those of spiritual and ministerial formation and individual journeys in such spaces as study bedrooms. (There are other appropriate rooms that could be used for these groups). The possible argument about being one “family” simply ignores the reality of the integrity of very different individuals and is an intrusion into personal space.

- 79 It is important that students are clear about the various expectations of this Group activity. There was evidence that such groups could work at common task quite well, such as acting as consultative bodies re food or organising the liturgy for a Mass, but the expectation in relation to formation is more complex. One Inspector observed a group where two members told their faith stories. The stories were rich. It was disappointing that there was little response from the other members of the group, and no one seemed able to take the discussion forward. This led us to wonder whether the staff did have an appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding of individual development and group process, let alone the capacity to understand and work with the experience of and between the three groups to enable the richness of these learning opportunities to be realised. This by no means to criticise the staff but rather to suggest that they may need to be helped to respond to this very different teaching role. One member of staff admitted to feeling ill-prepared for this aspect of his work.

### **Recommendation 9**

**We recommend that the review of educational design and delivery (Recommendation 11):**

- i. give serious consideration to a review of the task, tuition, location and management of these small groups, and**
- ii. develop a structured programme of in-service training for staff to enable them to fulfil the wide range of academic and tutorial roles**

- 80 We also wish to *suggest* that the community as a whole entity contains learning opportunities. We were told that unlike the previous year when some deep divisions had broken the surface, this present community of students exists quite harmoniously. Yet we were aware of undercurrents arising from deeply held opposing views. This is only to be expected inevitably reflecting the debates in the wider church. Indeed it could be argued that the House, because it focuses some of the differences of view so sharply, is in a better position than most to prepare people to handle those differences when they begin their ministry. One of the recent students we consulted felt that his experience at the House had done precisely that for him. Other evidence suggested that the House did not handle difference well (see para 46).
- 81 We held two formal meetings (one with the whole student body or those that could be present; one with a sample of students drawn by them from across the degrees and diplomas). The students in the whole group formal meeting seemed to be unsure about the influence of the wider Anglican communion, other traditions

and mission in their work. It was as though a tradition and style could only be preserved by paying very limited attention to what lay outside the House. One student commented in a separate conversation of a lack of engagement with outside issues, and that Christian Aid Week would have passed without a mention except that one person happened to mention it in intercessions. From the formal on academic matters referred to above it appeared that these talented and committed people (by no means young) had little tradition of open encounter with persons in authority on institutional issues, but good and supportive relationships with their teachers and tutors.

- 82 We **urge** that the college consider these observations in their recommended review of educational management and that the staff might investigate the use of an external consultant to help the community as a whole to develop a clearer self-understanding, offering some skilled leadership in working at noting, exploring and understanding the varied and common experiences of a “common life of the house”.
- 83 In our meeting with the student body as a whole it was encouraging to learn that some steps are taken to tap into the very considerable experience and expertise which many of the more mature students have. We want to encourage that process to develop further because it can ease the sense of being de-skilled which some students referred to both in the formal meeting referred to above and in individual conversations.
- 84 The regular interviews with tutors and Principal are another building block in the process of formation. They are places where tutors and the Principal provide termly and annual assessments of the students’ progress and provide materials for reports to dioceses. From discussion with students it was clear that these interviews were taken appropriately, but evidence from DDO interviews suggest that they might lack specificity and become somewhat general (see para 46). We did not have time or opportunity to observe such interviews, consider the sources and nature of evidence used in them, how they were conducted by tutors and the Principal and experienced by the students. Further it appeared that each student has the same tutor for three years. Consideration might be given to the danger that such a practice may reinforce views, sustain collusion and limit the learning opportunity of students to encounter a different person in role.
- 85 Pastoral care is another area which may need a more structured approach. It is clear that in many instances the present informal arrangements work satisfactorily. We appreciate that within a small community with a regular interchange on student progress at staff meetings most situations are well covered. In addition we were told that within the student body there is a degree of ‘looking out for one another’. But we had evidence from both past and present students of weakness in this area, some students will retreat into themselves, issues are sometimes not addressed early enough. One recent student raised the question of the appointment of a chaplain, which had been one of the recommendations from the previous inspection which had been discussed and rejected. We understand that

one of the spiritual directors often finds himself acting in this role, but we also were told that this person is actually too close and too well known in Oxford generally for everyone to feel comfortable with that arrangement. We **urge** the House to give some more thought to this area, including greater clarity about the roles of the spiritual directors in pastoral care and the possible appointment of a chaplain.

### **Recommendation 10**

**We recommend that the House develops a structured approach to pastoral care which provides greater clarity for all concerned about the responsibility of the Group tutor, and potential conflicts of interest.**

- 86 The House provides two spiritual directors who make visits twice each term to offer spiritual counsel to students. Where it is appropriate for one of these individuals to undertake an ongoing and thorough role as spiritual director, this may involve more frequent meetings, perhaps away from the college. Alternatively they can suggest other spiritual counsellors to students. Group tutors take a role in ensuring that those in their care have adequate spiritual counsel. The spiritual counsel offered by the two visiting spiritual directors remains confidential. We were satisfied that adequate and appropriate provision is being made and that students were taking seriously the opportunities for spiritual development.
- 87 Whilst spiritual direction is offered to assist students in the development of their own spirituality and there was abundant evidence of a Catholic spiritual tradition both in worship and in the life of the House, there was little to suggest more than a purely private exploration of other traditions of Christian spirituality.
- 88 We have already referred to the limited exposure to other traditions of worship (para 73) and recommended that this should be rectified. We also saw little evidence, among the student body as a whole of empathetic understanding of the reformed or Evangelical traditions of Christianity, though it is understood from staff that there are benefits derived from an annual exchange with students from Wycliffe Hall.
- 89 There is a highly developed sense of ecclesial identity, which for some runs the risk of being too narrowly defined. Given some of the external pressures which we noted at the outset, it is then very easy to develop the “siege mentality” to which the Moderator referred. This can result in a mocking of other traditions, and in particular distort the very proper ecumenical longing in relation to communions of Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

<p><b>The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion G, Ministerial, Personal and Spiritual Formation.</b></p>
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## **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.*
- H.ii Principles concerning what is included in pre-ordination/authorisation training and left to post-ordination/authorisation training should be available and consonant with any denominational requirements*
- 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.*
- 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 the appropriate knowledge and learning processes, while drawing on student experience.*
- H.v The educational methods employed, and the balance of methods within the educational programme, should underpin the stated aims of the programme.*
- H.vi Teaching programmes should be complemented by structured opportunities for students to learn, as individuals and as groups.*
- 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 beginning public ministry. There should be both affirmation and constructive criticism, as appropriate, of students and of work.*
- H.viii. Published assessment criteria should be used by the teaching staff and be available to students.*
- H.ix The educational programmes 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.*

- 90 St Stephen's House Ordinands, depending upon their academic background and advice, follow;

Oxford Diploma in Ministry (offered jointly with Wycliffe Hall).		(n=5: 3 UK; mean age=53. 1F 2 O/S; mean age=31yrs)
BA in Theology at Oxford University;.	taken in 2 years by candidates with senior standing	(n=7; mean age=26yrs) 2F
BTh at Oxford University	(only open to candidates from a limited range of colleges)	(n=9; mean age=32yrs)
MTh at Oxford University		(n=3; mean age=43yrs)
Oxford Certificate in Theology		(0)
Certificate in Theology for Theology Graduates		(n=1; age=56yrs) F

These offerings cover the range of theology topics for priestly and ministerial formation. These are complemented by the experience of the ordinands of the life in the House.

- 91 The degrees and certificates have an appropriate range of content within which St Stephen's House candidates are guided to a relevant and appropriate range of choices. Each route has a University and/or St Stephen's House handbook which sets out the required programmes, timetables, assessment procedures as well as general regulations regarding such matters as plagiarism and information on university regulations. The BTh/MTh/Certificate/Diploma courses contain many papers which give candidates an opportunity to integrate theory and practice, but we had some concern about the extent to which students were being equipped through a substantive integrative educational experience to encourage integration and assessment of it, and thus to take up the opportunities offered.
- 92 The BA degree is taught in the traditional Oxford manner of reading, lectures, tutorials and supervision with tutors drawn from across the University faculty. These methods are of very long standing and equip candidates with academic knowledge, the facility for critical reasoning together with the capability to develop and defend an argument. These are supported by staff being available to students for further discussion.

- 93 The Diploma in Ministry for Theology graduates is focused upon Ministry Formation; one year candidates for this do four courses and two year candidates do six courses from OT; NT; Ethics; Pastoral Studies: Liturgy; Doctrine and Ecclesiology; Spirituality; Mission Studies. From a reading of course outlines and student papers these were of an appropriate range and standard. Assessment procedures and marking schemas were communicated via the Diploma handbook.
- 94 We were assured that there is a central college administrative system for the academic courses run by the Academic Secretary; that a complete set of external and internal course handbooks with marking schemes is held by the office and also distributed to all teaching staff and all students; that there is a complete set of records contained in individual student files, alongside a complete set held in the office; that student evaluation forms are accessible to all teaching staff in the office. We understand that teaching staff hold their own course outlines as peer review takes place in subject tutor groups in the Faculty of Theology and that staff review the academic progress of all students termly at the staff meeting. It is clear from the above that subject teaching is well organised, and that from the work we were able to obtain from the students, the academic work is of a good standard, not least in the BA degree where House students have gained a number of 1<sup>st</sup> class degrees disproportionately large for the size of the college.
- 95 Our perception however from the experience of some difficulty we had in obtaining course outlines, records, student work etc., was that the system, whilst effective in relation to individual courses, lacked an overall coherence. This led us to a concern about where an overview of the educational process was held, that is, an awareness of how various aspects within individual courses interact with one another, how the different courses relate, and how all contribute to the overall educational aim. There are issues here of educational design, of management of the programme as a whole, and of the review of the effectiveness of the design, delivery and experience. The staff did state that some aspects were discussed at the annual staff residential, but such discussions must have had limited systematic cross year or cross course considerations.
- 96 We believe that if the strengths of House in the quality and scholarship of its staff and of their teaching expertise are to be maximised, there is a need to give attention to developing an overview. This kind of framework is crucial if the considerable talents which exist are to be harnessed to contribute together to the overall educational aim.

### **Recommendation 11**

**We recommend that the staff engage in a structured review of the educational design and management of all the whole courses – academic and formational – to establish a more effective process for overview and review.**

- 97 The feedback given to students in the Diploma was thorough; in the words of the students at the meeting to discuss their experience “the university gives us a mark and 2 lines; at the college there is as much as we can take”, evidencing the staff availability to students for the Diploma.
- 98 The papers we viewed upon the gathering of student feedback on their experience were rather brief and simple, but some of the content was pointed. For example “it would help if staff knew the content of other courses”. We understand that the university is revising its student feedback systems.

### **Recommendation 12**

**We recommend that the staff seek advice from educational professionals with particular expertise in the design of student feedback to enable a systematic understanding of student experience and evaluation of the education in which they engage.**

- 99 We noted that the marking schema for the Diploma had a range from 0 to 100 and differs from the common UK degree marking schema. The rationale for this was not clear to us.
- 100 A variety of teaching and learning methods are used in the House itself, including lectures, seminars, tutorial, small groups, some workshops, active engagement in liturgy and placements. We observed some good teaching sessions in the House, all of them in small groups. The largely conversational style invited participation from members of the group though this was not always taken up as fully as might have been expected.
- 101 While there are elements of student centred learning there is a substantial agenda of required work. There was little evidence of active student participation in shaping their own agendas or seeking visiting speakers or seminars but perhaps the smallness of the student body and the largeness of the Oxford context renders such efforts unnecessary. It may be that the somewhat centralised notions of authority (and the theological emphasis upon an obedient life) prevalent at St Stephen’s House limits students’ sense of freedom and exploration.
- 102 The Validation document refers to the “educational programme as an integrative structure”, a principle which we very much support. Accordingly we need to record here a number of other elements in the teaching and learning programme dealt with under other headings in this report, the Group system, (paras 66, 78, and 79), Tutor and Principal Interviews (para 84), placements (para 108 ff) and the corporate life (para 80). These place substantial demands on the staff. Accordingly:

### **Recommendation 13**

**We recommend a structured programme of in-service training for staff to enable them to fulfil the wide range of academic and tutorial roles**

- 103 The Library is well stocked and efficiently organised by the Librarian. It is available all night, even in the house discipline of the greater silence. Its catalogue is computerised, its resources were observed to be fit for purpose and there are other specialist libraries within easy reach. The ICT possibilities are there, but seem little used.
- 104 St Stephen's House teaches to the learning outcomes specified in the Ministry Division publication "Shaping the Future". However the link between studies at St Stephen's House and the requirements of IME 4-7 appeared to be difficult to bring into focus. This was held by the college to an outcome of the varied diocesan design and delivery of IME 4-7, a point accepted by us. However we also expected to see a greater effort by the college in working with the DDOs to build more understanding and links between initial and later training.

<p><b>The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion H, Teaching and Learning: Content, Method and Resources.</b></p>
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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.*
- J.ii The structures for learning - courses, seminars, groups, placements, private study, marking, feedback - should be configured so as to facilitate this integration.*
- 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.*

- 105 The Validation document expressed very clearly an integrative approach to the curriculum (see para 76). The Response to the Inspection Questionnaire expresses the same aspiration, "theory and practice should be integrated at every level, so as to train deacons and priests who are able to reflect theologically upon their work, articulate its purpose to others, and allow their own theological

- thinking to be appropriately informed by their experience of ministry”. The aim is to “form the Church’s pastors as men and women who through prayer, study and practice understand the unrelenting and joyful struggle involved in re-imagining lives lived in relation: relationships between the particularity of experience, heart, home and world, and a truly Catholic vision of God’s dealing with his world” (St Stephen’s House ACCM 22 submission 1998). This integrative aspiration is another area where we felt that the ‘follow-through’ from the principles to practice could be improved.
- 106 The Response to the Questionnaire sets out three main areas where this integration is addressed, at the academic subject level, through placement learning and through the Group system. As we noted in paragraph 76, the Student Handbook sets out the mechanics of the academic courses, the placements and the Group system, but it does not set out clearly how these elements fit together in pursuit of this key aim of integration.
- 107 We have therefore two main concerns in relation to this section. The first is the degree to which the centrality of an integrative approach set out in the Validation document is embedded in how the students see their task. The second is the extent to which the practice bears out the aspiration in the way in which the three elements interact.
- 108 Taking each of these elements in turn, we commend some of the developments which have already taken place in configuring the academic courses in MTh, BTh, and the Diploma in Ministry so as to integrate theory and practice. Indeed we heard from students how much they valued in particular the teaching of Doctrine in this respect. Likewise, it was good to hear of those courses which are particularly designed to foster reflection on practice, for example, Formation and Ministry, Understanding Islam. But we *suggest* that more attention might be given to how the experiences from the placements and the Groups affect the way in which for example, New and Old Testament, are taught. We appreciate that this is not as straightforward as in perhaps a subject area such as Doctrine. But a thoroughgoing approach across the disciplines might help to develop the skills which enable student’s “theological thinking to be appropriately informed by their experience of ministry” (para 105) when they leave the House.
- 109 The Response to the Questionnaire states that the college “lays particular stress on placement learning”. We were concerned however about how this important principle is communicated to students especially in the Student Handbook. The Student Handbook consists of a main section and an ordinands supplement. The main document contains 28 pages of general information and is designed to cover students of all kinds resident in the House. It includes sections in the following order on Who’s Who, College Structures, Worship, Academic Matters, College facilities, Policies and Financial matters, The ordinands supplement of 10 pages sets out issues of particular concern to ordinands. Whilst we appreciate that the section on Academic Matters, in order to be inclusive, focuses largely on obligations regarding the university degrees, it would be helpful in our view to

have at least a comment here on the obligation on ordinands to carry out placements as part of their course, with a reference to the supplement for the detail. Whilst we understand that a placement briefing day is held in the Trinity Term of the first year, the present positioning of the placement information solely in the Supplement, and on the very last pages as a result of the alphabetical ordering, could communicate to students that placements are an add on to the core course. If students are to be helped to appreciate the centrality of an integrative approach (see para 107) attention needs to be given to ensuring that the way material is presented reinforces that message.

- 110 Placements take two forms, one for four weeks in the summer one, and the other occupying a portion of one day each week. In fact the House requires three year candidates to do an extended vacation placement each summer, more than the Ministry Division requires. The placements are arranged after consultation with the student in the light of their particular training needs, by the Director of Pastoral Theology. There is coordination with regard to placements between the Anglican OPTET colleges and a common report form. All placements have a named supervisor. Those whom we consulted spoke highly of the communication with the House which included a clear set of paperwork outlining the responsibilities of the student and college and the expectations of the supervisor. Assessment is by the supervisor's report, followed through by discussion with the Director of Pastoral Theology. All students are encouraged to keep a placement file providing material for further reflection. The Response to the Questionnaire, though not the Handbook, states that "all students will be required to write a full-scale essay on their summer placement", being required to reflect theologically on specific themes.
- 111 The responses we received from placement supervisors were generally positive. Contact time varies often in relation to the demands of the particular academic course being taken. Whilst we had concerns about one or two cases where perhaps the student could have been more stretched, supervisors also bore witness to cases where people had been taken out of their comfort zone and had responded well.
- 112 There were several comments about the advantage to be gained when the term-time and summer placement could happen in the same place, and when in particular it was possible for the student to be in the parish on a Sunday as well as one day in the week – "Sunday mornings is the time when the parish comes together and can be seen at its most active". (See Recommendation 18). We heard from one placement supervisor, who currently has five students on placement from various colleges, that he occasionally gathers them all together for joint reflection. We commend this practice.
- 113 The third important element identified in the Questionnaire Responses to achieve greater integration is the Group system. The Student Handbook speaks of the Group as the primary pastoral unit in the House. It is also used for the allocation of tasks and duties in the House that serve the community, and for organising the

Group Mass each week. There is no mention here of the wider purpose of encouraging the “integration of theory and practice”. (Questionnaire Response)

- 114 We **urge** that attention be given to communicating more clearly to students through the published material and in the induction course, how these three elements in the integrative process interact with one another and form a whole. In particular:

#### **Recommendation 14**

**We recommend that the staff produce a clear statement about the role of each placement within the educational programme, how they fit together, and how they relate to other aspects of the programme.**

- 115 We referred in paragraph 111 above to some concerns which were expressed to us about some placements not being sufficiently stretching. We also had concerns about the range of placements. Despite apologetics offered for some of the placements in Oxford colleges, we were surprised at the extensive use of these atypical settings for the formation of clergy, most of whom will serve as parish priests. Much is made in the documentation about the setting of the House in multi-cultural East Oxford. We took the point that in fact the area is fairly limited in size, and we were aware that there were placements in other parts of Oxford, such as Jericho, but we wanted to encourage the House to think much more widely about the placement opportunities in the city and the immediate region, in the range of opportunities available, both in church and in other agencies.
- 116 We have referred elsewhere to the demand in the Church for collaborative forms of authority and ministry. The House is traditionally strong on priestly formation exercised within a parish setting, but most of the current ordinands as they begin their ministry will find that they are working within a wider pattern of ministry, involving lay people, non-stipendiary and ordained local ministers and Readers. Placements need to reflect these developments so that students can begin to tease out how their priesthood is to be expressed in these circumstances. Accordingly, following the observations in these two paragraphs:

#### **Recommendation 15**

**We recommend far greater use of term-time parish placements**

- i. To enable students to earth their theory in practice**
- ii. To draw deeper attention to the development of ministry to complement their attention to priesthood.**

- 117 In terms of the role of experience in learning we also encourage the House to make maximum use of the experience which individual students possess, and that which flows from being a residential community.

## **Recommendation 16**

**We recommend that the House, staff and students, works more effectively at realising the potential which is available to them in the city of Oxford, in the prior experience of students and that which arises from the community’s self-understanding.**

- 118 Closely related to these issues is the concern expressed within the Moderator’s report about “insularity and a lack of engagement with public theology”. Whilst he goes on to list the admirable number of ways in which the House seeks to address issues of public theology, our experience resonated with the remark in his report about demands on time tending to distance students from public engagement with faith issues. We have referred in paragraph 81 to the comment that Christian Aid week passed almost without mention. Apart from the placements we saw little evidence of a considered and sustained engagement with other faith communities and secular organisations in the area, or of the existence of groups within the House which are committed to a Christian approach to social, political and economic engagement (see para 43). We have commented elsewhere about the content of intercessions (see paras 71 and 120).
- 119 We came to the view that excellent work the House does in deepening personal faith, discipleship and helping forward priestly formation and practice, needs to be complemented by greater attention to mission, so that the House reflects the statement in the validation document – “To participate in the identity of the Church is thus to learn to live more fully in the mission of God”. This demands an outward facing stance to the world in which that mission is taking place (see para 44).

## **Recommendation 17**

**We recommend that the House seeks a more concrete expression, in its worship, prayer and corporate life of God’s mission in his world.**

<p><b>The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion J, Practical and Pastoral Theology.</b></p>
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## **K TRAINING IN PUBLIC WORSHIP**

*Inspectors will note the ways 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 in Public Worship. It should ensure that candidates plan, prepare and effectively conduct public worship, including preaching.*

- 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.*
- K.iii There should be an appropriate policy and practice for reviewing and assessing the leading of worship.*
- K.iv The student should receive critical and constructive comment, attending to performance, content and process from staff and peers.*
- 120 The policy on preparation for leading public worship is clear and the celebration of good liturgy is an established priority for the House. Students plan carefully, with appropriate guidance where necessary for the leading of corporate worship. There is appropriate preparation for preaching and feed-back and criticism from students and staff. We were concerned, however, that the lack of Sunday parochial placements deprives ordinands of the potential to come to know and understand a particular worshipping community to which they will preach and from whose members they may receive comment and criticism. We were pleased to note that the Principal intends to keep this under review.

### **Recommendation 18**

**We strongly recommend that the House's Sunday worship be rescheduled to allow for the fullest possible engagement with term-time placements.**

- 121 We were satisfied that the policy on preparation for leading public worship was adhered to and that oversight was exercised, but we were disappointed not to find that social concern and zeal for the Kingdom associated with the Catholic tradition, more fully expressed in intercessory prayer offered in college worship (see para 72).
- 122 We were fully persuaded that there was adequate attention paid to the development of liturgical practitioners, though they would have liked to see evidence of wider concerns reflected in public intercession (see paras 121 and 72).
- 123 Students receive adequate critical and constructive comment on aspects of their leading of worship and the policy on collective worship affords all students an opportunity to learn from each other as well as to offer constructively critical comment.

<p><b>The inspection team has confidence with qualifications with regard to Criterion K, Training in Public Worship.</b></p>
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## **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.*
  - 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.*
  - 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.*
  - 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.*
  - L.v The institution should have in place an effective framework and programme for the continuing professional development of its staff. All staff are to have annual appraisals.*
  - L.vi Staff should model an appropriate pattern of spirituality, continuing learning and reflection on practice.*
- 124 For the number of ordinands in training St Stephen's House is well staffed. The House is very fortunate in the qualifications, skills and experience which the core staff possess. Staff are active within the Faculty of Theology and are engaged in research. Two members of staff have had their research entered for assessment by the Faculty in the national Research Assessment Exercise.
- 125 Following the last inspection the roles of Principal, Vice-Principal, Senior Tutor and Bursar were reviewed by a working group commissioned by the House Council. The Principal is responsible for the regular appraisals of his senior staff, and, in turn, the Chairman of the Council for the appraisal of the Principal.
- 126 We have already referred elsewhere: to the need for the Principal and staff to give attention to modelling a collaborative style of management and ministry (para 54 and Recommendation 5): and to the need for the appointment of an ordained woman to the staff to comply with the Church of England guidelines, (Recommendation 6).
- 127 We have also drawn attention to the range of roles and skills required of staff in delivering the integrated educational programme and recommended the provision of further continuing professional development.

**The inspection team has confidence 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.*

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

*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.*

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

128 Recent appointments to the positions of Bursar, Assistant Bursar, and College Secretary appear, together with the Academic Secretary to provide appropriate administrative support. We have referred earlier to the positive contributions already made by the bursarial appointments. The College Secretary feels able to make decisions appropriate to the work she is doing and works collaboratively and effectively with the bursar and other college staff. She commented on the ease with which students in the House mix with staff in contrast to her previous experience in other colleges.

129 Recruitment and selection and interviewing procedures accord with good practice. Job descriptions and terms of service were examined, and apart from the question raised earlier about grievance procedures (para 58) were found to be satisfactory. The College Secretary is the holder of other job descriptions for other post-holders.

**The inspection team has confidence with regard to Criterion M, Administrative Staff.**

## **N STUDENTS**

*Inspectors will examine procedures for admission and suspension or 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.*

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

*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.*

- 130 There is a clearly stated admissions policy and process for interview visits.
- 131 Students receive material prior to arriving at the House. The Student Handbook sets out clearly what is expected of them in practical terms as a member of the community, including the various policies and complaints procedures etc. We suggested earlier that some of the more practical information in the Handbook, might be complemented by statements of purpose and how the various activities go together to provide the whole educational programme (see para 113).
- 132 We were grateful to the group of students convened by the Senior Student to discuss their responses to the first two of the Validation process questions, and for the excellent paper they produced. It provoked a useful discussion when we met with them. They emphasised the importance to them of the distinctive aspects of St Stephen's House, the stress on developing habits of prayer involving the daily recitation of the offices as well as frequent reception of Holy Communion, that it is not just a matter of learning to do priestly things, but being formed as priests. They recognised that when they begin their ministry in today's church they will need to work with others in a wider pattern of ministry and expressed some concern about balancing the need to be managers with being priests. They recognised that the House is sometime accused of being insular, but felt that this intentional withdrawal is a necessary part of the process of formation. We were impressed by their determination and confidence.
- 133 There are currently 9 married students, 8 of them in college married accommodation. From an interview with a student spouse we understand that whilst there is no official spouses group, they do come together to do things. Thursday evening and Sunday lunch are family meals but only currently two families with small children, the others being teenage. There are good relationships between single and married students. We heard from our formal meeting with the community how much some of the single students value occasional invitations to meals and other social events in the married accommodation.

- 134 We have already referred to the various consultative processes, via the Common room, Senior Student and Group system which enable matters of concern to be aired. We have also noted that two students, one as a voting member sit on the House Council (para 48).
- 135 We became aware of some concern about the arrangements for first appointments. We understand that a file of parish profiles is kept in the college office, but there was a feeling amongst some students that they were not readily available for them to. We **urge** that some attention be given to making this a more open process.

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

## **O CONCLUSION**

- 136 We thank the House for the courtesy which we received. We recognise that given one of the dominant pressures under which they feel they are operating, some of that sense of alienation from the mainstream will have been passed to us a visiting team. St Stephen's House has many strengths and a firm tradition, as has the Catholic Movement within the Church of England. For the sake of the whole Church we want to see both prosper, especially in interaction with one another. We hope that our recommendations will encourage the House towards realising a bold vision of its future, adopting an outward facing stance to both church and world, taking the opportunities for working with others in the University, both at a general institutional level as a Permanent Private Hall, and with partners in theological education; and in seeking allies and partners in the wider church.

In the light of the difficulty which seems to have been experienced in following through the recommendations of the previous inspection,

### **Recommendation 19**

**We recommend that the House draws up an action plan within the six months of the receipt of the report, indicating how and when the recommendations are to be implemented.**

- 137 Our judgement of confidence with qualifications (see para 15) in the institution is based on the evidence of the progress in internal organisation made so far, and of the commitment of a number of individuals, both staff and students, to build confidence in the contribution of the Catholic tradition to the Church of England.

**Overall outcome: The inspection team has confidence with qualifications in St Stephen's House for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry.**

## **LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that the House Council:**

- i. develop a vision of how the institution can make a gift of its wider aims and objectives to the Church of England and the mission of God.**
- ii. through its members develop and align a strategy for the institution to realise the vision (paras 20 and 52)**

### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend to the staff and Principal that the developing programme of lectures and conferences is built on for the benefit of the wider church and region. (para 21)**

### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that the staff in co-operation with the other members of OPTET seek further ways in which the existing collaborative work on the BTh can be extended. (para 39)**

### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend to the Principal that reporting, to the dioceses in particular, takes account of their desire to have as clear evidence as possible, especially relating to the extent to which the student is meeting the learning outcomes. . (para 46)**

### **Recommendation 5**

**We recommend that the academic and administrative staff work with the Principal to develop a leadership style which models a collaborative process for the benefit of the institution and those who study and work in it. (para 55)**

### **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend the earliest possible appointment of an ordained woman to the core tutorial staff so as to ensure conformity with the Church of England guidelines for colleges and courses training women for ordination. (para 57)**

### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that the House Council ensures that the grievance and appeal procedures are legally defensible. (para 58)**

#### **Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that the House explores the breadth of Anglo Catholic worship and spirituality as well as other traditions of Anglicanism. (para 73)**

#### **Recommendation 9**

**We recommend that the review of educational design and delivery (Recommendation 11):**

- i. give serious consideration to a review of the task, tuition, location and management of these small groups, and**
- ii. develop a structured programme of in-service training for staff to enable them to fulfil the wide range of academic and tutorial roles. (para 79)**

#### **Recommendation 10**

**We recommend that the House develops a structured approach to pastoral care which provides greater clarity for all concerned about the responsibility of the Group tutor, and potential conflicts of interest. (para 85)**

#### **Recommendation 11**

**We recommend that the staff engage in a structured review of the educational design and management of all the whole courses – academic and formational – to establish a more effective process for overview and review. (para 96)**

#### **Recommendation 12**

**We recommend that the staff seek advice from educational professionals with particular expertise in the design of student feedback to enable a systematic understanding of student experience and evaluation of the education in which they engage. (para 98)**

#### **Recommendation 13**

**We recommend a structured programme of in-service training for staff to enable them to fulfil the wide range of academic and tutorial roles. (para 102)**

#### **Recommendation 14**

**We recommend that the staff produce a clear statement about the role of each placement within the educational programme, how they fit together, and how they relate to other aspects of the programme. (para 114)**

### **Recommendation 15**

**We recommend far greater use of term-time parish placements**

- i. To enable students to earth their theory in practice**
- ii. To draw deeper attention to the development of ministry to complement their attention to priesthood. (para 116)**

### **Recommendation 16**

**We recommend that the House, staff and students, works more effectively at realising the potential which is available to them in the community of Oxford in the prior experience of students, and that which arises from the community's self-understanding. (para 117)**

### **Recommendation 17**

**We recommend that the House seeks a more concrete expression, in its worship, prayer and corporate life of God's mission in his world. (para 119)**

### **Recommendation 18**

**We strongly recommend that the House's Sunday worship be rescheduled to allow for the fullest possible engagement with term-time placements. (para 120)**

### **Recommendation 19**

**We recommend that the House draws up an action plan within the six months of the receipt of the report, indicating how and when the recommendations are to be implemented. (para 136)**