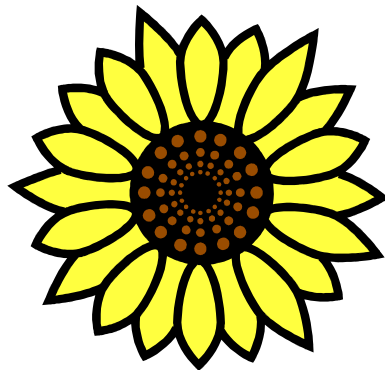


Ministries Reflection Course



2008—09

Theological Institute of the Scottish Episcopal Church

MINISTRIES REFLECTION COURSE 2008-09

NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

Introduction

Ministerial Formation at TISEC is structured around a competencies framework. The purpose of the Ministries Reflection Course (MRC) for students undertaking their Initial Ministerial Education (IME) at TISEC is to ensure that all students have an opportunity to engage fully with this framework, and to reflect on the ways in which their own learning and practice of ministry dovetail with it. The MRC encourages participants to reflect on each competency in relation to their personal development and vocation, and to the wider church and/or society. As such, the MRC is a highly important part of students' formational processes, and must be taken seriously. *Attendance at MRC meetings is mandatory for all IME students.*

Who runs it, and who is it for?

The Ministries Reflection Course is run by each diocese in the Scottish Episcopal Church which has students in training for roles in authorised ministry (i.e. at present, ordinands and candidates for Lay Reader Ministry). All such candidates for ministry are expected to attend the Course.

In some dioceses, those in the first three years of ministry also attend the MRC as part of their Continuing Ministerial Development. This offers opportunities for those preparing for public ministry to share their experiences with those who have recently embarked upon it, and vice-versa. The constituency of the MRC group, however, is for each diocese to decide.

Please note: the Ministries Reflection Course is not an assessed part of the IME Curriculum at TISEC, and it does not carry any credits towards an award by the University of Wales, Bangor.

Ecumenical Involvement

TISEC is an ecumenical Institute, preparing not only SEC but also Methodist candidates for ministry. It may be appropriate for Methodist students in your area to be involved in your MRC meetings. Please speak to the provincial Ministry Development Officer for more information.

How often does it meet, and for how long?

There are eight sessions per annum for the Ministries Reflection Course, one session being devoted to each of the eight competencies in the competencies framework (see below). It is suggested that these sessions are held at roughly monthly intervals, from October to May; but dioceses are free to hold meetings at whatever intervals suit the members of the MRC group in that diocese.

Sessions last about 3 hours. It is suggested that each follows the timetable set out below, which has been found to work well: dioceses wishing to vary this timetable should, however, feel free to do so. There is an opportunity to gather feedback from students and to share this at the IME Board of Studies, and this provides a valuable opportunity to learn from each others' experiences of running the MRC.

The Competencies Framework

A few years ago the Scottish Episcopal Church was faced with constructing a new curriculum for the training and education of its ordinands and lay ministers. This provided the opportunity to rethink what we wanted ministers to be in the church. In answer to this we developed a list of eight competencies, which represent characteristics and attributes that we believe are core to being a minister in today's church. They are also characteristics which all ministers need constantly to develop during the course of their ministry. A list of these competencies is provided below with a brief description.

The framework consists of eight core competencies. Each competency title is to be prefaced with the words: 'The student is expected to be a (name of the competency).' Each competency title is followed by a brief definition, which explains in broad terms what students are expected to accomplish in order to achieve the competency. The competency is then ascribed two levels. The levels define standards of achievement for students to aim at and be assessed in, with level two being the higher level. These levels are 'benchmarked' against Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework criteria. Level 3 criteria, which might be used by those in CMD1-3 or by those in IME who have already engaged in theological study to degree level, are currently in the process of development.

1. Critical and Creative Theologian

Students are expected to develop an ability to engage theologically with issues of life, faith, ministry, and mission, and with biblical/doctrinal materials, in a critical and creative manner.

Levels to Competency 1:

1. Ability to discern some core theological concerns, show evidence of beginning to reflect on and evaluate these critically and creatively, and make some relevant links between life and faith.
2. An ability to analyse and evaluate core theological concerns in a theologically critical and creative way and make detailed links between life and faith.

2. Theological Resourcer

Students are expected to develop an ability to identify and/or produce appropriate theological resources to be employed both in the practice of ministry and for the purpose of enabling and educating others to reflect theologically.

Levels to Competency 2:

1. Ability to identify, develop and/or present basic theological resources that relate to defined contexts. Resources should show evidence of a broad knowledge of the theological issues involved and some clear and relevant linking of these to the context.
2. Ability to identify, define and/or develop a range of theological resources that are appropriate to the given context(s) and which display a critical understanding of the core theological issues and the needs of ministry involved.

3. Servant

Students are expected to develop an understanding of the nature of ministry and leadership founded on servanthood, which is shaped by the needs of mission.

Levels to Competency 3:

1. Displays a basic understanding of Christian ministry as service and is able to relate it in relevant ways to context(s). Is able to identify and evaluate 'service' and leadership in various contexts. Basic ability to appreciate and engage with different understandings of service and leadership reflected in the mission and ministry of the Church.
2. Ability to engage and evaluate ministry and leadership in a critical manner and in relation to a developed understanding of servanthood.

4. Communicator

Students are expected, to listen and speak carefully to a variety of contexts, with openness to other people/perspective and with a concern for God's mission.

Levels to Competency 4:

1. Appropriate choice and/or use of medium to communicate some key ideas/message. There should be clear evidence that the views and needs of the context have been considered.
2. Ability to communicate complex ideas in an appropriate medium, taking into account the views/needs of the context.

5. Prayerful Person

Students are expected, in relation to personal development and/or the church community, to engage with issues and methods of prayer, discernment, and worship.

Levels to Competency 5:

1. Displays a basic self-awareness, evidenced in an understanding of some key personal experiences shaping interior motives and thoughts. Basic understanding of theological and pastoral issues surrounding personal prayer and corporate liturgical prayer/worship. Understanding of some significant spiritual traditions in the church and basic ability to communicate their main tenets.
2. Ability to discern and evaluate interior motives and thoughts in a critical and balanced manner. Ability to analyse and evaluate core theological and pastoral issues related to personal and corporate prayer/worship. Ability to distinguish between different spiritual traditions in the church, and to engage with and compare them critically.

6. Collaborative Worker

Students are expected to value the gifts and ministries of others and to develop appropriate skills to both working with and developing these gifts.

Levels to Competency 6:

1. Values and encourages collaborative working and understands its theological significance. Students demonstrate that they have listened to others and reflected on their engagement in a process of working collaboratively.
2. Displays ability to co-ordinate and/or facilitate collaborative working. Displays some evidence of a systematic approach to working collaboratively. Is able to identify and analyse some key theological and/or practical issues related to collaborative work.

7. Critically Aware Person

Students are expected to develop an ability to engage with matters of justice, peace, and creation, and to reflect on these in relation to their personal faith and to the wider concerns of marginalisation and the exercise of power and authority.

Levels to Competency 7:

1. Basic awareness and analysis of justice, peace, and creation issues in relation to personal faith and the wider social concerns of marginalisation and the exercise of power and authority.
2. Critical analysis and evaluation of justice, peace, and creation issues in relation to personal faith and the wider social concerns of marginalisation and the exercise of power and authority.

8. Effective Self-Assessor

Students are expected to develop an ability to identify and monitor their own learning needs in relation to ministry.

Levels to Competency 8:

1. Basic understanding of the process of self-assessment in relation to lifelong learning. Ability to reflect on experience of learning and identify some key issues that have been perceived, learnt and/or require further investigation.
2. Ability to provide a critical evaluation of the experience of learning and ability to identify detailed continuing learning needs.

The competency framework is a tool for education and ministerial training. It enables learning to move beyond a 'surface' approach, to a deeper engagement with the subject area in relation to life and vocation. Moreover, the framework presents attributes that can always be developed further. It can be employed later in ministry as a reference and an aid for understanding the nature and demands of ministry.

The Structure of Sessions

It is suggested that sessions follow the structure set out below. N.B. timings are for evening meetings: if the circumstances of group members permit, there is no reason why meetings should not be held during the day, or at weekends.

6.00 Arrivals.

6.15 Shared meal. Please bring food to share with other participants.

6.50 Opening act of worship.

7.00 Welcome: housekeeping, notices, and introduction.

7.10 Part one: exploring the competency and reflecting on experience.

7.55 Break.

8.05 Part two: engaging with tradition.

8.50 Wrap-up.

9.00 Concluding worship.

9.15 Finish.

Notes

- (i) The first hour or so of the meeting is devoted to a shared meal and an opening act of worship. These allow the group to relax and focus on its time together.
- (ii) Acts of worship may be led by the MRC facilitators, or by students. If students are to lead the worship, it is suggested that a rota is drawn up and distributed either before or at the first meeting of the group. Facilitators may suggest a particular form of service be used: for example, for the opening act of worship Evening Prayer from the SEC's Daily Prayer book might be used, or a meditation might be given on the competency which is to be discussed, or a simple prayer might be used; whilst the closing act of worship might consist of Compline from the Daily Prayer book, or a period of silence concluding with the Grace. Alternatively, facilitators may allow the students freedom to devise acts of worship of their own.
- (iii) Two exercises occupy the bulk of the meeting. One of these should focus on students' experiences, and enable them to identify occasions when they have themselves used and/ or developed the competency under discussion that evening. The other should enable students to link in the competency to the practice of the Church, through focussing on some aspect of Christian tradition. In the timetable above this engaging with tradition is the second exercise: some groups, however, have found it to be more effective as the first exercise. The ordering of exercises is for each diocesan group to decide.
- (iv) There are brief times built into the programme to allow facilitators to introduce each session and to wrap up at the end. The introduction should include a few words about the competency being examined, and a reminder to the group of the importance of confidentiality being maintained regarding the discussions which follow.

Ordering of sessions

In the past, sessions have examined the competencies in the order: 5, 8, 1, 2, 6, 4, 7, 3. This ordering enables students to explore the more personal, reflective competencies first and then go on to look at the competencies involving interaction with others as the Course progresses.

However, the ordering of sessions is up to the diocesan groups, and if an alternative ordering is preferred, that is perfectly acceptable so long as all eight competencies are covered in the course of the year. Students should be informed of the order being followed either at or before the first meeting.

Content of sessions

In the past, detailed suggestions have been made for the exercises which might be undertaken in each session. These have included:

- identifying and reflecting upon particular episodes relating to the competency
- reflecting upon experiences of Church practice
- reflecting on experiences of worship (including those occurring within the MRC group itself)
- undertaking Bible study
- examining a 'classic' Christian text
- producing pieces of artwork
- preparing worship materials

More recently, and for the year 2007-08, the precise content of each session is left for the facilitators of the MRC groups to decide. Please be as inventive as you like, and please keep notes assessing how you feel sessions go, so that your group's experiences can be shared with others at the Board of Studies.

If you would like any help or suggestions with the planning of sessions, please contact the Provincial Ministry Development Officer.

Feedback

Feedback from the students participating in the MRC should be sought. This can aid your own reflection on the content and delivery of sessions. A proforma is included (appendix 1, p. 8) which can be photocopied and distributed to students at the beginning of the course, and collected at the end.

Some practical notes for those leading Ministries Reflection Course sessions

General

1. Sessions should be clearly structured and the aims of the session should be communicated to the students at the outset. If you can summarise in your own mind that 'This session is about *x*: at the end of it, I would like students to have learned/ discovered *y*' then this is helpful, and such a summary can usefully be presented to the students at the beginning of the session.
2. Please ensure that students are aware in advance of anything which needs to be brought to sessions (e.g. Bible for Bible study, Prayer Books, material for reflection).
3. You may decide to split students into small groups for some exercises. When you do this, please make clear at the outset:
 - (i) how students are to divide up, and into groups of what size (e.g. groups of 3 with your neighbours)
 - (ii) exactly what questions they are to discuss. It is helpful to write these up on a board, or have them printed on an overhead transparency, or to give them out on printed sheets.
 - (iii) what form of feedback to the whole group will be expected (e.g. single-sentence answers to each of three questions).
4. Plenary sessions need to be carefully handled to ensure that all those who wish to contribute are invited to do so, and one or two more vociferous students are not permitted to dominate. Try not to let students wander too far from the subject of the session, and, if you disagree with them, try to get them to say more about the subject and to justify their position, rather than enter into conflict with them.
5. Timekeeping is of vital importance. Please try to adhere to the timetable for each session as closely as possible. Continuing beyond the time stated for finishing should only be done with the consent of the whole group. Individuals who have particular pressing issues they wish to explore further should be offered the opportunity to remain behind for a few minutes to chat to facilitators, but, again, it is good practice to keep such conversations time-bound.

6. When dealing with theological issues (e.g. in Bible studies) concepts of 'right' and 'wrong' answers are often inappropriate. Please remember that most participants will be capable, well-read and articulate people.

Appendix 1

Student feedback form

Please complete the relevant section of this form at the conclusion of each meeting of the Ministries Reflection Course, and hand in the completed form to the facilitator(s) after the last session.

PART 1

Please respond to the question, ‘How did this session help you to engage with the competency being discussed?’ for each session by circling a number on the scale of 1-5, where 1 = poor, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = above average, and 5 = good.

Session 1:	1	2	3	4	5
Session 2:	1	2	3	4	5
Session 3:	1	2	3	4	5
Session 4:	1	2	3	4	5
Session 5:	1	2	3	4	5
Session 6:	1	2	3	4	5
Session 7:	1	2	3	4	5
Session 8:	1	2	3	4	5

PART 2

Please note below any particular things you have enjoyed or found difficult about this Course, and why you have found them to be so.

Enjoyable:

Difficult: