

Discipleship Training LLM(Reader) Course Supervisors' Guide



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Supervision with a Trainee Reader

at a glance:

<p>What: A supportive conversation about a Trainee Reader's Ministry</p> <p>Who: The Supervisor (usually the parish Priest) and the Trainee Reader (unless the Trainee Reader would like anyone else present).</p> <p>Why: To learn from experience and improve practice</p> <p>When: Every 4 to 6 weeks during training</p> <p>Where: Somewhere comfortable, neutral and confidential.</p>	<p>Fun Frequent Frank</p>
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What supervision is not

- ! not an opportunity to criticize, reprimand or compete with each other!
- ! not a staff meeting or a rota discussion
- ! not a list of problems to be solved, with the expectation that the supervisor has the solutions
- ! not spiritual direction (although hopefully it will contain prayer!)

Reflective practice in supervision

Supervision sessions are for engaging in reflective practice.

The task of the Supervisor (often, but not always, the parish priest) is to help the Trainee Reader to ask questions arising from their experience of ministry in such a way that their deepening theological understanding is a personal process and not just a series of lessons received from another.

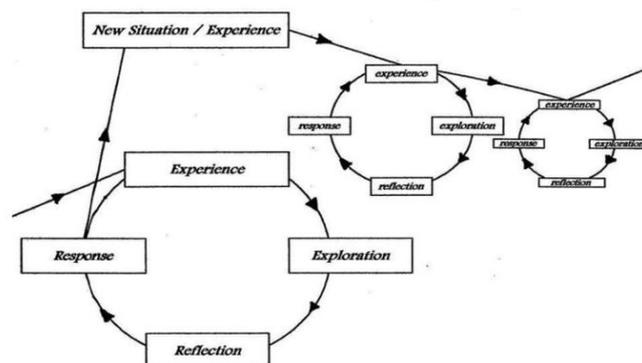
Imagine the kind of discussion that took place when Jesus gathered His disciples together after sending them out to proclaim the kingdom of God. He listens to what has happened and continues to guide them in the light of those experiences.

Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with Him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. (Luke 9)

That is what you are trying to do in supervision sessions. They are meetings in which Supervisor and Trainee Reader reflect together on what has been noticed and experienced, and the Trainee Reader learns how to allow his/her experience to question the theological tradition and the tradition to confront his/her experience. In other words, the Trainee Reader continues to develop that method of theological enquiry which undergirded their studies, and which fosters resilience, sustains practitioners in ministry and enables them to respond creatively to change.

In their training, Trainee Reader candidates were taught to offer a non-judgemental narration of an experience: recall the who, what, where, when and how of the event; to explore it so as to identify the heart of the matter: what issue, question or quandary does the experience raise for you? They learned to reflect upon it theologically by structuring a correlation: does the theological discourse bring new insights to the experience? Does the experience bring new insights to the theological discourse? and finally they have been trained to respond by identifying new learnings and calls to action: how will you grow from this experience? What might you do differently next time?

Laurie Green’s reflective spiral



Supervising Incumbents need to enable the Trainee Reader to engage in this theological work themselves, rather than offering quick-fix answers to ministerial issues.

The ‘pro forma for Critical Incident Journalling’ in the next page is one way of engaging in reflection upon ministerial experience. The comparative length of each section is delineated by the relative size of the boxes.

Narrate the experience

Identify the heart of the matter

Outline the resulting theological reflection

Identify new learning or avenues for further development

The Attitude of the Supervisor

The behaviour of the Supervising Incumbent is also crucial. Pastoral supervision is a method of doing and reflecting upon ministry in which a supervisor and supervisee covenant together to reflect critically upon their ministry as a way of growing in self-awareness, professional competence, theological understanding and Christian commitment. This means that how the Supervising Incumbent models ministry is of supreme importance. Throughout all contact with the Trainee Reader it is vital to show a continuing ability to learn, to be challenged and to engage effectively with the excitement of ministry; to show commitment for the task and for the congregation; and to demonstrate the enrichment and engagement that the work of ministry brings.

The Trainee Reader should see someone who is still learning, and who is prepared to respond, adapt to change and think theologically about practice. It will require energy, effort and enthusiasm. This also means learning the art of giving feedback. Feedback too often manifests itself as either unreflective criticism or generalized praise.

Praise is a blanket summary statement of how good someone is, without explaining what in particular they are good at and what is good about it. For example, ‘you’re a genius with languages’ or ‘you’re such a gifted singer’.

Feedback, in contrast, consists of statements about the nature of what someone did. It is directed not towards a person’s attributes but toward their actions. For instance, ‘I admire the work you did to get 98% on that Greek test’ or ‘your singing makes me feel so serene’ are examples of feedback rather than praise. Feedback can be just as positive and approving; it simply shifts the focus away from a person’s identity and onto the effort and engagement they put into the task. Feedback is an objective message about behaviour or activity, recognising and reinforcing something well done or offering suggestions about how to do something better.

In giving feedback, we need to be accurate and specific. It is much easier to do something with specific feedback than with generalisations. For example, ‘you tend to drop your voice at the end of a sentence’ is better than ‘I find you difficult to hear’.

Only offer feedback on the things which the person has the power to change. ‘I find your tendency to flick your hair during preaching distracting’ could be helpful. ‘I really don’t like your accent’ is not.

Giving feedback is a sensitive issue. It is often helpful to spell things out in full using ‘I’ rather than ‘you’. ‘I felt lost and rushed and found I was distracted during the first prayer. It might be helpful to slow down a bit’, rather than ‘you prayed too fast in the first prayer’.

In giving feedback it is usually as helpful and creative for people to receive feedback about their strengths as it is to receive it about weakness, since it enables them to affirm what they have and build upon it with confidence. All feedback should include affirmation of strengths. In short, feedback should be focussed on behaviour not personality, evidence not assumption, description not value judgments, specifics not generalities

Working Collaboratively

Trainee Readers serve as part of the ministry team under the leadership of the incumbent. That definition makes clear where accountability lies – but it also speaks of collegiality. Please note that the Reader is not the incumbent’s helper to do their bidding and to take the blame – they are partners in ministry.

Trainee Readers and the Supervising Incumbent will need to work hard - from the initial discussion which leads to the drawing up of the Working Agreement right through the initial years of ministry and beyond – to apply good practice in the area of collaborative working. Good supervision practice, the establishment of annual goals and the use of objective criteria for evaluation and evidence-based reporting all encourage a culture of mature reflection upon gifts and shortcomings. Judgements become depersonalised, without blame or shame; ongoing appraisal of strengths and weaknesses becomes the norm.

But these frameworks notwithstanding, good team working has to be worked at. As is well known, all teams have three overlapping areas of need: those of the **Individual**, that is, paying attention to physical, psychological, social, emotional and spiritual needs; those of the **Team**, that is the maintenance need to create and develop a cohesive group, and those imposed by the **Task**, that is getting the job done

Building a smoothly functioning team will necessitate considering the three areas outlined in the three-circle model: the task or skills needed to accomplish the task, the needs and development of individuals and the development of the team as a corporate unit. Clarifying aims, allocating and delegating roles and responsibilities, good diary management and forward work-planning, timed implementation and intentional evaluation will all form part of the task-focused areas of team life. Clarity about roles and responsibilities is vital; ‘role creep’, where an individual is seeking to perform too many different roles, must be avoided. The Working Agreement should militate against this danger.

A healthy team comprises players who restrict their activities so as to avoid diminishing the role of others of others, but who play their own role with distinction. Seeing where people fit and ensuring they are working where they flourish is a key responsibility of Supervising Incumbents. Another way in which to help teams work

well together is for members to come to an appreciation of the different kinds of personalities which make up that team. Different personalities contribute differently to the process of working together, and for harmonious work it is necessary to understand where your fellow members 'are coming from' and why. There are many different tools on the market to aid such enquiries, from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Belbin Team Role Analysis, Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles Questionnaire, Gilmore and Fraleigh's 'Style Profile for Communication at Work' and the Enneagram. The use of such tools can contribute to the development of individual confidence and security, and of harmonious team -working.

Good communication is likewise essential. Within any team it is essential to find ways of communication that are effective and that connect with every team member. Many teams use email to share information (please NEVER supervise by email!) but care should be taken that all involved are on e-mail and check it regularly otherwise some may feel that they hear everything later than everyone else or not at all. We recommend that e-mails, text messages and letters be used for information purposes only; contentious issues should be handled face-to-face. Face-to-face team meetings are essential for a variety of reasons, but must be utilized as effectively as possible so that members feel that the investment of their time and energy is worthwhile. This can particularly be an issue when some in the team are in paid posts and others are doing demanding full-time jobs on top of their voluntary ministry. Having spent a whole day in the workplace, it can be frustrating to come to an unfocused and unproductive team meeting.

The Supervising Incumbent needs to ensure that communication is fair and democratic. If one person in the team always receives information second-hand they can feel excluded or unvalued. Similarly, situations can arise where it feels as if the team leader has an 'in-crowd' with whom they discuss important issues prior to the actual team meeting; this is especially important to manage well when there are two or more fulltime members in the team and the others are part-time or volunteer members. Not all meetings need to be business-orientated, however; providing opportunities for team members to spend time together in other ways create a sense of fellowship and cohesion within the team. Spending time in corporate prayer, team worship or Bible study, in team-building activities, on Away-Days, studying a book together or watching a film can all assist in engendering a sense of cohesion and mutuality.

To do this well, however, involves paying attention to people's availability and identifying meeting times and places which work for all concerned, not just the fulltime/stipended members. Never underestimate the importance of attitude in growing teams; simple things like not taking people for granted, treating people with

respect and expressing appreciation and thanks may seem obvious but are often forgotten in the busyness of church and organizational life.

Further reading

- ! Chadwick, C. (2000) *Growing in Ministry: using critical incident analysis*.
- ! *Grove Booklets Pastoral Series 84*
- ! Evans N. (2012) *Developing in Ministry. A handbook for effective Christian learning and training*. London, SPCK
- ! Lamdin, K. (2007) *Supporting New Ministers in the Local Church. A handbook*. London, SPCK
- ! Leach J. and Patterson, M. (2015, *Pastoral Supervision, A Handbook*. London, SCM Press.
- ! Tilley, D. Greenwood, R. (2000) *Ministry Team Handbook; local ministry as partnership*, London, SPCK
- ! Ward, F. (2005) *Lifelong Learning; theological education and supervision*. London, SCM Press

The Role of the Training Minister/Supervisor

By Training Minister we mean the incumbent of the student's home church, or sometimes another minister within that context appointed to the role.

The Training Minister will also be the 'Placement Supervisor' whilst students are working in their home church. When on placement elsewhere, the incumbent (or other minister) of that church will be the Placement Supervisor. *For clarity, in what follows the term 'Training Minister' is used for home-church based activities and 'Placement Supervisor' is used for activities undertaken in an alternative church context.*

The relationship between Training Minister and Student may be complex. He or she is in most cases the incumbent and s/he will have been an important part of the student's journey to this point in a variety of ways. It is not a given that there is a close personal friendship, but sometimes that is the case.

As a student begins training for ministry a new element enters that relationship. The Course takes as its starting point the understanding that the relationship between training minister/supervisor and student is a professional one with all that implies of responsibility and accountability on both sides.

If a student's home church is in a vacancy or goes into a vacancy, then an interim training minister will need to be appointed to ensure that context based learning is properly supervised. In such a case a conversation with the Director of Studies and Warden of Readers needs to take place as soon as possible.

Each module involves tasks which have to be carried out in a 'ministerial context'. Some assignments are based on these activities. Students should check all modules for such tasks and activities and plan dates accordingly with their supervisor. Training ministers/Placement Supervisors are asked to be as accommodating as possible with this as it has an impact on the student. It is helpful if the student takes the lead in letting the minister/supervisor know what they are being asked to do.

The Training Minister/Placement Supervisor is asked to:

- ! provide students with an experience of learning and development appropriate to their personal and ministerial capabilities (students are not just 'an extra pair of hands!')
- ! help students identify, plan and reflect on the tasks required by each of the modules
- ! give written feedback on practical assignments using the feedback sheet (attached)
- ! give students experience in professional practice appropriate to their ministry and experience and to provide appropriate feedback
- ! introduce students to areas of good practice in your context
- ! meet regularly with students specifically to provide professional supervision and – through this and other means – help students to reflect on their sense of calling and on the ministry and mission of their church

- ! keep in mind student's preparation for ministry not only in that placement but also in the wider church and community
- ! liaise closely with the Director of Studies and prepare an end-of-year or end-of-placement report.

The Working Agreement (a blank Master of this document can be found on page 24)

The Training Minister / Placement Supervisor is required to develop a Working Agreement with the student. This should set out shared expectations about the following areas (as a minimum, a working agreement should cover the following):

1. Praying together : The church is sustained through prayer and you need to share in corporate prayer with both the congregation and with your Supervisor (and any other ministerial colleagues, as appropriate). There needs to be agreement about the times and occasions for this prayer time together.

2. Public worship: You should have regular opportunities to share in the design and the leading of worship and in preaching. Agreement should be reached about how often it is expected the student will be present, robed, in a leadership role, preaching – and how feedback from congregation, colleagues and Supervisor will be managed.

3. Meetings: It is good when Christian ministers, working together, can be friends as well as working colleagues but it is important to maintain clarity of purpose and task between staff, supervision and social meetings. It is important to distinguish between: staff meetings which are for information sharing, planning and review; supervision sessions where the specific task is to enable the student to reflect. Students are expected to have regular supervision meetings with their Training Minister (and when on placement their Supervisor) in addition to 'ordinary' (business, planning, or staff) meetings. Supervision meetings should be held at least once a month (eight or nine times a year, allowing for a break at Christmas, Easter and one or two in the Summer.) It is the student's responsibility to arrange the meetings with their Training Minister/Placement Supervisor. If supervision meetings do not take place, students should speak to the Director of Studies.

4. Communication: It is important that both student and supervising minister are clear about how information is shared in both written and spoken form. There will need to be a negotiation so that communication between the two of you, and with the church as a whole, is effective and does not lead to misunderstandings or communication breakdown.

5. Life Balance: There is always a tension between living out a vocation which is life-long and creating a balance between study, work time, ministry time, family time and time off. This can be a complex juggling act for those who may have to balance a full-time paid job, family and leisure time as well as ministry time in the church context. Remember that time spent in Sunday worship and in ministry-related work during the week (normally at least an evening a week) is included in the 3.75 hours per week average.

6. Spiritual Development: In addition to participating in the corporate life and worship of the parish, it is expected that you will wish to develop your own personal prayer life. It is also expected you student will have regular access to a spiritual director/soul friend. If you are not sure about what this means, talk to your Director of Studies.

7. Annual / End of Placement Review: There must be an annual or end-of-placement review between you and your Supervisor. Placement Review Forms are provided to assist this process, but an important purpose of this review is for you to reflect on the previous year and identify specific tasks and learning needs for the year ahead.

8. Confidentiality: There should be a specific statement and agreement about confidentiality and about you being publicly supportive and loyal to the leadership of the supervising minister and the leadership team within the church. It will be useful to agree a process for reviewing this if at any time there seems to be pressure on the agreement reached.

Once agreed and signed, a copy should be sent to the Director of Studies (dawn.glen@derby.anglican.org).

The Recommendation of the Incumbent / Priest in Charge

This course is largely apprenticeship based and requires students to complete all the outcomes necessary prior to licensing. As many of those outcomes are learned and completed in the placement area, at the end of the course the incumbent (or equivalent in a Vacancy) will be required to sign a statement of completion and recommendation to the Bishop for the student to be licensed to them in their parish/benefice. Without this recommendation students will not be able to progress to the office of LLM(Reader).