

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Vocations Advisors and
Assistant Director of Ordinands

HANDBOOK

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MINISTRIES: Ordained and Lay

Vocations Advisors (VAs) are asked to guide the local discernment process with the PDO and diocesan bishop for ordained ministry and some authorised lay ministries. Assistant Director of Ordinands (ADOs) are asked to guide the provincial process with the PDO and diocesan bishop for the ordained ministries: Vocational Diaconate, Vocational Priesthood.

Candidates for priesthood may only be recommended provincially for training to either Incumbent Priesthood or Assistant Priesthood. They are not recommended within these two categories of priesthood for specific roles such as chaplaincy or ordained pioneer ministry, but they may be recommended for Mixed Mode training.

The ministries for which candidates may be sponsored are described in detail in the paper '**Ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church**'. This paper delineates the Core Responsibilities, Criteria for Selection and Formation Outcomes for Vocational Deacons and Priests. The comparative tables at the end of the paper may be helpful for both VAs and ADOs and candidates to discern which ministry they may be called to (the tables also include Lay Readership). Currently, Lay Ministry is considered locally, but work is underway by the College of Bishops to offer the required consistency of oversight for Lay Ministry and their authorisation such as: Eucharistic Assistants, Worship Leaders; Pastoral Assistants. VAs are involved in discerning all the potential pathways for the enquirer (See Note at the foot of this page) and offer their report to the diocesan bishop for a recommendation.

It is important that the enquirer's potential ministry is discerned clearly. Ordinands or Lay Readers in training who perceive they are called to a different ministry are required to withdraw and begin their discernment process anew. Lay Readers must serve in that ministry for at least 2 years after licensing before beginning a discernment process for ordained ministry.

Throughout the discernment process the Criteria for Selection are used for evidence based base reporting by the VA and ADO to help build a picture of the pathways available to the enquirer/candidate.

(Note: Recognising the new SEC Discernment Process for Ordained Ministry the PDO considers it may be good practice to introduce the term "Enquirer" for the individual beginning the process with a VA until recommendation for the appropriate pathway by their diocesan bishop.

Once an individual has completed their local discernment, and only when recommended to meet an ADO, the individual continues the process as a "Candidate". These terms will be used throughout the handbook.

This distinction differentiates local from provincial discernment. Obviously, this new descriptor will take time to be used formally (as the term Candidate was used in the former process throughout) but it is hoped that expectations and local pressure on the individual will be reduced. The emphasis will change to validating their gifts by clear discernment for future ministry: lay or ordained.)

THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

In the Scottish Episcopal Church, final decisions about selection for training and then ordination to the diaconate or priesthood are made by the candidate's diocesan bishop.

The bishops involve the PDO, ADOs and VAs in the discernment process and the clarity of decision making is aided by a Discernment Meeting and an Advisory Selection Panel, both involving lay and clergy members. A flowchart [*Appendix 1*] is available to highlight the process for all involved.

Core Values

The values held by everyone involved within the *Discernment Process for Ordained Ministry* have been agreed by the Bishops, PDO, Vocations Advisors, Assistant Directors of Ordinands, Discernment Meeting personnel and Advisory Selection Panel personnel. Incumbents, Enquirers and Candidates are to share in these core values of Hospitality, Honesty and Integrity. Throughout the process, informed by prayer and pastoral sensitivity, all involved shall offer welcome, kindness, and respect.

Core Beliefs

In Jesus the Kingdom of God came among us.

All members (of Christ's body) are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the church and for service of the world to which Christ is sent.

We have confidence in God, in the Church, in each other and in the *Discernment Process*.

DISCERNMENT IN THE CONGREGATION OR CHAPLAINCY WITH THE INCUMBENT & VA

It is important that an individual is first referred to the PDO by a formal letter or an email from an incumbent. An *Initial Enquiry for Vocational Discernment Form* is completed, available from the PDO. This begins the process as outlined in the SEC's *Discernment Process for Ordained Ministry*, available online.

The incumbent should offer an enquirer with confidence, after careful discussion. If the enquirer is referred too soon or without enough reflection, it can cause problems later, for a non-recommendation for training becomes increasingly painful as the process continues. It is important to note that whilst the Discernment Process for Ordained Ministry begins locally, and has a later provincial stage, it is the enquirer/candidate's sponsoring incumbent and their charge that must remain pastorally and prayerfully supportive throughout. Some thought should be given locally as to the support the candidate will receive. The PDO directs the enquirer to a Vocations Advisor (VA) and this is the first step in the process. The Vocations Advisor will meet the incumbent, the candidate, and the candidate's partner/spouse/family throughout the local process ensuring this support.

The incumbent or chaplain and VA may be helped by the **Guidance for Incumbents & VAs** to aid discussion with the enquirer at the preliminary stage. This is available online and may be offered by the PDO.

DISCERNMENT WITH THE VA AND ADO

The enquirer should expect to meet with the VA for several months.

Interviewing

Interviewing will take different forms with the VA and ADO. The initial meeting(s) with the VA will involve hearing the life story of the enquirer and obtaining some basic personal details looking at the Criteria for Selection in outline and building an evidence base for further reflection. The bishop will interview the enquirer to complete the local discernment process in the diocese.

A meeting with the PDO may move onto a more in-depth discernment of the Criteria, and reflection on any development work to be undertaken before subsequent meetings with the ADO. On completion, the enquirer becomes a candidate for the discernment process for ordained ministry.

Paperwork

VAs and ADOs should keep a record of each interview, detailing what was discussed and proposed, and arrangements for any subsequent meeting. This should be copied to the individual (and possibly the PDO). This record will prove helpful for 'evidence-based reporting', reflecting on the candidate's progress for the Discernment Meeting and to assist the diocesan bishop and PDO for the eventual Advisory Selection Panel.

During discernment with the ADO, the candidates should complete a **Registration Form** which allows them to demonstrate their self-awareness and ability to reflect, as well as sharing how they might envisage their contribution to the ministry of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

There should be some **continual screening for practical issues** which may need dealing with for both VAs and PDOs, remembering that an individual's circumstances may change:

Relationship status

During the process of exploring the possibility of ordination, it is important that candidates reflect on the promises set out in the Scottish Ordinal 1984. These include a declaration made in response to the question:

"Will you, in all your dealings with others, in the life of the Church and in your home, seek to show an example of obedience to the way of Christ?"

This is an expression of the teaching of the Church that faithful, committed relationships are a reflection of the generous, covenanted love of God.

In the light of this, the Diocesan Bishop has to be satisfied that, at the point in the process of discernment at which they are sponsoring a candidate to the Advisory Selection Panel, the candidate's chosen lifestyle reflects this teaching, as expressed in the Ordinal. In practice this means that if a candidate is living in a committed relationship they should, by that point in the process of discernment, be either married or in a civil partnership.

Candidates who are **divorced** do not have to apply for special permissions to become a candidate for ordination, although the discernment process will explore whether there has

been sufficient reflection on the marital breakdown and whether relationships are as healed and resolved as can be expected.

Candidates in **Civil Partnerships and Same-Sex Marriage** also do not have to apply for special permissions to become a candidate for ordination.

In the light of the changes to Canon 31 in June 2017, the College of Bishops issued Principles and Guidelines for the SEC. It states:

In the light of this, we affirm the following four guiding principles and commend them to our church.

- 1. Acknowledging the internal diversity of the Scottish Episcopal Church, we seek to maintain the highest possible degree of generosity and communion within the Church's life.*
- 2. Those who minister within the Scottish Episcopal Church must be prepared to acknowledge that the church has reached a clear canonical position but one which recognises diversity of view and practice.*
- 3. We remain committed to the flourishing within the Church's structures of all those whose understanding of marriage lies within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion. This includes those in authorised ministry in the Province and those who may seek such authorisation and those who may seek ordination.*
- 4. We acknowledge that the Church's new canonical position is set within a broader theological and pastoral conversation within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God.*

These Principles inform each other, and they should be read and understood together.

Candidates should be made aware of the importance of this guidance by the ADO for their future ministry.

Confirmation

Candidates for ordained ministry must have been episcopally confirmed by the time they go to an Advisory Selection Panel.

Age

Legislation about age discrimination prevents there being any formal age limits in for candidates in the discernment process. There are two grounds on which age might be a legitimate factor in the process:

- (i) if the candidate cannot realistically offer sufficient years of service to merit the financial investment by the SEC that training would involve. This might be countered by the candidate financing the training themselves.
- (ii) if the candidate's age prevents them from fulfilling the Criteria for Selection. This might apply, for example, if they were unable to demonstrate the creative missional leadership of a potential incumbent, or a realistic and deliverable vocation.

Currently, bishops do not require candidates over 60 to go to an Advisory Selection Panel (ASP), but this policy may change across the SEC; so all will attend an ASP.

Visas for non-UK/EU candidates

Neither the General Synod nor SEI are authorised to issue a certificate of sponsorship for a student visa (Tier 4). Consequently, candidates' ability to be in the UK cannot be dependent on

their expectation that we will simply be able to issue a certificate of sponsorship for a student visa. Their right to be and remain in the UK will need to be dependent on some other relevant immigration category.

It is, therefore, essential that VAs and ADOs confirm with enquires/candidates at an early stage whether they have the right to remain in the UK, as agreed by the UK Border Agency, and the correct Visa, were they to be selected for training and also, on the assumption that they might need to work to support themselves during training, that they have the right to work in the UK. This may apply to a spouse or family member and should also be checked as to how this affects the status of the candidate for training and work.

Health, legal and financial status

The candidate should disclose any health problem or disability which might affect their capacity to train or to minister in the SEC.

The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 provides that certain individuals are disqualified from acting as charity trustees. Those who serve as ordained ministers and as incumbents, as well as vestry members, will normally be regarded as “charity trustees” for the purposes of the Act. It is, therefore, recommended that those seeking ordination should confirm their eligibility to act by signing the SEC Charity Trustee declaration. This should be drawn to the attention of prospective ordinands by the ADO when completing their Registration Form. Anyone who acts as a charity trustee while disqualified is guilty of an offence punishable by imprisonment, or a fine, or both. A person is not disqualified if any previous conviction is spent by virtue of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

If there is a concern about the candidate’s psychological stability, this requires to be discussed with the PDO, whether they should undergo a psychological assessment. Each candidate must provide a **Confidential Declaration** about their potential PVG status before they attend a Provincial Panel.

Financial assistance for Full Time ordinands: A grant is provided by the Scottish Episcopal Institute to enable full time study at a Scottish University. The maximum level of grant is agreed annually (£13, 235 for 2019-20) and is means tested (any grant paid reduced to reflect any other income the candidate receives). Potential candidates should submit a completed application form to the PDO to enable the level of grant to be determined. The application should be submitted as soon as possible but, in any event, not later than 30 November in the year prior to the year of commencement of study.

In most cases University Fees will be paid by SAAS (Student Awards Agency for Scotland) – candidates should ensure that appropriate application is made to SAAS. An annual bursary of £750 is also payable by SAAS to candidates over 25 with household incomes less than £17,000 – candidates should ensure that appropriate application is made to SAAS.

Financial Assistance for Mixed Mode ordinands: An annual grant is provided to enable full time study during the duration of the Mixed Mode placement. The maximum level of grant is agreed annually (£13,235 for 2019-20) and is means tested (any grant paid reduced to reflect any other income the candidate receives). The grant is administered by the Scottish Episcopal Institute and is funded jointly by the Institute and the placement charge / diocese. Potential candidates should submit a completed application form to the Director of Mixed Mode Training to enable the level of grant to be determined. The application should be submitted as soon as possible but, in any event, not later than 30th June in the year prior to the year of commencement of study.

DISCERNMENT IN THE PROVINCE

The PDO meets the candidate and then will refer them to the Assistant Director of Ordinands (ADO), who interviews the candidate over several months. This provides a further element of discernment, and also provides evidence as to whether the candidate is ready to proceed to a Discernment Meeting. The ADO and candidate will use the **Criteria for Selection** and a **Discernment Curriculum** as discernment tools during their meetings, and the candidate may be required to do reading and written work, undertake practical ministry, and broaden their church experience. Suggestions for development work based on the Criteria for Selection are found in the **Discernment Curriculum** in this handbook.

ADOs may find it helpful to use the **Criteria Assessment Sheets**, so as to gather material for the Discernment Meeting report for the candidate's diocesan bishop, after the Discernment Meeting.

It is important at this stage, after the Discernment Meeting, that the candidate meets their diocesan bishop. The PDO is informed as to whether the bishop recommends a candidate to go (or not) to an Advisory Selection Panel. This should be agreed with the bishop initially, as it will depend on the age of the candidate and the category of ministry for which they are sponsored.

Candidates for Vocational Diaconate, Incumbent priesthood and Assistant Priesthood should always go to an Advisory Selection Panel, if recommended. Currently, their bishop may not require it if they are over 60 years; although this policy may change so all will attend, if recommended.

The bishop may decide that the candidate does further discernment work or is not recommended for ordained ministry. The ADO de-briefs the candidate after the Discernment Meeting, which may involve helping the candidate to come to terms with a non-recommendation. The PDO will ensure that any preparatory or development work is done for an Advisory Selection Panel (e.g. revising their Presentation and Group Exercise).

Advisory Selection Panels

These are held between Oct/Nov and March, to ensure that candidates may obtain places on the Scottish Episcopal Institute training programme. (Admission Request must be made by the candidate before June and local planning arrangements for Mixed Mode training has to begin in Dec /January before the following June confirmation of admission to SEI). There will be no more than 6 candidates per Advisory Selection Panel. The Panel is held over two days from 11 a.m. on a Friday to about 4 p.m. on a Saturday. The diocese funds travel to the Panel for candidates, and the Province funds any overnight accommodation required (see **Finance Tables**).

Candidates really appreciate **a card from the ADO** awaiting them at the Advisory Selection Panel.

Candidates will have two interviews, each with a pair of advisers. They will also be involved in a Group Exercise and writing a short reflection on the experience of the exercise. Candidates will not be asked to lead worship or lead intercessions but they will be asked to read from the Bible at occasions during worship. This will be indicated to the candidate before the date of the Panel to enable preparation.

Paperwork for the Advisory Selection Panel (ASP)

This will be overseen by the PDO and must be submitted no later than 3 weeks before the Panel by the candidates with the support of their ADO. The PDO completes the Sponsoring Forms in consultation with the ADO. Candidates also submit a Pastoral Encounter Exercise which includes a description of the situation, a verbatim report, and a reflection on their own contribution and the contribution of others.

With the support of the ADO, candidates should submit the following:

- Registration Form
- Pastoral Encounter Exercise
- Incumbent Reference
- Personal Reference
- Academic Reference or Occupational Reference
- Photo (jpg by email)
- SEC Confidential Declaration PVG
- SEC Charity Trustee Declaration

NB: References:

Referees:

Referees should be **balanced in terms of gender and clergy/laity**.

Referees should **not be related to the candidate** or to each other.

Some of the referees should have **known the candidate for more than 2 years** in order to provide a good overview and evidence of development and growth.

Referees should be **from different contexts**, e.g. if a candidate works in a church context, not all the references should come from there, or an additional referee should be found, to give some balance.

While a candidate has every right to choose their own referees, sometimes their choice may not offer the scope and breadth that would be helpful, so please **offer guidance to candidates in choosing their referees** for the most appropriate person as opposed to the most obvious person.

References:

References should be **dated and signed** (electronically will do).

References should be no more than six months old by the time of the ASP. If they are older, then referees need to be invited to update the reference

- The PDO will complete Sponsoring Form 1 and Sponsoring Form 2 for the ASP.

After the Advisory Selection Panel (ASP), the diocesan bishop will decide on a recommendation to begin training with SEI.

The PDO writes a full Advisory Selection Report of the Panel, based on the Advisors' written reports, for the candidate's diocesan bishop and a copy for the ADO. Candidates may be recommended for training, not recommended, or conditionally recommended. Once the PDO is sure that the bishop has communicated the recommendation to the candidate, the PDO should be in touch to arrange to meet for a debriefing.

FINAL DECISIONS

The candidate's diocesan bishop decides what the candidate will do next on the basis of the various recommendations. In practice, they almost always follow the recommendations of the Panels. At this stage, the candidate may begin training, but the decision has not yet been made as to whether they will be ordained at the end of training. Again, in practice, it would be very unusual for them not to be, but it has happened.

The care of non-recommended candidates

This is a difficult and delicate area, which calls for co-operation between the bishop, ADO, PDO, Incumbent, VA and others (e.g. a Spiritual Director). The Incumbent may be as disappointed and critical of the process as the candidate or may now reveal that he or she had serious misgivings all along. If candidates have been well-prepared about the process and the possible outcomes, they will find it easier to come to terms with a non-recommendation. It is also helpful if Incumbents have been warned to take their pastoral responsibility to the candidate at this time seriously.

The VA has an important role, at the earlier stage of local discernment, working with the enquirer and offering pathways suitable to the enquirer's discerned gifts and abilities. It may help the individual to continue with authorised lay ministry before further discernment about ordained ministry.

Helpful resources

CPAS Resource Sheet 7 – PDF file found by entering the title into a browser.

and *When the Church Says 'No'*, Helen Thorp, (Grove Booklets, P98) see:

<http://grovebooks.co.uk/products/p-98-when-the-church-says-no>

TRAINING AND FORMATION

Ordinands are formed and trained by the Scottish Episcopal Institute (SEI), alongside Lay Reader candidates.

They are required to **register with SEI by the beginning of June** in the year that they will begin training, so all recommendations by the Advisory Selection Panel have to be made by that date.

Ordinands' training pathways depend on their previous education and future ministry:

Incumbents must attain degree level in theology by the end of IME 6 (end of curacy).

Assistant priests and **Vocational deacons** must attain diploma level before ordination.

All candidates follow a three-year course of formation; those with existing theology degrees can continue academic studies at a higher level alongside residential learning, modules in areas not yet covered and field education.

Some ordinands may be offered a bursary by the SEC to complete a three-year theology degree at a Scottish university; funds for this are limited and would apply only to Incumbent ordinands.

Other ordinands would take the Common Awards (CA, Durham University) diploma in theology and ministry. This is a three-year course, for which entry is offered every year. Incumbent candidates study during their curacy for further CA credits which lead to a degree being awarded.

Prior to beginning training candidates may be invited to study elements of the SEI Foundation Year course in study skills, Biblical studies, Hermeneutics, Field Education and Worship.

Further details about SEI, training and formation may be found at:

<http://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/vocation-and-ministry/sei/>

SEI CONTACTS

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Director of Mixed Mode Training:

Rev Dr Richard Tiplady

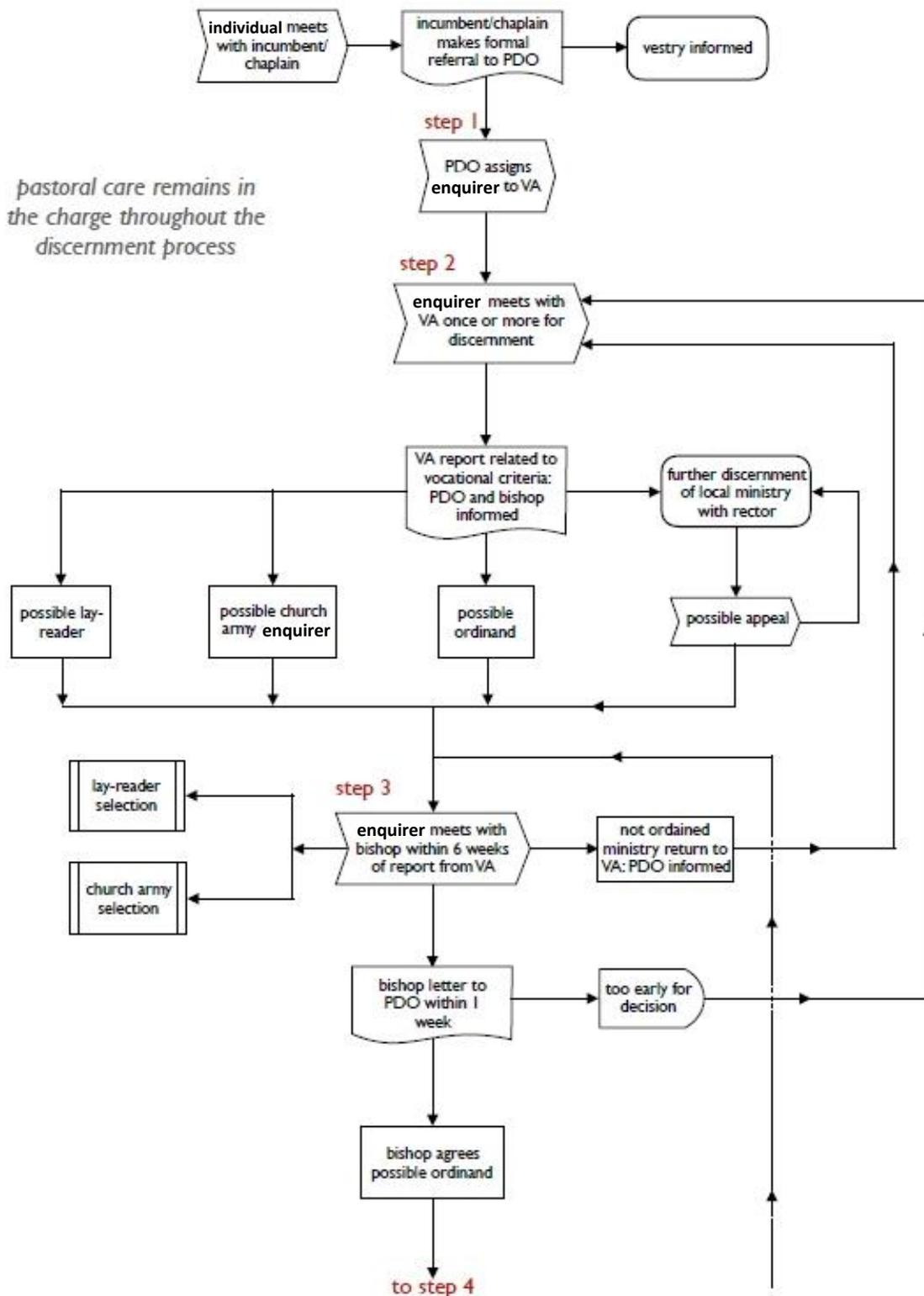
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Appendix 1: flowchart

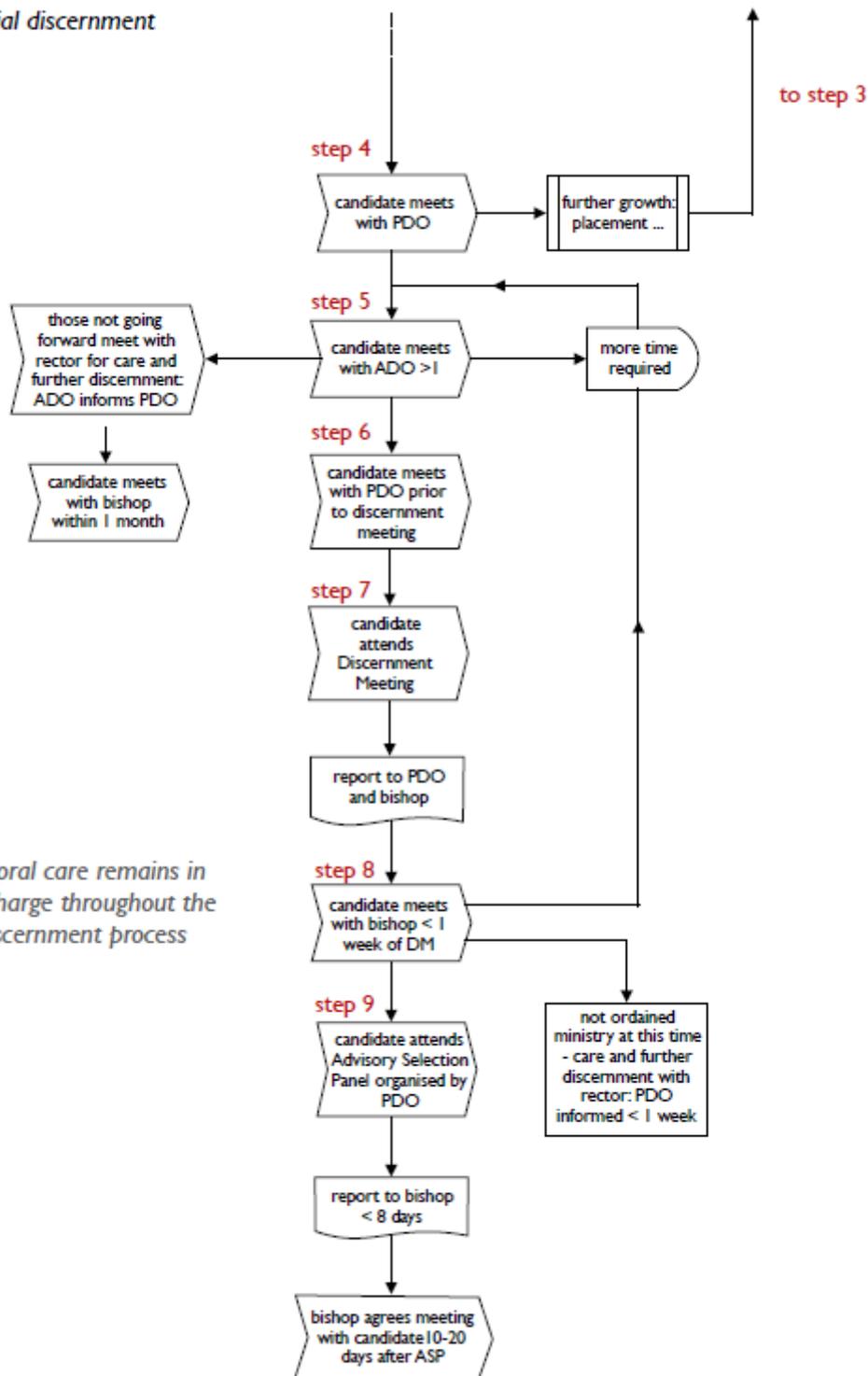
(this chart is also available as a single document on the website)

Scottish Episcopal Church: Vocational Discernment Process

local discernment



provincial discernment



pastoral care remains in the charge throughout the discernment process

Appendix 2: process *[as described on the website]*

Discernment process for ordained ministry

In the Scottish Episcopal Church, final decisions about selection for training and then ordination to the diaconate or presbyterate are made by the candidate's diocesan bishop. However, the bishops involve others in the discernment process from the beginning.

Discernment in the congregation or chaplaincy

Individuals must be sponsored by their priest or chaplain, and normally will have discussed their sense of vocation with them for a time. The priest may or may not involve the Vestry (church council).

When the enquirer comes to the point of formal sponsorship, a reference from their priest is required. This reference is sent to the Provincial Director of Ordinands (PDO) for the process to begin. The Province is developing the role of a 'Vocations Advisor' who can help to discern what kind of ministry (e.g. Lay / ordained) the enquirer may be called to. The Vocations Advisor will inform the enquirer about the steps involved in the process of vocational discernment.

Discernment with the Vocations Advisor

The Vocations Advisor will have several meetings with the enquirer for up to about 18 months. During this time, the enquirer may be required to do reading and written work, undertake practical ministry, and broaden their Church experience. This begins the personal discernment by the enquirer as well as the Church valuing and validating the gifts of the individual.

Some dioceses require individuals to engage in group discussion about discernment and their vocation with their congregation or with other enquirers. The individual will normally meet with their diocesan bishop at least once during this time.

Discernment with the Provincial Director of Ordinands (PDO)

The process continues with the Vocations Advisor offering their report to the Provincial Director of Ordinands (PDO) and to the diocesan bishop on the enquirer's progress, related to general categories and criteria for discernment. The diocesan bishop interviews the individual and offers their own reflection to the PDO about their progress. The PDO meets the enquirer and decides the next most helpful step for them. (The PDO is appointed by the College of Bishops and advises them directly). The individual may be advised to return to the Vocations Advisor to aid personal development or the discernment of an appropriate ministry other than ordained ministry. Further elements of discernment may be included by the PDO, with reference to the diocesan bishop, before the enquirer may be considered a candidate suitable for ordained ministry. The next stage is for the candidate to meet a regional Assistant Director of Ordinands.

Criteria for Selection and Discernment Curriculum

The Criteria for Selection provide a framework and tool for the Discernment Process, Selection Panels, and the Scottish Episcopal Institute's (SEI) Formation Outcomes for ordinands. Conversations and reports are shaped around the Criteria. It is important for candidates to engage with the Criteria from an early stage. Candidates are to provide evidence for having fulfilled each Criterion. The Discernment Curriculum does not have the rigidity of a "course" but should be viewed as "accumulating a portfolio". Candidates are asked to undertake suggested reflections and activities. Details of the Criteria for Selection and the Discernment Curriculum are available from the PDO.

Discernment with the Assistant Director of Ordinands (ADO)

An Assistant Director of Ordinands (ADO), with local ministry and mission expertise, assists the candidate through several meetings with the elements for further discernment. A Registration form is completed with the candidate, and the ADO makes evidence-based recommendations in a report based on the Discernment Curriculum to the diocesan bishop and PDO, as to whether the candidate progresses to a formal Discernment meeting, or not. The diocesan bishop reminds the candidate's priest of their ongoing pastoral responsibilities to those individuals whose discernment suggests vocational options for discernment other than ordained ministry.

Discernment Meeting

The PDO is responsible for those candidates who are to attend a Discernment Meeting, consisting of two lay people and one clergy person from the Province. After interview, recommendations are sent to the PDO, and copied to the Bishop, about the candidate proceeding to an Advisory Selection Panel, or taking further time with the ADO to address identified issues. The diocesan bishop meets with the individual, in consultation with the PDO, to discuss the next steps. Personal or family circumstances can change significantly during the time of the whole vocational and discernment process so it may be possible for a recommendation to be made that the individual is not called to ordained ministry.

Advisory Selection Panel

The Advisory Selection Panel, receiving the required reports and references from the PDO, is made up of experienced clergy and lay advisers, sometimes with a group of candidates. The Panel involves interviews, written work, and presentations. The PDO writes a full report of the Panel, based on the Advisors' written reports, for the candidate's diocesan bishop. Candidates may be recommended for training, not recommended, or conditionally recommended.

Final decisions

The candidate's diocesan bishop decides what the candidate will do next on the basis of the various recommendations. In practice, they almost always follow the recommendations of the Panels.

At this stage, the candidate may begin training and formation with the Scottish Episcopal Institute. A final decision as to whether the candidate will be ordained is made at the completion of their Initial Ministerial Education, usually lasting three years.