

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Report

St Stephen's House

Conducted onsite and online, November 2021

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Glossary

ASE	Annual Self Evaluation
BCP	Book of Common Prayer
CA	Common Awards
CofE	Church of England
CW	Common Worship
DDO	Diocesan Director of Ordinands
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
IME1/2	Initial Ministerial Education Phase 1/2
PER	Periodical External Review
PPH	Permanent Private Hall (of Oxford University)
SSH	St Stephen's House
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TEI	Theological Education Institution
UKME	UK Minority Ethnicity

Reviewers

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The Periodic External Review Framework

Periodic External Review (PER) is part of the Church of England’s quality assurance for its ministerial training institutions (‘Theological Education Institutions’ or TEIs), whereby the church conducts an external quality check of each TEI against national standards and expectations for ministerial training and formation.

On behalf of the church, review teams are asked to assess the TEI’s fitness for purpose in preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry and to make recommendations for the enhancement of its life and work. The reviewers’ report is made to the House of Bishops acting through the Ministry Council.

Church PER teams are appointed by the National Ministry Team from a pool of reviewers nominated by bishops and TEIs.

For TEIs that offer Durham-validated Common Awards programmes, representatives of Durham University’s Common Awards team will sometimes carry out their own academic quality assurance review in parallel with the church’s PER, to inform the university’s decision-making on: (i) renewal of the Common Awards partnerships with approved TEIs; and (ii) revalidation of Common Awards programmes that have been approved for delivery within TEIs.

Recommendations and Commendations

PER reports include Recommendations which are either developmental, naming issues that the reviewers consider the TEI needs to address, or encourage the enhancement of practice that is already good. They also include Commendations, naming instances of good practice that the reviewers wish to highlight. The reviewers’ assessment of the TEI is expressed as much through the balance of Recommendations and Commendations in their report as through its criterion-based judgements.

Criterion-based judgements

Reviewers use the following outcomes with regard to the overall report and individual criteria A-E:

Confidence

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

Criterion level: aspects of an institution’s life which show good or best practice.

Confidence with qualifications

Overall outcome: likely to include commendations as well as a number of recommendations, including one or more of substance that questions the generally acceptable standards found in the review and which can be rectified or substantially addressed by the institution in the coming 12 months.

Criterion 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 raises significant questions about the standards found in the review and the capacity of the institution to rectify or substantially address these in the coming 12 months.

Criterion 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.

Review of St Stephen's House

Introduction

St Stephen's House is an Anglican theological foundation offering formation, education, and training for a variety of qualifications and ministries in a variety of modes. Founded in 1876 by members of the Tractarian movement, St Stephen's House continues to stand in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England and is the oldest unamalgamated training institution in the Church of England. It has been a Permanent Private Hall (PPH) in the University of Oxford from 2003 and has delivered qualifications validated by the University of Oxford since 1970. In 2014 it was also validated as a Theological Education Institution for the Church of England's Common Awards programmes validated by Durham University. Those programmes were most recently revalidated by the university's Common Awards team in November 2018.

St Stephen's House was originally situated near the centre of Oxford, where the New Bodleian Library now stands. From 1919, the House had a site in Norham Gardens, near to the University Parks. In 1980 it moved to the current site on Marston Street, formerly the mother-house of the Society of St John the Evangelist (also known as the Cowley Fathers), founded by Richard Meux Benson.

The formational aims of St Stephen's House have been summarised as being 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'. The mission of St Stephen's House is to be 'a company of Christians, rooted in the Catholic tradition, helping the Church give faithful witness to Christ in contemporary society; a community centred in prayer and worship; a college that offers the best possible teaching at every level; and a context encouraging disciplined study, academic research and personal reflection'.

St Stephen's House is a relatively small sized organisation with a small student intake. It is supported by a core staff comprising of a Principal, a Vice Principal and Director of Pastoral Studies, a Senior Tutor, and two further Tutorial Fellows, one of them part time. Core academic teaching is delivered by the Principal and Tutors with Visiting Tutors and one Honorary Fellow who teach in specific subjects on a regular basis. In addition to this a wide range of academics and practitioners deliver material in their area of expertise for one-off classes or lectures. Administrative staff included the College Secretary (PA to the Principal and Admissions Secretary), the Academic Secretary, and the Bursar. The institution also employs a Librarian on a part-time basis and a part-time IT Manager.

PER Process

The team of reviewers representing the Church of England's National Ministry Team visited St Stephen's House in November 2021.

The reviewers are grateful to St Stephen's House staff and students for their work in planning and taking part in a review at a time of continuing adjustment to the working and residence requirements brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are glad to have been able to carry out most of this review onsite and in person, although with some online meetings built into the visit. The review team members were made welcome by everyone involved and every effort was made to ensure that both online and in-person meetings were arranged efficiently and securely.

In the course of the team's meetings, we had conversations with key staff, students in both formal and informal settings, members of the House Council, and other stakeholders. We attended worship and observed teaching sessions.

The reviewers received in good time the required PER documentation including a bespoke self-evaluation document, module overview tables, curriculum mapping documents, staff and student handbooks, external examiner reports, statistical data, previous validation and inspection reports, and committee and council minutes. The team also received views in writing from stakeholders including sponsoring bishops, DDOs, placement supervisors and former students.

General Observations

St Stephen's House was founded in 1876 as an Anglican Foundation to train priests for the ministry of the Church of England. It is charitable body with a board of trustees known as 'the House Council' and this is chaired by the Bishop of Chichester, the Rt Rev'd Dr Martin Warner.

St Stephen's House situates itself within the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church of England. The prevailing understanding of the Catholic tradition within the college, in common with that of some other Christian churches worldwide, does not favour the ordination of women to the priesthood or the episcopate, while recognising and working with the Church of England's decision on the matter. There is a diversity of theological positions within the student and staff of the House and women are warmly invited and welcomed to train within the institution. There is one female priest on the core staff team whose teaching and ministry are respected and valued.

The Principal is the Rev'd Canon Robin Ward, who commenced in post in 2006. Staff, Governors, and students spoke warmly of Canon Ward's leadership and abilities as a theological educator over the past sixteen years. St Stephen's is amongst the smallest of Theological Education Institutions (TEIs) for the Church of England and although there are disadvantages that flow from this there are also positives: for example, many students felt that they had easy access to the Principal as well as other members of staff, and they testified to the quality of the individual attention to formation received.

In the current academic year there are 17 students training for ordination, making St Stephen's House the smallest of the current residential colleges. There are five core staff team members, one of whom is part time and one of these is female, and they are supported by a small group of associate tutors. St Stephen's

House also has 70 graduate students including 20 who are studying for a PGCE in the University. With additional ‘general students’ spread over a variety of disciplines, including DPhil students, the total student community numbers just over 100. The community gathers together regularly for social occasions, for example at the weekly Thursday evening dinner.

By way of introduction to this Periodic External Review there are three important background factors that need to be considered.

First of all, St Stephen’s House has been a Permanent Private Hall (PPH) of Oxford University since 2003. The University is in the process of reviewing St Stephen’s House status and it is now clear that St Stephen’s House will cease to be a PPH later in 2022. One key reason is that the University of Oxford will not permit a PPH to deliver another university’s awards. This decision for SSH therefore represents a loyalty and commitment to the Common Awards system to which the majority of TEIs subscribe. However, this change will be a significant moment in the life of the House and at least at a structural level will have major impact on its horizon, finances, governance, and relationships. This shift is by no means understood as a negative move by the House Council, nor by the Principal and Staff, nor by the University of Oxford, and some things will not change.

We heard testimony to the role of SSH as a PPH in maintaining the theological and Christian presence in a secular university and there is no reason why this should not continue. Although this move signifies the conclusion of a particular period of college life after 18 years of PPH status, it is thought that membership of the Conference of Colleges will continue, and the House will continue to benefit, for example, from bursarial support. Students would continue to be able to access theology degrees in the university as an approved pathway for theological training in the Church of England, albeit with different structural arrangements.

Second, the national context of the Church of England is challenging for the Catholic tradition in general, and for St Stephen’s House in particular. There are few ordinands in the Catholic tradition compared to numbers offering for ministry from an Evangelical background. Recruitment is hard and despite efforts numbers entering the House and projected to do so in the future continue to be on the low side. A low number of ordinands is a threat to the sustainability of the future of SSH and poses challenges not least in financial and pedagogical terms.

The reviewers considered carefully both some of the reasons for low numbers and also endeavoured to go below the surface to discern underlying questions that might help release SSH’s potential to be a flourishing TEI in the future. One of the themes of the review is that SSH is a place that takes academic theological reflection with great seriousness and anchors this in processes that aim for and achieve a deep liturgical and spiritual grounding. But another theme is that we find SSH, though much respected as a place for the formation of traditional Catholic priests, is not always perceived as a place that is hospitable

to a broader understanding of Catholic formation and ministry. Therefore, it is not always perceived as a favourable and advantageous place to study and train for those who have this broader understanding. As our report reflects at several points, we believe that there are issues for SSH’s message, outreach and, perhaps, its own theological understanding and dialogue internally and with partners.

Third, a widespread theme in our conversations was a perceived lack of understanding in the wider church of the value of the St Stephen’s House residential model of theological education and training as a preparation for the Church of England’s ministry. Some in the community spoke of looking outwards and feeling under-appreciated but these reflections were always set within a strong advocacy of a formational model that potentially could make a significant further contribution to the church if it were more widely available and experienced. There was also a strong advocacy of a model that sought to promote mutual flourishing within a community of learning and prayer amidst the differences of theological and ecclesial outlook. The reviewers came to understand that this was a challenge both for SSH and also for the wider church.

Summary of Outcomes

This report is written in relation to the PER Criteria in force for 2021-22 and available on the National Ministry Team’s quality assurance pages of the Church of England website.

CRITERION	OUTCOME
A Formational Aims	Confidence with Qualifications
B Formational Context and Community	Confidence
C Leadership and Management	Confidence with Qualifications
D Teaching and Learning	Confidence
E Ministerial Formation	Confidence with Qualifications
Overall Outcome	Confidence with Qualifications

Section A: Formational Aims

A1 The TEI's formational aims are clearly stated, understood and owned within the TEI.

1. St Stephen's House (SSH) has a clear commitment to train priests in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England. There is evidence of this commitment in the prospectus and on the website though it is implied rather than clearly stated. The phrase '*St Stephen's House was originally established to train priests in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England*' on the website homepage could be construed as being a past aim rather than a current one. Much clearer is the Formational Scene Setter document which in its opening paragraph sets out what the college aims to do and how it aims to do it. Similarly, the Common Awards PER of 2018 provides a helpful summary of SSH's formational aims (though it is not clear whence this summary comes).
2. The core purpose of SSH is set out clearly in the Memorandum and Articles of Association and is rehearsed in the Business Plan. The formational aims fully accord with the core purpose of SSH. In interviews with staff and students, there was a clear awareness of the college's commitment to train priests in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England, and a more or less similar level of awareness of the aims as described in the Formational Scene Setter document. The understanding of SSH as a place of formation within the Catholic tradition of the Church of England was clearly understood by other stakeholders and was central to their understanding of SSH's central purpose.
3. Evidence from interviews with staff and students, and comments from a range of stakeholders confirmed the reviewers' perception that 'Catholic tradition' can be understood in different ways. The reviewers found that different understandings of 'Catholic tradition' were well respected and would hope to see this breadth of understanding reflected more clearly on the website and in the prospectus.
4. We found that there is a clear sense of identity and sense of mission in SSH, owned by students and staff alike. However, this is not well communicated externally, as evidenced by comments by some stakeholders, and there is an impact on recruitment for SSH, which does not draw equally from across the dioceses, and its student numbers are relatively small. In particular, the number of ordinands from the regions is low – particularly from the Northern Province. Perception internally does not translate into an external perception in a way that evidences that SSH will grow.

Commendation 1

The reviewers commend the staff, Council members and ordinands for the clarity of SSH's internal ownership of its vision and objectives.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that SSH should make a clear and central statement of its formational aims on its website and in the prospectus, using the wording from the Formational Scene Setter document and from the 2018 Common Award PER document.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that SSH makes further efforts to grow its recruitment, engaging in different and creative ways with a wider range of dioceses.

A2 The TEI's formational aims are appropriate to the ministerial training requirements of its sponsoring church denominations.

5. The SSH document mapping the Church of England's agreed Formational Learning Outcomes to the programme elements of the various pathways offered by the college provides clear and helpful evidence of the consistency of the College's and the Church of England's aims and expectations.
6. All ordinands are training for stipendiary ministry and there are no bespoke pathways for lay ministries or Ordained Pioneer Ministers offered.
7. Interviews with staff and students (separately) revealed a thorough understanding of ways in which ordinands at SSH are already living in missional, collaborative, flexible, adaptive, and diverse ways. Each group was able to provide good examples, and to speak about how the honing of these skills now is foundational for future ministry.
8. The reviewers found documentary evidence, for example in the Michaelmas Term Academic Staff Report to House Council, of regular and thorough review of its educational and formational aims and programmes, and we observed evidence of this at the meeting of the House Council which we attended.
9. SSH has a clear theological identity which it holds with integrity, whilst being open and hospitable to other traditions. The female ordinands were unequivocal in their praise for the College's hospitality to women when the majority of ordinands are traditional Catholics. An ordinand commented: 'St Stephen's House is a place where people listen to each other with real respect – in fact they more than listen, they defend each other.' Yet, as we note in our introduction and elsewhere in Section A (hence **Recommendations 1, 2 and 4**) it is still the case that the hospitable nature of the SSH community is not always perceived by a wider range of stakeholders, so we believe there is a further job of communication and outreach to be done.
10. Most of the present ordinands are graduates though this should not be viewed as evidencing a disregard for inclusion of those from non-traditional educational backgrounds. The reviewers found evidence in some lectures and seminars of conscious efforts being made by staff to teach in such a way that would engage with a diversity of educational backgrounds. We would hope that

staff development would facilitate the sharing of good practice in this regard. This will be particularly important as SSH seeks to diversify in terms of the dioceses from which it draws ordinands and the previous life experiences they bring.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that staff development time should be given to developing the already evident good practice across the staff team in engaging with those of a range of educational backgrounds.

A3 The TEI's aims, activity and achievement are understood and supported by wider church audiences.

11. The reviewers recognise SSH's commitment to providing formation in the Catholic tradition and that this includes, *inter alia*, formation for women and men who are not traditional Catholics. The reviewers noted that the acting chair of the House Council for the meeting that we observed emphasised the importance of ensuring that Catholic formation is offered to all. Conversations with ordinands and staff highlighted how the perception of the College in some dioceses does not recognise this inclusivity, and some ordinands spoke of how they encountered opposition from bishops and DDOs in their desire to train at the college. The reviewers recognised this as an area for the college to address as its publicity, especially its website and prospectus, seem to undersell the college's inclusivity. One former student commented: 'I'd like to see the college reach out more beyond the boundaries of its traditional sending parishes (e.g., existing Anglo-Catholic churches) and to groups of people who would be interested to see what it offers e.g., youth groups, sixth forms, university students. That might awaken a thirst for what the college offers, which can sometimes feel like a well-kept secret!'
12. The reviewers found that the formational experience provided by SSH is valued by a variety of stakeholders. One former ordinand's comment is typical: '[SSH offers]... formation in the Catholic tradition in a fulsome, robust and rich way. In my view, this is probably unique within the Church of England... SSH has a shared commitment to prayer, study and a full sacramental life which all enjoy regardless of their churchmanship. And from a placement supervisor: 'SSH does not shy away from tackling the most difficult and challenging issues in the church and also in society (women's priestly and episcopal ministry, *Living in Love and Faith*, poverty and homelessness, theological questions of ecumenism, episcopal authority, and many others), and that the opportunities to discuss and debate these both formally and informally enable individuals to experience opposing views, as well as to inform and form their own views and reasoning. And then to live and worship alongside those of different views in a loving and mutually flourishing context'. Alongside these supportive comments, the reviewers noted that some stakeholders referred to SSH ordinands as being less well equipped for mission than those from other TEIs. This may be because some of the language and terminology currently used by SSH does not always match that used currently by the Church of England.

13. In terms of new outreach initiatives, the Edward King Centre for Pastoral Theology is a recent development and a very good example of a strategic development. It focuses around a portal designed to enable and online community of learning through ‘online pre-recorded and live lectures, formational talks, events and open access resources.’ In this context pastoral theology is understood as ‘the meeting point of traditional Christian theology, contemporary context interdisciplinary dialogue, a forum for theological reflection on pastoral practice and religion in the public sphere’. The Centre was launched in the autumn of 2021. The website presents a professional face and participants are encouraged to engage in four different ways – through open access to online resources, taking stand-alone modules in pastoral theology, entering into an associate programme and giving opportunities to continue degree level education in the Common Awards programmes. Funded by the Fellowship of St John Trust Association, it is in its developmental period. This is something to celebrate.

Commendation 2

We commend the imagination and practice that have led to the establishment of the Edward King Centre for Pastoral Theology, its clear intentions, and its successful launch.

14. The current ordinand community is predominantly white male graduates, and is London-centric. The reviewers did not find evidence that this is the result of any intentional planning by SSH –quite the contrary given existing efforts to recruit more widely. However, the importance of improving marketing as we suggest at **Recommendation 2** is to be encouraged in order to widen attraction and access, and we believe that a review of the language used in publicity will also have a bearing on this issue. As part of this we would urge SSH to look at ways to attract a broader range of ordinands (i.e. not just from a traditional Catholic background) for whom a strong, distinct, and disciplined formational and spiritual life, might appeal and indeed be of benefit in their formation.

Commendation 3

The reviewers commend SSH for offering an environment where diversity is welcomed and debate is encouraged.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that through activities such as its open days, SSH begins to see itself more closely allied to the wider Church of England in promoting vocations. This may involve, for example, a review of the language, phrases, and expressions it uses to ensure that the inclusivity that is so evident in the College begins to be better understood by the wider world.

The review team has Confidence with Qualifications with regard to Criterion A: Formational Aims.

Section B: Formational Context and Community

B1 The TEI draws on partnership with theological educators in the region and local faith and community organisations to enhance formational opportunities for students.

15. SSH makes strong use of its links with the University of Oxford, including the use of the degree in theology for suitable candidates. There is some sharing of resources with the other two residential theological colleges in Oxford; we would encourage further sharing wherever possible in order that ordinands from different traditions in the Church deepen their appreciation of those traditions. In 2019-20 the University of Oxford signalled its intention not to grant a further five-year licence to SSH for the delivery of the University of Durham Common Awards and SSH is in the final academic year of its permission to deliver Common Awards. As SSH will not hold PPH status in the University of Oxford in the future there will be a need to reshape the relationship with the University in an appropriate form.
16. Students have a range of opportunities for placements, both locally in term time and further afield during the vacations. The reviewers met with placement supervisors from a range of theological traditions. Students were described as highly engaged and motivated in placements, and in D5 and E1 the reviewers also commend the high quality of theological reflection by students that the supervisors report. It seemed however that not all students are given a wider experience of the Church of England or ecumenical partners and to some extent this was evident in comments from students. This is a concern given the current realities of deployment in the Church.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the placement pattern for each student includes serious engagement with Church traditions they are less familiar with. For example, it might mean every student having one of their placements in a less familiar tradition. This should be monitored by the staff responsible for the placements.

17. Partnerships with other faith communities are particularly evident in the study week on Judaism and Islam in which all students participate, and to some extent in placements, though not in a systematic way. The House hosts the Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies and they organise the study week mentioned, but little seems to be made of this link publicly. For example, the websites of the Centre and of SSH do not mention the other organisation, despite being on the same site. This is an aspect of the life of the House that could be made more of in its publicity.
18. There was good evidence for partnerships with civic and community organisations, with a group placement in a local school, placements with chaplains, and a much-appreciated study week with a variety of chaplains.

B2 There are well understood and embedded practices of corporate life so as to enhance students' formation.

19. There are appropriate policies for the community in relation to welfare and pastoral care, and both the students and staff team have a high degree of confidence in the coherence, clarity, and effectiveness of the support system for student welfare. There is a well-developed and coherent system for identifying students with disabilities and ensuring them the professional and mentoring support they need - either through Oxford University or private provision, as funding allows. Students with disabilities reported an experience of being very well supported by the College.
20. All staff have training in mental health support, and student welfare and pastoral care is discussed weekly at the staff Monday meeting. Shared Confidentiality amongst the staff team is widely assumed but this is an area that needs to be more clearly articulated both for staff and students in a clear policy statement – hence **Recommendation 6** below.
21. There is relatively little ethnic or gender diversity within the College community – most staff and students are white males. There is a degree of diversity amongst ordinands in terms of their socio-economic, educational, and geographic backgrounds. Three female ordinands are studying at SSH (plus 34 female students who are not ordinands), and there are two ordinands from a UKME background. However, appropriate policies are in place to ensure a culture of mutual respect and support which students agreed were applied and the female students were all very clear that SSH offered them a context in which they felt fully supported, respected, and enabled to flourish in their vocation.
22. The ministerial and teaching staff is comprised of four ordained and one lay tutor. Four full-time members of staff are male; the one female member of the teaching and ministerial staff is half-time – although she plays a central role in the life of the College and is held in great respect and affection by students and staff alike. Whilst they are all rooted in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England, within that spectrum they represent a reasonable diversity of theological and ecclesiological positions and bring with them a wealth of knowledge of the Church of England and Anglican Communion. The staff team is a relatively small unit, but one that the reviewers observed works well and efficiently under the clear leadership of the Principal and together modelling a strong sense of collegiality.
23. Safeguarding procedures, training and practice are in place, in line with national requirements and taken seriously at St Stephen's House. Students we spoke to had good awareness of the TEI's Safeguarding policy, a clear understanding of the role and identity of the lead safeguarding officer and expressed confidence in approaching any member of staff with safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding training is prioritised and takes place during Induction Week in each ordinand's training. We probed this area in some depth with staff and students, and were content that the

proper policies and procedures were understood and followed enabling individuals' well-being to be properly and appropriately held.

24. Through observation and discussion with staff, ordinands and their families, a clear sense of community and fellowship is apparent in the life of SSH, further enriched by the presence of the PGCE students and frequent visitors to the House. SSH is essentially a Eucharistic community, with the celebration of the Mass at its core, framed by the recitation of Morning and Evening Prayer.
25. Through observation and discussion with staff and students and through sharing in the life of the community over a number of days, we developed the sense of a community at ease with itself: a place of mutual support, but also healthy mutual challenge, and a place where the rhythm of life offers a structure which includes time to pray, worship, study, socialise, and celebrate. Important in the structure of the TEI's corporate life are Tutor Groups, led by a Group tutor, to which each ordinand belongs. We attended a Tutor Group meeting and were impressed by the quality of the engagement and reflection of both the Staff Lead and students.
26. The primary forum for ordinands is their regular Common Room meetings and the students are also represented on the House Council and four further committees across the range of college life. Although students did not seem very vocal in the House Council we attended, when asked if they felt their voice was represented in the TEI community, a range of students expressed satisfaction that the student voice was heard both through formal structures and also informally. The Student President meets with the Principal weekly, and all students seemed comfortable in raising concerns with staff members, including the Principal, directly. They were generally confident that feedback and action was appropriate and effective. Later we note at paragraph 112 in Section E5 the desire expressed by some ordinands for chaplaincy or other additional pastoral support independently of the college tutorial staff and the structures of assessment – this in part prompts **Recommendation 7** below.
27. In discussion with spouses, there is evidence that their needs together with those of their families are well catered for. Spouses spoke of how they are considered very much part of the college community and one described it as feeling like being embraced. Spouses and their families are encouraged to take a full part in the life of the college; from daily afternoon tea in the Common Room and Thursday evening guest dinners, to being part of the worshipping community. They also spoke as to how their children are drawn into college life and through observation they appear to be naturally welcomed, there being a general sense of inclusivity.
28. In conversation with the spouses, two issues arose. First, communication – a tendency for the college to communicate through their ordinand partner rather than directly. And second, pastoral care: one spouse spoke strongly about how they lack a 'parish priest'. While the local parish priest does come into college on a termly basis for pastoral care and support, this is an arrangement that

is somewhat detached from the worshipping community of the House, where a person would naturally seek and be given such care and guidance.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the College considers adding explicit policies on Consent and Confidentiality.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the College considers recruiting a house chaplain (potentially on a voluntary or House for Duty basis) to cater for the spiritual and pastoral needs of ordinands, their spouses, and families.

B3 The provision of public social and private living accommodation is satisfactory.

29. Social and private accommodation is fit for purpose. Ordinands expressed satisfaction with their accommodation, and the social accommodation – a large, comfortable common room provides a good setting for communal relaxing.
30. In discussion with both married ordinands and their spouses, the accommodation in Moberly Close was described as functional and generally comfortable. However, while basic repairs and maintenance are regularly carried out, there was comment that the building is beginning to show its age and that there was a need for a degree of updating regarding the quality of the kitchens and carpets and the fact that there are only single-glazed windows.
31. In discussion with staff and through written evidence, the college works closely and collaboratively with the University Disability Advisory Service in supporting those with a range of disabilities. The UDAS provides the college with a variety of services, including advice and training and they meet with college staff on a termly basis. The university advisor also assists those with learning needs through the production of individual study plans. Staff interview and written evidence demonstrate that there are sound systems in place and that the necessary responses are made, and individual needs catered for. There is an annual review of both policies and provision, together with a Disability Audit.
32. SSH is a complex of mainly older buildings, however all the ground floor rooms and facilities are accessible to those with physical disabilities and one staff member is a visible and dedicated Disability Lead.
33. The House Chapel, where the Community gathers daily for the Offices and Mass, is a beautiful and prayerful space. Ordinands additionally have the use of the Founder's Chapel for private prayer and reflection, although there are fire security considerations that inhibit greater use. On Sundays, the College Community gathers at the Church of St John the Evangelist (which forms part of the complex of buildings) for the Sung Mass, this building has the potential to be adaptable to a range of worship.

34. In discussion with the Principal and Bursar about it was evident that the potential development of the SSH site generally and for ordinand and student accommodation in particular is reviewed regularly. This is becoming a key issue as SSH will no longer be able to host Oxford University PGCE students when it ceases to be a PPH, and there will be a consequent loss of income. We noted that the business plan highlighted the future redevelopment of Moberly Close (married ordinands and graduate students' accommodation) in the light of national policy. There is also a current commitment to explore partnerships with other colleges or the university to share the Moberly Close site.
35. The College and the Bursar are fully aware of the Carbon neutrality goal set by the Church of England for 2030 but there are no firm plans yet in place. This will need further attention and strategic thinking as SSH's plans develop.

B4 The TEI's corporate worship and liturgy are balanced in range and tradition, including authorised and innovative rites.

36. There is strong evidence from ordinands, spouses, staff, and former students that worship of God is central to the common life of the House. As a visitor, it is very apparent that the College's Day is underpinned and framed around worship.
37. CW Order One is used for the daily celebration of the Eucharist, with the provision of a monthly BCP Holy Communion. The SSH Office Book, centred on the BCP with the Revised Psalter, is an impressive volume, edited by former ordinands and arising out of a desire of students and staff to have a common liturgy. The Office Book is to be highly commended for the nature of its content and accessibility and for the entrepreneurial spirit in which it was compiled.

Commendation 4

We commend the quality of the theological reflection and the background commentary in the introduction of the Office Book, which seeks to enrich and place the Church of England within the wider Western Church.

38. There was confirmation through observation and discussion with students and staff that the House models its liturgical and communal life around the *Five Guiding Principles* and that the Community has learnt to live with difference in a spirit of mutual understanding and tolerance. The one female priest on the staff spoke as to how her ministry as an ordained person is welcomed and celebrated, not just tolerated. In interview, ordinands, including the current female ordinands, strongly articulated their appreciation of the strong liturgical formation they receive and emphasised how they have found the House to be a safe place for healthy debate and discussion.
39. The ordained staff are on a rota for celebrating the daily Eucharist. On the day that Mthr Lucy is celebrant, an additional mass, with a male presiding is also offered in the early evening. There was a degree of probing by the reviewers into the current dynamics around Eucharistic presidency and

gender inclusion, however considering the relatively small size of the College at present, the current arrangement, favoured because it is seen as the best way of maintaining unity, appears to work well and is lived out in a compassionate and accepting manner. In interview, staff did speak of their on-going dialogue on the subject and said that arrangements for Eucharistic presidency, including opportunities for a female celebrant to celebrate the sung mass on occasion, would be reviewed in the future, in the context of a larger community.

Commendation 5

We commend the pattern of daily prayer and the Eucharist at the College, which prepares ordinands for a disciplined prayer life, necessary for their future ministry.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the College considers, as the make-up of the House naturally changes and evolves, that measures are put in place to ensure that the current healthy dialogue and mutual tolerance of both ordinands and staff is maintained, and new options for eucharistic presidency and gender inclusion are considered.

B5 Staff model an appropriate pattern of spirituality, continued learning and reflection on practice.

40. Teaching and ministerial staff do model consciously what they seek to form in others.
41. We witnessed good examples of interaction between staff and students in both learning and social settings. In all the teaching sessions we observed, there was a good balance of input from the member of staff teaching and clear engagement and interaction with students. Similarly, in social settings – over meals, in the common room – the relationships between staff and student appeared relaxed and mutually respectful. This integration of the learning community was also borne out in the context of conversations and interviews with both student and staff.
42. It is clear that all staff members continue to develop their professional expertise, and although workloads are significant, we were also impressed by the staff's modelling of a good pattern of work and wider life, ongoing learning and research, personal spirituality and reflection. This was evident in observing staff teaching, in interviews with staff and through student comments when asked about this.

The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion B: Formational Context and Community.

Section C: Leadership and Management

C1 The TEI has clear and effective governance structures.

43. In July 2018 SSH made the transition from being a charitable trust to being a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee.
44. The Articles of Association set out the governance structure of SSH and describe the relative governance roles of the Members, Trustees and House Council. Reviewers noted from the Articles that all Trustees are the only Members (8.1). We would urge that the additional appointment of Members who are not Trustees could be helpful in providing some ‘eyes on, hands off’ scrutiny of the trustees’ work.
45. Three of the trustees are life members, and reviewers were pleased to note that other appointed trustees have terms of office which do not end at the same time, thereby ensuring some continuity. The Principal, an elected staff member and a representative of the student common room are also trustees.
46. We noted from conversations with the Bursar that although she currently holds the Company Secretary’s role there are plans that this should become the responsibility of a Board member, and that this move would enable wider trustee engagement. Reviewers noted that Bursar’s role is a full and demanding one.
47. The Reviewers noted that reserved business happens on occasion but not on a regular basis. Trustees expressed the need for more regular reserved business in order for them to have quality time together without staff present and the Reviewers support this.
48. A Chairman’s Strategy Group has been appointed by the House Council with no formal governance status, rather more of a task and finish group (for one year). Its purpose is to set strategic direction. The group comprises Chair, vice-chair, bursar, principal, and vice principal. Reviewers were not able to observe the work of this group as it was preparing to embark on its task at the time of the review visit.
49. The Finance and General Purpose Committee is chaired by a member of the Board who has a strong financial background. The F and GP meetings are regularly in sync with House Council meetings and there is a clear protocol which defines its work programme which is actively followed. The F and GP committee scrutinises SSH’s risk register for the House Council. Quarterly management accounts are produced and scrutinised by the F and GP Committee.
50. There is a robust and full forward-looking financial analysis and plan that covers three years in detail plus two years indicative. SSH staff are fully aware of the financial challenges ahead – the loss of income from PGCE graduate students on ceasing to be PPH, the loss of Bed and Breakfast income because of challenging business trading conditions during and following Covid, the

challenge of sustaining summer schools during the current climate and the small number of ordinands. The balance sheet shows a very strong financial position in terms of tangible assets. The financial model currently means that the general account receives an annual amount from the Appeal Fund to subsidise and balance the overall financial position.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that SSH considers the relative roles of Trustees and Members and whether there is merit in appointing Members who are not Trustees to provide additional scrutiny of the trustees' work.

Recommendation 10

In the light of the work of the Chairman's Strategy Group, we recommend that Trustees review their committee structure to ensure they have the most effective and strategic way of working given the future challenges for SSH.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the trustees reshape the Council's agenda to allow regular quality time together in reserved business without staff present.

C2 The TEI has effective team leadership.

51. The reviewers are satisfied that the Principal and senior team are able to be both directive and collaborative. From observation and conversation with staff and students, the senior team appears to be cohesive, mutually supportive, and capable of independent reflection and scrutiny.
52. The reviewers found abundant evidence that the Principal is highly regarded and greatly respected by the whole community at SSH. Staff members spoke of the Principal's intellectual ability, commitment to collegiality and to doing what is best and right. Students spoke enthusiastically of the Principal's approachability and availability and recognised in him good marks of leadership. The Principal is appraised annually.
53. Staff members who are in attendance at the House Council meet together before and after House Council meetings, and they believe that the House Council takes seriously any feedback from staff and is effective in holding the Principal to account.
54. There is a widely owned vision for excellence in the College and a positive motivational climate evident and commonly articulated amongst students, staff, and Trustees. It is centred around the College's prioritisation of liturgical and spiritual grounding, teaching excellence, and a strong sense of community life.
55. Reviewers did not find evidence that a clear strategic plan for SSH is in place. This is not to say that such a plan does not exist but it appeared to be more implicit than explicit. Staff and trustees

acknowledged this and explained that drawing up this plan was the principal task of the Chairman's Strategy Group. Uncertainty regarding PPH status and the establishment of the Edward King Centre for Pastoral Theology has led to delays in the formation of a strategic plan but as the direction of these two issues is now resolved, a plan can be formed.

56. Reviewers observed one meeting of the House Council and were encouraged to note the openness and level of self-reflection offered by many Council members both in the meeting and in interviews and conversations later. Council members recognised that there is a need for SSH to promote itself including to constituents beyond their own church tradition. Council members were open about their view that SSH needs some key performance indicators and about the need for a creative challenge. Trustees recognise that there is still a need for the House Council to be more proactive in the life of the community at SSH. They reflected with us that this might well be facilitated by the move to end PPH status, given the change in governance dynamic that SSH will inevitably undergo.

Recommendation 12

Following the end of PPH status, we recommend that the House Council explores working with an external coach/consultant to review its work programme and strategic priorities.

C3 Trustees are appropriately recruited, supported and developed.

57. Five trustees are SSH alumni, including two life appointed trustees and the Principal. Two further council members are SSH alumni with the right to speak but not vote. Nearly all current Trustees belong to the Anglo-Catholic tradition, and nearly all are white and male. Whilst this cohesion brings strengths of understanding and commitment, it limits the potential for the vital creative grit and strategic imagination that greater diversity would bring.
58. Trustees are clearly committed to the work of SSH. Attendance at Council and other committee meetings is good and trustees spend time in the House beyond that required for their formal meetings; many are known by the ordinands.
59. There has not been a skills audit carried out for some time and trustees were able to identify some gaps on the House Council - for example, in human resources and (other than staff members) in experience in teaching.
60. Trustees recognise the importance of there being a Nominations Committee in place to ensure diversity amongst their number.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that the Trustees carry out a thorough skills and diversity audit.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the Trustees consider the creation of a Nominations Committee to review current membership of the House Council and its committees.

C4 The TEI has effective business planning, fundraising, risk management and reporting.

61. The Bursar enjoys the full confidence of the House Council and Principal, and she describes the House Council as supportive and robust. The Bursar is seeking to generate greater clarity about how her work relates to the aims of SSH.
62. SSH employs a part time development director. The reviewers appreciated the restrictions in work, brought about by Covid, in this area, but were surprised not to see a document setting out the objectives, strategy and planned outcomes for development. Reviewers were told that the Development Committee has not met for almost two years. Financial donations appear to be almost wholly reliant on alumni and on a single generous donor.
63. There is a current business plan, but it requires supplementing with other documents to see the wider picture. For example, it states SSH's core purpose arising from the Memorandum and Articles but it does not state clearly the vision for SSH from which objectives, strategy and outcomes might flow. Also, the financial planning information is not part of the business plan and neither is there an assessment of risk within the document. Although there are objectives they do not appear in the document with an associated action plan. Without a one key central document there is a real risk that different components might not be connected up in the strategic thinking of the leadership team and trustees.
64. We refer at Section A to the Edward King Centre for Pastoral Theology which is an excellent new strategic development. However, the Reviewers also noted that it does not find its strategic place within the current business plan.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the Development Committee should produce one document to set out clearly and to hold SSH's vision, objectives, strategy, and planned outcomes including the development of the Edward King Centre for Pastoral Theology.

The review team has Confidence with Qualifications with regard to Criterion C: Leadership and Management.

Section D: Teaching and Learning

D1 The TEI offers programmes appropriate to the sponsoring church's ministerial training needs.

65. Most ordinands follow Durham Common Awards (CA) programmes which are clearly an approved curriculum with clear aims. The smaller number of ordinands who take the Oxford University BA in Theology over two years now take the CA PG Dip award in their third year. A few ordinands take other post graduate pathways with supplementary modules for formation. All pathways have been approved.
66. The programmes show ample evidence that they are world-engaging, have appropriate depth, enable theological learning, and relate faith to life, evidenced both by stated intentions and from interviews.

D2 The TEI's taught programmes are appropriately resourced, developed and quality assured.

67. Staff members are very well qualified academically and have a strong commitment to the liturgical and community life of the House and its foundation for formation. The staff members have parochial and chaplaincy experience, though some of this would seem not to be very recent. They appear to be adequately resourced for their roles, and no concerns were raised with the Review Team in this area.
68. We noted however a gap in provision for staff study leave. Study leave is said to be one term in every seven, but we have been told this does not work out. This seems ambitious for a small TEI and should be re-considered so that aspiration and reality can be more closely aligned, and a written staff development policy be developed and agreed that will include appropriate study leave provision.
69. The CA PER recommended the formalising of staff development (CA PER Recommendation 5). Progress has been made by instituting a termly staff development session, with a mutually agreed list of topics. In addition, the Vice Principal has initiated a twice termly colloquium focused on academic development. These developments seem to have good potential for increasing collegiality still further and broadening academic horizons: for example, reflecting on African and black theology was the proposed subject for the colloquia in the Michaelmas term. We would encourage staff, other commitments notwithstanding, to continue to prioritise these opportunities to continue to inform and challenge themselves intellectually and theologically.
70. Staff participate in an Annual Review with the Principal.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the staff and House Council should develop and agree a written policy on staff development, including study leave.

71. Students spoke very positively of library and IT resources. The House library has the books on the reading lists, they have access to other libraries in Oxford, and for many modules material is also available via the CA Moodle Hub (see CA PER Recommendation 4).
72. The two main teaching rooms are equipped with AV facilities, are light and airy and have ample space for groups of about 15 students. Students were happy with the information needed to support their learning, and those who took the study skills course were very positive about the help this gave them. This year has been the first time that any students have moved from completing the Oxford BA to the CA PG Dip and they struggled with the different ethos in assessment and aims. They have now discussed this with the appropriate staff member and we were told that changes will be made to the induction process next year.
73. The House seeks student feedback through end of module evaluation, through representation on the various House committees and through informal conversation. Currently the House has two non-resident part-time ordained students completing CA programmes, and 43 part-time students on OU graduate courses. Mature students and those with disabilities are well supported. There are excellent processes in place for assessment and support, and these were set out clearly in the documentation, and explained by the staff members concerned. Students reported their satisfaction in the support offered.
74. We observed that the House is thorough in its use of the Annual Self Evaluation (ASE) and there was evidence that the curriculum is developed over time. Students are strongly urged to complete module and course evaluations. Staff reported some frustration in getting students to complete these evaluations. A discussion with students suggested that they were not always clear that feedback had been reflected on. It would be helpful for staff to consider how to communicate their reflection on feedback to students. Experience elsewhere suggests this is not straightforward and needs to be done repeatedly and consistently so that students build up a sense that their feedback is taken seriously. We are confident that the feedback is taken seriously by staff (this is related to CA PER Recommendation 2).
75. There is ample evidence that the programmes are quality assured, with good paperwork in place and sense of continuing reflection on the programmes emerging from the interviews with both staff and students.

D3 There is a good mix of teaching and learning styles and assessment methods, and students are engaged.

- 76. In the limited sample of teaching and learning that we observed we noted a variety of approaches, including traditional lectures, student-led presentations, and small group work. At times discussion seemed to be a series of one-to-one conversations between the staff member and an individual student, rather than a truly group conversation, though this might be a consequence of small group sizes to some extent.
- 77. Supporting material was used and we noted some imaginative use of objects to illustrate and develop concepts.
- 78. The majority of modules in their CA programmes use written essays for assessment. Following encouragement from the CA PER (Recommendation 6), assessed conversations have been introduced recently as an additional form of assessment. Portfolio approaches are used to reflect on placements.
- 79. Ordinands following the OU BA programme are assessed through the traditional end of year exams, and write around 12 essays through the 8 week term. They encounter a wider variety of assessment approaches in their third year, taking the CA PG Dip.
- 80. The House recognises that the OU BA programme is suitable for a limited number of ordinands and most take the CA programmes. We met students from a wide range of prior educational experience and we were encouraged that they had been well-supported and appropriately challenged.
- 81. Feedback from students was positive about the feedback they received on their assignments. It comes in good time and enables them to develop further their academic formation. While there is some variation between staff in how they approach giving feedback this was seen as within acceptable bounds, and there is no evidence, written or verbal, that students are finding this problematic (see CA PER Recommendation 3).

D4 There is provision for students' progression and development over the course of the learning programmes.

- 82. Students are well able to meet the learning outcomes and we are confident that the programmes enable the development of study skills, critical thinking, and research skills. We were told by a number of different stakeholders of the seriousness with which students undertake theological study and this was apparent in conversation with students. The small sample of student written work we saw also evidenced serious theological engagement.
- 83. The only caveat is that the taught programme (assessed and audited) is very full and also compressed at the end by the desire to provide time for the Leavers Programme. There was some evidence that the number of formative assessments had been slightly reduced, and also made

more clearly formative for the summative assessments. However, the academic workload remains very high and is of concern to a number of students (the phrase “crisis management” was used, for example). We support the recommendations from the CA PER to review (again) both the overall student workload and the purpose and volume of academic assessment (see CA PER Recommendations 7 and 8). For example, the assessed modules and required audited modules in a given pathway might be reviewed by considering which are essential for formation and which might be “nice to have” if they do not overload a given individual’s timetable.

D5 Students are helped to integrate their academic learning and ministerial development.

- 84. Although the placement requirements are slightly lighter than in some other residential TEIs they are effectively used to integrate academic learning and ministerial development. There is a clear plan to enable progression in theological reflection across courses and modules, beginning with more straightforward approaches, moving on to corporate reflection in the second year on the basis of group placements, and in the third year learning to adapt and incorporate a variety of approaches to theological reflection.
- 85. Students themselves report growing in confidence over time, and some at least recognise how theological reflection has deep roots in the tradition. It was striking that the placement supervisors we spoke to were very positive about the ability of these students to engage in theological reflection when on placement, with significant theological rigour. Reviewers had good evidence from supervisors and from listening in to students that the quality of theological reflection by students on placement is very high. They are adept at relating the Christian tradition, Biblical and historical, to the situations in which they find themselves.
- 86. The systems for overseeing placements seem effective, both academically and administratively. Placement supervisors provide very good oversight and seem well briefed on what is expected of them. As we come out of the pandemic, we heard the desire to broaden further the range of placements and this is to be encouraged, especially in ensuring that students experience the breath of the church, theologically, geographically, and sociologically.

Commendation 6

We commend the high quality of theological reflection by students on placement.

Commendation 7

We commend the quality of SSH’s placement supervisors and the College’s provision of support and briefing for their role.

The review team has Confidence with regard to Criterion D: Teaching and Learning.

Section E: Ministerial Formation

E1 The TEI's programme of ministerial formation enables students to grow into the ministerial qualities and competencies sought by the sponsoring church.

87. The reviewers had good evidence of the contribution of the academic and formational programme and the corporate life of SSH to students' ministerial development.
88. In terms of the formational programme, we found students to be growing in their learning and knowledge of Christian tradition, faith and life as demonstrated with their intense and critical engagement in the programme content. This was also evident in conversations with students and with external placement supervisors. Comment was made in interview around the clear doctrinal and theological formation received, giving students the confidence to articulate, preach and teach the faith.
89. With regard to the qualities of being 'relational, missional, collaborative, diverse and adaptive' that the church seeks in its trainees and ministers, the reviewers found evidence for these qualities in its students in the group placement programme, both in working with fellow students and at the placement location – although as we reflect Section A and at **Recommendations 2 and 4**, we have some concerns about how well SSH's commitment to the development of these qualities is communicated outside the institution. We urge that SSH reviews its communications to clarify how these qualities are developed through its formational programmes.

Recommendation 17

Given that the Church of England places significant emphasis on developing the qualities of being 'relational, missional, collaborative, diverse and adaptive' in its trainees and ministers, we recommend that SSH reviews its publicity materials to communicate more clearly how these qualities are developed through its formational programmes.

90. Mission is understood as being grounded in worship and interpreted within the framework of *missio Dei*. The terms 'mission' and 'missional' were used in connection with the group placements, but it was not always clear to the reviewers in what sense the activities being discussed were seen as missional. 'Mission' and 'missional' are terms which are especially difficult to pin down and find agreed definitions, and the reviewers suggest that SSH might serve the wider church by reflecting with others in their tradition to develop more explicit definitions and understandings of mission. We discuss further at E2 how we consider that reflecting further on how mission is understood and practised might further benefit students' formation, and **Recommendation 18** picks this up.
91. The quality of being 'adaptive' was again described as evident in placements though it may be somewhat at odds with the strong commitment to a set way of worship within the House. A need to develop creativity is mentioned by at least one DDO with current experience of the House, while

a placement supervisor hoped for training that would make students more “comfortable in more informal worship contexts”.

92. Group placements in particular place a stress on the need for students to be relational and adaptable, providing opportunities for them to encounter and engage with diversity; an example of this is an on-going relationship with a local school, which is ethnically, socially, and religiously diverse.
93. As described in section D5, we found good evidence of theological reflection and reflective practice, with a clear plan for development in place from the staff. It is more obvious in the Common Awards (CA) programmes, but those who take Oxford University programmes also audit appropriate CA modules, and if doing three years, go onto the CA PG Dip. Students from the House have been noted (for example, by placement supervisors) to have a particular gift in using the theological tradition in theological reflection.
94. We reflect further at E4 on the role of SSH’s corporate life and its potential to provide deep and sustaining roots and a ministerial structure for students. Moreover, SSH is a small college and there is evidence that this, with a relatively high staff-student ratio, allows for effective support of the needs and formation of individual students. One student spoke of their own positive experience, as someone with few prior academic qualifications, being encouraged, nurtured, and supported in their academic studies.

E2 Students have a desire and growing ability to share in mission, evangelism and discipleship.

95. The desire to be world-facing, to teach the faith, to help others grow as disciples and in their own vocations is expressed by SSH staff and by students, both in the range of modules and other learning opportunities provided and in discussion of motivations. It is seen as being grounded and resourced by a deep commitment to prayer and worship, and given liturgical form in the dismissal at the end of the service of Holy Communion.
96. The reviewers have noted in **Recommendation 17** that the language used by the House does not always match that used by others in the Church of England at present, which can create a challenge in evidencing the above qualities. However, we note SSH’s commitment to equipping students to serve the common good via Pastoral Studies Units (PSUs) including chaplaincy and Anglican Social Theology; its modules on mission and ministry, on homiletics, and on Creating New Christian Communities.
97. The Creating New Christian Communities module is undertaken by all SSH ordinands and has been outworked by students visiting and engaging with local church plants, hence providing opportunities to engage with differing models of mission and liturgical styles and practice. This module was mentioned by several students as inspiring and helpful in providing new insights.

98. The reviewers had limited direct evidence about the students' ability to communicate the gospel sensitively and appropriately in and outside church contexts but were able to note very positive remarks from one training incumbent. Opportunities for preaching and for small group work are restricted by the placement structure.
99. There was evidence of a desire and ability to see and help others grow as Christians in a Tutor Group discussion on vocation. Several contributors expressed an eagerness to move into ministry and inhabit the role of the priest - with its role of service, pastoral care, leading a worshipping community and, by implication, growing disciples. This was also noted in personal conversation and in some of the exchanges in teaching contexts: there was a keenness to understand how a particular insight, aspect of theology, might support ministry, including teaching in a parish context.
100. As the reviewers reflected on the students' desire and growing ability to share in mission, evangelism and discipleship, the reviewers connected this with the importance of a sharper articulation of the formational offer that SSH is making to the wider church. Stakeholders' feedback noted at section A3 further bears out this point.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that SSH seeks to develop and celebrate a more fully articulated and disseminated Anglo-Catholic theology and practice of mission, as a gift to the wider Church and to assist in the deeper missional formation of students.

E3 Pioneer ministry training - not applicable

101. SSH does not formally offer training for pioneer ministries.

E4 Students are growing in personal spirituality and engagement with public worship.

102. In interview, the academic staff remarked that the common life of the College had the potential to provide deep roots and ministerial structure for students, that would continue to sustain them after ordination, preparing them well for the pressures and rigour of parish life. Students too spoke in interview about the disciplined spiritual and communal life of the House and their belief that is preparing them well for a life of service in their future roles and parishes.
103. This way, embodied and embedded in a life centred around prayer, study, fun and living together, binds students to commit to living out their differences, bound as they are by a strong commitment to a common spiritual life and discipline. Evidence from former students supports this view and several have written as to the pivotal place, their liturgical, spiritual, and theological formation has had in their ministries.
104. In observation and discussion, it is apparent that the staff have a strong commitment to forming priests in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England, where spiritual and theological

formation is continually interwoven. The Vice-Principal has described this ‘as preparing and forming people for holy living’.

105. The commitment to a particular pattern of common life of prayer and worship has many strengths, but it also leads to a perception amongst some outside the House that students need to be encouraged to be more creative. Although some students told us that their in-depth formation in the details of doing the liturgy enables them to also do it in more relaxed ways (“easier to dial down...”) this gave the impression of missing the point that worship in the Church of England, including the Catholic tradition, is much more varied than relatively small changes to the liturgy of the Mass, or options in the Daily Offices. This also relates to the comment from a placement supervisor, noted in para 91 above. It may be helpful to pay attention to ways in which the creativity of students can be brought to the surface.
106. There was some mention of exposure or experience of other styles of worship happening in placements, but it appears patchy. As an example, one student described being out of his comfort zone by being on a rural placement (which in itself is helpful), but it was still in a traditional Anglo-Catholic parish.
107. The rigorous structure of a common spiritual life, with ordinands required to be present for the Daily Offices and for the College Eucharist on Sundays, might potentially be viewed as a limiting factor, with the Church increasingly requiring its clergy to be adaptive and missional. That said, evidence from both individual and group placements, including feedback from placement supervisors does demonstrate engagement with other ways of ‘being church’.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that SSH reviews how it can encourage the diversifying and deepening of participation in and leading of worship, formal and informal, including appropriate reflection to follow up.

E5 Students’ personality, character and relationships

108. Students were commended, for example, by external tutors, for their commitment to learning and participation in lectures and seminars. Students themselves gave the impression that they were coping with significant demands from the programme, and doing so with grace and resilience. We note however the concern in section D4 about the overall workloads and endorse the relevant recommendations of the Durham Common Awards PER. We found that some of the language used by students about the pressure was a little concerning.
109. Students were articulate in reflecting on personal strengths, weaknesses, gifts, and vulnerability, and we saw an excellent example of appropriate vulnerability in the sharing of personal stories in a group setting.

110. We did have some concern about the level of structured support for students in personal development. With numbers as low as they are at present, informal systems of support are seen internally to be effective and sufficient, but with larger numbers of students, which the House needs, we are less sure. We also heard the call from more than one group of students for more structured pastoral support. It was suggested that, while staff were very good at responding to difficult situations and crises, students would also appreciate regular in-depth individual proactive and reflective opportunities for formational reflection.
111. The level of individual contact between students and personal tutors as explained to the reviewers was very brief, two short meetings per term. This puts considerable pressure on the more informal systems of pastoral care. These are feasible when the House is at its present size, but less sustainable if it is to grow in numbers again. It may be that there is too much reliance on personal formation being accomplished by the liturgy and community life.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that the staff and students of SSH review the options for tutorial support, with particular attention to the more personal elements of formation.

112. It was remarked that while, pastoral care was good, it sometimes came late in the day and there is a general reluctance to go their tutor with a concern as this is the same person would also be marking their academic work. There is a desire, on the part of the ordinands for the appointment of a college chaplain, who would be able to offer a distinctive pastoral and spiritual ministry. We note that this was brought to the House Council but deemed to be too expensive. We would urge further consideration of options, as we would think that support from someone available locally, perhaps on a house-for-duty basis, might well meet the need rather than a full-time or substantial post. This reinforces **Recommendation 7** under Section B2.
113. Staff and students' understanding of safeguarding policy and practice were probed and these matters seemed to be well understood (as discussed further at section B2).

E6 Students are developing in the dispositions and skills of leadership, collaboration and ability to work in community.

114. These issues are addressed in the curriculum and the feedback from receiving incumbents was positive. Students are being formed to offer collaborative leadership for the whole people of God, with the priestly vocation understood in that broader context.
115. Students spoke in interview about how the life of the College prepares them to work collaboratively in their ministries; on a basic, but perhaps fundamental level, this is demonstrated by the way they function together collectively as a student body for the good of the common life of the House.

E7 Students' sense of calling to ministry within the sponsoring church is growing, realistic and informed.

116. Students expressed a clear and realistic sense of calling by God and the church, and several took care to make clear that they and the House were strongly committed to the Church of England, recognising that in some quarters this seemed to be doubted. They have a strong commitment to ministry in the wider setting of a parish, evident from their own comments, and those of placement supervisors and receiving incumbents.
117. The students at SSH spoke of their commitment to the whole Church of England and their engagement in vigorous theological debate, although it was clear in conversation that most SSH ordinands expect to serve in a context which shares their traditionalist beliefs. Different groups of students indicated that debate about this issue was undertaken respectfully and we were given a strong impression that one key difference in the House – over the ordination of women – was well handled. Both male and female ordinands spoke repeatedly of mutual support and respect.

E8 The TEI has sound procedures for the interim and end of training assessment of students' knowledge, skills and dispositions, reporting on their achievement and identifying further learning needs for the next stages of training and ministry.

118. The policies and procedures are in place for assessment and reporting. DDOs do not raise any problems about reporting. One expressed a desire for sight of a first year report (for 3 year students), especially if a student is moving from their sponsoring diocese.
119. Students gave evidence about their confidence in the process.

The review team has Confidence with Qualifications with regard to Criterion E: Ministerial Formation.

Conclusion

The review team has Confidence with Qualifications in St Stephen's House in preparing students for Ordained Ministry in the Church of England.

Summary of Commendations

Commendation 1

The reviewers commend the staff, Council members and ordinands for the clarity of SSH's internal ownership of its vision and objectives.

Commendation 2

We commend the imagination and practice that have led to the establishment of the Edward King Centre for Pastoral Theology, its clear intentions, and its successful launch.

Commendation 3

The reviewers commend SSH for offering an environment where diversity is welcomed and debate is encouraged.

Commendation 4

We commend the quality of the theological reflection and the background commentary in the introduction of the Office Book, which seeks to enrich and place the Church of England within the wider Western Church.

Commendation 4

We commend the pattern of daily prayer and the Eucharist at the College, which prepares ordinands for a disciplined prayer life, necessary for their future ministry.

Commendation 6

We commend the high quality of theological reflection by students on placement.

Commendation 7

We commend the quality of SSH's placement supervisors and the College's provision of support and briefing for their role.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

We recommend that SSH should make a clear and central statement of its formational aims on its website and in the prospectus, using the wording from the Formational Scene Setter document and from the 2018 Common Award PER document.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that SSH makes further efforts to grow its recruitment, engaging in different and creative ways with a wider range of dioceses.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that staff development time should be given to developing the already evident good practice across the staff team in engaging with those of a range of educational backgrounds.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that through activities such as its open days, SSH begins to see itself more closely allied to the wider Church of England in promoting vocations. This may involve, for example, a review of the language, phrases, and expressions it uses to ensure that the inclusivity that is so evident in the College begins to be better understood by the wider world.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the placement pattern for each student includes serious engagement with Church traditions they are less familiar with. For example, it might mean every student having one of their placements in a less familiar tradition. This should be monitored by the staff responsible for the placements.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the College considers adding explicit policies on Consent and Confidentiality.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the College considers recruiting a house chaplain (potentially on a voluntary or House for Duty basis) to cater for the spiritual and pastoral needs of ordinands, their spouses, and families.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the College considers, as the make-up of the House naturally changes and evolves, that measures are put in place to ensure that the current healthy dialogue and mutual tolerance of both ordinands and staff is maintained, and new options for eucharistic presidency and gender inclusion are considered.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that SSH considers the relative roles of Trustees and Members and whether there is merit in appointing Members who are not Trustees to provide additional scrutiny of the trustees' work.

Recommendation 10

In the light of the work of the Chairman's Strategy Group, we recommend that Trustees review their committee structure to ensure they have the most effective way of working given the future challenges for SSH.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the trustees reshape the Council's agenda to allow regular quality time together in reserved business without staff present.

Recommendation 12

Following the end of PPH status, we recommend that the House Council explores working with an external coach/ consultant to review its work programme and strategic priorities.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that the Trustees carry out a thorough skills and diversity audit.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the Trustees consider the creation of a Nominations Committee to review current membership of the House Council and its committees.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the Development Committee should produce one document to set out clearly and to hold SSH's vision, objectives, strategy, and planned outcomes including the development of the Edward King Centre for Pastoral Theology.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the Core staff and House Council develop and agree a written policy on staff development, including study leave.

Recommendation 17

Given that the Church places significant emphasis on developing the qualities of being 'relational, missional, collaborative, diverse and adaptive' in its trainees and ministers, we recommend that SSH reviews its publicity materials to communicate more clearly how these qualities are developed through its formational programmes.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that SSH seeks to develop and celebrate a more fully articulated and disseminated Anglo Catholic theology and practice of mission, as a gift to the wider Church and to assist in the deeper missional formation of students.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that SSH reviews how it can encourage the diversifying and deepening of participation in and leading of worship, formal and informal, including appropriate reflection to follow up.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that the staff and students of SSH review the options for tutorial support, with particular attention to the more personal elements of formation.