Admissions Policy for Ordination Candidates (Common Awards Programmes)
For publication on the SSHO website

Introduction
St Stephen's House accepts applications from Ordinands of the Church of England for two programmes within the Common Awards validated by the University of Durham: the Diploma in Theology, Ministry and Mission (two-year candidates) and the BA in Theology, Ministry and Mission (three-year candidates). This policy is in accord with the norms for fairness and transparency set out by the University.

Decisions on admissions are based solely on the individual merits of each candidate, their suitability for the course they have applied to study, and the selection criteria appropriate to the course of study. Admissions procedures are kept under regular review to ensure compliance with this policy. All selection for admission takes place within the parameters of our Equality Policy which is published at https://www.ssho.ox.ac.uk/about/policies.html

Criteria
1. Candidates for the Common Awards must be sponsored by the Church of England for full-time training, and have an immigration status that allows them to study in the programme.

2. Two-Year Candidates. Entry to the Diploma is flexible, depending on the candidate's experience, employment and education. In general, applicants would normally have at least two A-levels (at Grade E or above) or equivalent qualifications. However, if a bishop has sponsored a candidate for full-time training who does not have these qualifications, St Stephen's House will assess other evidence of the candidate's potential to benefit from the programme, for example, a portfolio of recent academic writing or relevant work experience.

3. Three-year Candidates. Normally entry to the BA requires at least three A-levels (Grade E or above) or equivalent. Graduates in other subjects may enter the BA programme, and students who have completed the Diploma in Theology, Ministry and Mission successfully may be admitted to the final year of the BA programme.

4. Candidates for whom English is their second language should have achieved a score of 6.5 in an IELTS examination, or equivalent, if they do not have qualifications at A-level or above where the primary language of instruction was English.

5. Our policy on Accredited Prior Learning is set out in a separate document.

6. Where candidates do not meet these entry requirements, their application will be referred to the Common Awards Team at the University of Durham for decision by the Common Awards Management Board (normally by Chair's Action).

Process
7. The Admissions Process is managed by the Admissions Secretary under the direction of the Tutor for Admissions for Ordinands.
8. Candidates are invited to interview on receipt of their application form.
9. Interviews for admission normally take place twice a term (a maximum of four candidates attend at each interview round), but if circumstances require late entrants and special cases are sometimes interviewed outside the usual interview rounds.
10. Before the interview the college requests three references - normally from the candidate’s parish priest, another ordained minister and an occupational or academic referee. These are then available to interviewing staff.
11. Candidates arrive at lunchtime on Thursday and leave after lunchtime on Friday, and during their stay candidates normally:
   a. Attend college worship
   b. Attend a guest night dinner
   c. View college accommodation
   d. Have an interview with the Principal
   e. Have an interview with the Course Director
12. Interviewers record in writing their assessment of the candidate’s suitability to study here for the relevant qualification along with a recommendation of acceptance or refusal.
13. The Principal is responsible for Admissions decisions under this policy.
14. Decision letters are sent to candidates as soon as possible after their interviews.
15. Offers are conditional if the candidate has not yet received notification of the bishop’s decision on the recommendation of the Bishops’ Advisory Panel.
16. Decisions are reported to the next formal Staff Meeting.

Feedback

17. Feedback will only be given on written request to the Admissions Secretary, when it will be provided generally either by email or in writing in as timely a fashion as possible.

Staff Training

18. Normally St Stephen’s staff involved in interviewing will have training provided by the Oxford Learning Institute and/or have been mentored by the Senior Tutor.

Review

19. The operation of this policy will be kept under review in the first instance through reporting of its operation to regular Staff Meetings, and the termly Common Awards Management Committee. The results of such discussions will be included in the Annual Self Evaluation Process.

Complaints
20. Following the University of Durham, this policy defines a complaint as ‘specific concern regarding a procedural error, irregularity or mal-administration in admissions policies or procedures.’ An appeal is defined as a request by an unsuccessful applicant for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision. Appeals will not normally be considered.

21. Candidates who have an admissions complaint should raise it as soon as possible and normally within 28 days after the event in the first instance to the Course Director for the Common Awards. If the complaint is made in writing, the Course Director will acknowledge it within five working days, and attempt an informal resolution.

22. If informal mechanisms do not produce a resolution, the complaint should be made in writing to the Vice-Principal (or Senior Tutor) who will acknowledge it in writing within 5 working days, institute a formal investigation, and report the decision within 28 working days after the acknowledgement.

23. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, he or she has a right to request a review by the University by contacting the Common Awards Team common.awards@durham.ac.uk The Office of the Independent Adjudicator does not consider complaints about admissions.

Contact Details

24. Contact Details for members of St Stephen’s House Staff are available on this website via https://www.ssho.ox.ac.uk/about/staff.html