DIOCESE of OXFORD
A Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world

Becoming an LLM (Reader) – a guide to Selection and Training

Introduction

In the Diocese of Oxford, we are looking to identify, encourage and prepare people of any age or background to join in with what God is doing where *they* (you) are: at home, work and recreation, as well as in church. Training has been reconfigured in recent years to make things more accessible to people who are (for example) working, caring for young or older family members, or who don't get on with traditional forms of education and learning. And this includes training for Licensed Lay (Reader) Ministry – or 'LLM'.

Licensed Lay Ministers [LLMs] are lay people in the Church of England who come from all walks of life, are called by God, theologically trained, and licensed by the Church to preach, teach, lead worship and assist in pastoral, evangelistic and liturgical work. They are vital for effective parish ministry in this and other dioceses across the country.

LLMs carry a Bishop's licence and bear significant responsibility as part of the local ministry team. The nature of LLM ministry is inevitably shaped by nationally agreed formational qualities, diocesan priorities and local need. But it is shaped also by the gifts and dispositions of each minister and, fundamentally, by the example of Jesus' own life and ministry.

At the end of the day, our aim is to form a confident community of Christ-centred, theologically informed and reflective learners who love God and are:

- devoted to becoming more Christlike
- formed for a ministry steeped in contemplation, courage and compassion
- confident in their vocation, equipped for the nurturing of God's people, and enabling of others in everyday faith and ministry in response to the call and mission of God.

If this excites you, read on to find out more!

Discernment, Selection and Training in a nutshell

The selection and training of LLMs in Oxford diocese follow a pattern where the processes of shared discernment, training and formation are intentionally integrated. This means that the initial Foundation year (Year 1) of training is explicitly part of the discernment process, and that different stages of selection occur *during* training as well as prior to it.

Initial admission to the Foundation year of training follows an informal 'stage 1' shared discernment process, typically over a number of months, involving conversations with your local Vicar, a Vocations Adviser, and representatives from the LLM Area Advisers team. Ongoing discernment during the Foundation year culminates in a formal Selection Panel at the *end* of that year – recommendation from which would secure access to the Year 2 programme.

Successful completion of Year 2 typically leads to a recommendation to the Bishop for an initial 2-year licence, following which a further year of training must be completed (over one or two years – the choice is yours), before your initial licence comes up for renewal to a 'full' licence.

Enquiry to licensing – step by step

1. Exploratory conversation(s) with your vicar.
2. Contact the LLM team via carolyn.main@oxford.anglican.org to take things forward for you
3. Submit an application form (available from Carolyn Main).
4. Your LLM Archdeaconry Adviser will arrange to meet with you once references etc have been checked.
5. Admission to initial Foundation year (September induction).
6. Formal LLM selection panel (end of Year1 - July).
7. Admission to Year 2 of training.
8. Pre-licensing reports (end of Year 2 - July).
9. Initial (two-year) licensing in November.
10. Admission to post-licensing training year ('Year3') – choice of completing over one or two years.
11. Final sign off, renewal to full Licence and opportunities for Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD).

Training Overview – what's involved?

Throughout training and formation, LLM candidates learn together as well as alongside enquirers and candidates exploring ordained ministry, and a growing number of interested learners seeking to grow in their faith and discipleship. This makes for a particularly rich learning experience, benefitting from a range of different and shared perspectives.

Each year of training comprises three 'core' modules (or equivalent) and a 'long thin' module, so called because it is spread 'thinly' across the whole year. In Year 1, your core modules will be in these foundational aspects of faith and ministry:

- Mission and Evangelism (Autumn Term)
- Opening Up the Bible (Spring Term)
- Everyday Discipleship (Summer Term).

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Autumn term
core module</th><th>Spring term
core module</th><th>Summer term
core module</th><th>‘Long-thin’
module</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Discernment (stage 1) -
meetings with Incumbent, Vocations Advisor and LLM Archdeaconry Advisor</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 1
Foundation</td><td>Mission & Evangelism</td><td>Opening up the Bible</td><td>Everyday Discipleship
Discipleship, prayer & spirituality</td><td>Being Anglican
Anglican history, Ministry and the contemporary Church in global context.

3 x study days (one each term)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Discernment (stage 2) - Selection Panel (July)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 2</td><td>Leading Worship and Preaching</td><td>Jesus and Salvation
An introduction to Christian doctrine and history</td><td>Pastoral Care</td><td>Reflective Practice & Placement
Theological Reflection for ministry + a 30hr Placement

2 x study days (Autumn & Summer term) + Spring term Residential weekend.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Final reports and Recommendations
... followed by initial (2yr) Licensing (Nov)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 3
Post-licensing</td><td colspan="3">Core modules
All candidates complete these four half-modules:
OT book
NT book
Christian Ethics
Reflective Leadership
Options
Two further half-modules are chosen from a selection of options each year – for example, Funeral Ministry, Working with Children & Young People, Further Topics in Christian Doctrine, Mission in the Workplace, Environment... or other vocationally appropriate courses selected from further LLM provision, diocesan CMD or other approved external courses.

Long-thin
The post-licensing ‘long thin’ module is completed in year 3, with your LLM year-group cohort.

Other elements of the ‘Year 3’ programme may be completed in either one or two years after licensing.</td><td>Enabling ministry
Ministry-based workshops and Preaching clinics

2 x study days (Autumn and Summer term) + Spring term Residential Retreat weekend</td></tr>
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Core modules

Each core module runs for 10 weeks in the relevant term and comprises up to eight units of online learning materials, which you work through each week (in your own time, at your own pace) before exploring this learning further in group tutorials (also online). The remaining units of each course are delivered through either one or two onsite Study Days, usually in Oxford.

- Module Study Days occur 9am-4pm on Saturdays.
- There is usually a choice of meeting times each week for online Tutorial Groups – typically Wednesday afternoon, Wednesday evening or Thursday evening. We ask you to be as flexible as possible when expressing preferences.

- You will need approximately four hours each week to complete online learning materials (usually comprising videos, guided reading, practical exercises, and questions to provoke deeper thinking and reflection). Wider reading and assignment preparation, together with Study Days does mean that, overall, your time commitment to training will be significant across each year. You should expect, on average to be giving 10+hrs/ week in one way or another; so adjustments in other areas, for a season, may be needed to gain the most from the particular opportunities that training offers.

'Long-thin' modules – Study Days and Residentials

'Long-thin' modules (also considered core to both curriculum and formation) are delivered through three in-person study days each year, one each term. In years two and three, the spring term long-thin study day is replaced by an overnight residential weekend.

Induction Day

Each year begins with an Induction Day in mid-September - an important time for connecting with core staff and students from other LLM and ordination pathway year groups. A great way to kick start the programme each year with opportunities for worshipping together, theological reflection and some helpful study skills. You will need to make this a priority.

Placements

Placement-based learning, and supported reflection on this, is integral to your formation as a minister.

- Parish context ('long placement'). The home parish of each candidate is an important learning context, a 'long placement' integral to effective training, not something separate from it. You will therefore have a training minister 'on the ground' with responsibility for providing regular supervision, feedback and opportunity for reflection on practice. Parish-based learning tasks and assignments from modules will intentionally engage learners with the home context in different ways.
- Short-term Placement (Year 2). You will also complete a 20-30hr placement in a new context, with the purpose of encountering and reflecting upon 'difference'. You will be encouraged to complete your placement in a church of different theological tradition or socio-geographic environment, an appropriate community-based setting, or a context which fosters learning and reflection on contemporary missional questions relating to (for example) race and diversity, climate, disability...

Moodle

To engage with your programme, you will be enrolled on Moodle, the virtual learning platform on which our Learning Hub is based. Just ask if you want earlier access to discover some of the wider resources available on the Hub, and to explore the Induction module before you start.

Formation and the culture of learning

Formation groups and Personal tutors

Alongside the modular programme above, you will join a Formation Group for Years 1 & 2, to reflect together with other LLM candidates on life, learning and emerging vocation. Formation Groups meet twice each term – once online and once during the 'long-thin' study days. You will also, of course, still meet regularly with your vicar and others as you continue to explore your discernment journey.

To further support you in your personal learning and formation, you will be allocated a personal tutor with whom you would meet at least termly.

Spiritual Director

If you do not already meet regularly with a Spiritual Director/Accompanier you will be strongly encouraged to do so.

Reporting and Self-Evaluation

Towards the end of each year, you will be asked to complete a self-evaluation of your learning and development. This, together with input from your local vicar, core staff and formation tutors, will form the basis of a brief report which you will have opportunity to sign and comment upon.

Worship

Worship is a vital context and foundation for all learning and formation. Apart from regular worship in the parish, which provides a context for both learning and spiritual sustenance, candidates in training will spend time together in worship during study days, residentials and online tutorials. You will pray together in formation groups and there is an annual Quiet Day for LLMs in training.

Candidates will be expected to engage in and lead worship in a range of contexts during training (including the local parish), encouraged to grow in experience and confidence, and explore less familiar and more diverse liturgical resources as well as those already more familiar.

Inclusion and accessibility

Our aim is to make training as accessible as we possibly can, so please talk to us if there are adjustments we can make or other things we can do to help you with your learning and enable you to engage fully with the programme.

We are committed to fostering a culture of learning in which students feel safe, respected and valued by one another and by staff. We seek to nurture this through highlighting the theological model of dialogue and listening, facilitating a space in which all both belong and learn. Concerns relating to bias or discrimination will be addressed with the aim of achieving reconciliation, change and appropriate learning.

Safeguarding

We are committed to keeping all our students safe. Safeguarding concerns will be taken seriously by staff, with support and direction from our Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Assessment

Don't let the idea of assessment put you off! If you are interested in exploring LLM ministry we will do everything we can to find ways of helping you track your development in ways that work for you and help you embed your learning.

We embrace a creative assignment framework designed to prioritise assessment *for* learning as much as *of* it, and you can expect module assignments which focus on practical ministry as well as the embedding of wider learning. Assessment options that do not always depend on the written word (for example, group presentations and assessed conversations) form part of the standard programme, as well as project reports, theological reflections and creating resources for ministry.

LLM candidates are required to complete a total of five assignments in each year of training. Completion of 'formative assignments' is also required, but these are carefully designed to help you complete the main assignments.

Common Awards (Durham University) - Foundation Award

LLM candidates are no longer required to undertake a formal academic award during their training. There is, however, opportunity to opt in to a Common Awards Foundation Award validated by Durham University, should you wish to. This is a 60-credit (3 module) award validated by Durham University at HE Level 4. It equates to half of a Certificate of Higher Education (Cert HE), which (at 120 credits) is equivalent to the first year of a full university degree programme. If you continue to Year 2, you may also be given the option to progress the full 120-credit CertHE.

By enrolling for a formally validated academic award, you would, in effect, be signing up to the following additional training commitments, which need to be taken seriously:

1. completion of two or three *additional* assignments each year
2. more rigorous assignment deadlines and referencing requirements.

Please indicate interest as soon as possible before the start of the academic year.

Prior learning and experience

Prior learning and experience is carefully considered and, where appropriate, exemptions from specific aspects of the standard programme can be made. Please ask for further details.

FAQs

- **I've been out of education for a long time, will I cope with the study?**
  This is true of many people who engage with courses of this nature and most discover that they find their feet again soon enough! At the same time, we are experienced in supporting adult learners returning to study after a break of sometimes many years. You will be given support from course tutors and core team to ease you back in and, if further support is required, we will help to source that for you.

- **What will it cost?**
  Core LLM training costs are picked up by the diocese, and you don't even have to buy lots of books, unless you wish to (you will be given access to a vast library of online resources, and required reading will be provided for you for all modules.) PCCs may be able to provide a modest grant to help towards books or travel expenses for candidates in training.

- **When would I know my timetable for the first year?**
  Dates for the whole year are usually confirmed soon after Easter of the previous year. Just ask for details if you need to know training requirements for certain times of the year or, for example, the weekends on which induction and study days will fall

Next steps

If the prospect of exploring ministry as an LLM (Reader) excites you, the first thing now is to chat with your vicar, who would then be able to refer you to the LLM team to take things forward.

In the meantime, if you want to look at a sample module, to give you an idea of what some of the training looks like, or perhaps speak to someone already in LLM training, please just ask.

For all enquiries, contact our LLM Administrator: carolyn.main@oxford.anglican.org

What they say....

- *"The learning materials provided to work through each week were well-balanced. I particularly enjoyed the reading, which was well-chosen and thought-provoking and added a great deal to the tutorials."*
- *I really liked the course content. I thought the mix of watching, listening and reading was just right. Asking questions of me as I went along was great as it confirmed my understanding of what I had just learnt. The weekly group session was a great opportunity for me to share my views and opinions on what I had learnt during the module and to listen to other learners' views and opinions on what they had learnt.*
- *This course has significant impact on my faith and my ability to share my beliefs with others. It has deepened my understanding of my own belief, and it has also developed a stronger sense of purpose and mission in my life it has given me more confidence to share the word of God and given me knowledge how to grow new congregations and bring them closer to God.*
- *"I have enjoyed every week of this course and revisit themes discussed often. The discussion, reading and materials have added to my knowledge and understanding of discipleship and have caused me to reflect on my own discipleship and what I can address and pray about.*
- *The study days were good. It's stimulating to be with others on the same pathway."*