



## MISSION COUNCIL

13 – 15 MAY 2013

# H1

# Reshaping Student Finances: Appendix 1

## Current Pathways and Patterns in Education for Ministry Phase 1

This is a narrative from the colleges about the lives of students on the various pathways and patterns of training currently offered by the different colleges – the accounts are all fictional but reflect the experience the colleges have had in all sorts of ways over many years. The hope is that the lives and experiences of the different ‘students’ will help to personalise the financial discussions and give an insight into the benefits and challenges of these individualised formational pathways.

### NORTHERN COLLEGE

Formation for ministry usually takes place in a pattern of study over four years, both full time and part time, in which reflection upon a wide variety of denominational and secular placements is an integral part of working towards a qualification in contextual theology with the University of Manchester. The pattern of placements varies between Ministry of Word and Sacrament (MWS) and Church Related Community Work (CRCW) students. Most full-time MWS students also undertake a summer pastorate and all have the opportunity of an overseas placement. This is in addition to the ‘College Time’ (as the name implies, this is the time with students and staff within NoCo rather than the cross-college academic teaching at Luther King House) which is the opportunity for more practical formation: URC-focussed ethos and practice is reflected within it. We have a number of students on pathways of less than four years, taking into account their prior experience and qualifications. At present we have students with us for 3½ years, 3 years, 2½ years, and 2 years but it is impossible to predict variations in patterns for the future because they are so personalised.

### MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS

#### Full time – Diploma (level 5)

- **Grant-maintained** – N1 trained over four years. She came to the college with limited academic background and difficult experiences in her earlier education. For a considerable time she struggled with this aspect of the training – both attaining a good level and in terms of her confidence. But she engaged with the variety of her placements and gained experience and confidence there from the start. She would certainly not have been ready for ministry without the four years full time. She truly grew in self-awareness and her gifting and passion only really showed itself during the final months.
- **Expenses-only** – We have never had a student who has been self-funding on the full-time BA or Diploma pathway. However, there are occasionally students who have never taken a government student loan before and applying for one assists the URC. Their pattern of study would be the same as other Diploma/BA students and the URC would only pay academic fees and expenses.

## Full Time – BA (level 6)

- **Grant-maintained** – N2 trained over four years. He had been successful in running his own company, has an insightful mind but hadn't written an essay since school days. He benefited enormously from the theological reflection upon his placements and engaged with them wholeheartedly – this was the single biggest factor in helping him to make the transition from a very different form of work into ministry. The full-time pattern to a BA has ensured the student was stretched intellectually to the right level for him. Given this student's work ethic when he began, had he not been challenged by the variety of placements he benefited from he could well have experienced burn out quite quickly in ministry.
- **Expenses-only** – See under Diploma level above.

## Full Time – MA

- **Grant-maintained** – It was clear that N3 was an able student. He came with a first degree in a humanities subject and began on the undergraduate programme. He reached diploma level which gave him the necessary theological and biblical grounding before he switched to the MA programme. The MA has clearly taken this student to a good level of achievement, but more than that, the four years have given him the space to apply his theological thinking, with an able mind, to his placement experiences. This student might well have been a candidate for undertaking MPhil or even doctoral research as a potential theologian/educator in the URC in the future and his example raises the question of where (EM2 or 3) such work might be done in the future, but also of how it might be funded.
- **Expenses-only** – N4 is training over three years. She has been means tested and does not qualify for a grant. She brought with her a first degree in fairly traditionally-taught theology and the MA was the obvious pathway for her. Being able to spread the MA over three years has allowed her to use her assignments to reflect on variety of placement types and to stretch her awareness of the breadth of the URC. Again, she is a possible candidate for further research in the future. The URC pays only for fees and expenses.

## Part Time – Diploma/Foundation Degree

- **Expenses only** – All weekend students are self-funding apart from fees and expenses and, at the moment, teaching is only available to take them to Diploma level. They all study for four years – which is necessary for several reasons: (a) the amount of teaching we can offer in one year means they can only complete the requisite number of modules in four years; (b) with fewer hours on placement, the four years and the variety is essential; (c) 'College Time' is already limited (in duration compared to the mid-week pattern) and we do not feel it is appropriate to reduce this further. Student N5 was not a local preacher before he began training and he needed the four years to develop his preaching as well as his knowledge and ability to reflect.

## Part Time – MA

- **Expenses only** - A few students come in only for MA teaching and tutorial time. They are self-funding apart from fees and expenses. This pattern is usually for those with an appropriate first degree but also considerable experience working in the URC – for example, a Minister in non-Stipendiary service transferring to ministry in Stipendiary service or a CRCW becoming a MWS in stipendiary service.

N6 is changing from NSM to SM and she is undertaking the MA as her place to reflect upon the new challenges. Because she was self-funding she needed to continue in her 'day job', and, taken together with NSM responsibilities and college work, it was a real challenge for her to complete

within two years. Even so, she struggled to complete her dissertation before her induction in her new post.

## **CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORK MINISTRY**

### **Full-time (grant-maintained) BA/Diploma students (who, in addition, receive English Standard Board for Community Development accreditation)**

The placement-hours requirement for CRCW students means it is not possible to fulfil all requirements as a part-time student for all, or any, of their years at the College. Therefore, all CRCW students train for four years full time and are grant-maintained. Although I can conceive of a CRCW student who, after means testing, would not receive a grant, in practical terms I think this is unlikely.

- N7 is dyslexic and so her writing did not fully reflect her ability. She experienced being freed from previous poor experiences of education by having this recognised and supported by the College. The community-work modules are all taught over extended weekends, but the student selected some mid-week modules to complete a BA. There are few CRCW students and this gave N7 the opportunity to be part of the mid-week community and she felt less isolated.

## **THE SCOTTISH COLLEGE**

There are a number of distinctive elements in the patterns of EM1 offered through the Scottish College:

- Almost all students pursue an academic award, through either an appropriate local University in the case of full-time, grant-maintained pathways or through a validated course at the Theological Institute of the Scottish Episcopal Church (TISEC) in the case of part-time, expenses-only pathways.
- All students undertake supervised placements close to their home base, which could be in any part of Scotland or the North of England.
- All students take part in a weekly day of formational studies which are offered by the Scottish College staff on an open basis. So EM1 students potentially learn alongside members, Elders, and Ministers of the United Reformed Church and ecumenical partners who are interested in the particular subjects being offered.
- The majority of students at the Scottish College in recent years have been graduates of humanities subjects or theology when candidating for ministry, and many of them have undertaken an intensive one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Theology offered by the University of Edinburgh before moving on to Masters subjects.
- The length of full-time EM1 programmes of the Scottish College tends to be two or two and a half years due to the previous educational attainment of the students.

## **WESTMINSTER COLLEGE**

Education for ministry at Westminster 'normally' takes four years, but there is a great deal of room for a variety of pathways, taking into account educational styles and needs, previous learning and experience, and personal or family circumstances. Students study within the context of the ecumenical Cambridge Theological Federation, but while some live here, some commute either weekly or occasionally. They engage in a variety of placements (church, social context and international),

alongside study, throughout their time in education for ministry, and all students have a sustained and intensive placement, usually at the end of their time with us, called the Living Ministry Placement. We believe that ‘all learning is formation’ and throughout all the varied parts of learning, in church and in the classroom, in social context and in the life of shared community here and at home, students are learning to reflect and to pray, to seek wisdom and acquire skills. There are some parts of what we do that are outside the ecumenical programmes of the Cambridge setting, but most preparation for URC ministry is done in the richness of a truly ecumenical space.

### **Full time – FdA/BA (Anglia Ruskin) ... in future years Diploma/BA (Durham) ... plus Living Ministry Placement**

#### **Grant-maintained**

- W1 is being prepared for ministry over 4 years. He is in his early 30s and has 2 children under 5 – his partner is their full-time carer, taking a career break from teaching. This student has little previous formal education. He is clearly bright, creative and enthusiastic about learning, but (in part because of dyslexia) learns best with face to face contact with tutors and in seminar groups. He will study either to Diploma or to BA level and will then do a one year placement in a pastorate (the Living Ministry Programme) being in college one day a week in term.

The whole family have moved to be near Westminster and are thoroughly immersed in the life of Cambridge, the ecumenical Cambridge Theological Federation, and a local URC very different from the one they came from.

The community life with its daily prayers and rich diet of opportunities suits W1 well and, though he was wary of moving life to Cambridge and giving up his job (and income), he is thriving on it and growing in ways he hadn't expected. He is discovering that he can achieve in some areas in ways he never thought possible, holding his own in an ecumenical classroom, getting some good grades for assessments, and excellent reports for his interpersonal and communication skills.

He receives the full grant, including an accommodation allowance so that the family can rent a small house near Cambridge, and child allowances. He has no significant savings, and in fact came with some small debt. Family help out a little, but they are not well off and so cannot do much. His local church do give him a few hundred pounds a year which helps towards books and his Synod have helped out with a grant towards travel to an international placement. A college fund, with the aim of helping students with young families, has also given a few hundreds of pounds support, when the student's car needed some urgent repairs. Student W1 was tempted to choose a cheaper way of training, but he was encouraged to believe that he and the family would just about be able to manage on the grant for four years and that it would be worth it to be able to train in this community setting. He certainly could not have done this on a lower level of grant and would not have risked getting heavily into debt that, on a stipend, he would not be able to repay.

### **Part-time FdA (Anglia Ruskin) ... in future years Diploma (Durham) – plus Living Ministry Placement**

#### **Expenses-only**

- W2 is being prepared for ministry over 4 years. She is in her late 40s and has teenage children. She is continuing to live at the family home 100 miles from Cambridge, but travels to Cambridge once a fortnight for several days each time. She has a good mix of local tutors and she has good experiences of intensive days at college when she attends classes and seminars, worship and prayer, as well as throwing herself into community life. She will have her Living Ministry placement close to her home in her final year and will continue to travel to college once a fortnight. W2 is very bright and thrives on the blend of distance learning and face to face teaching – with local tutors and with college staff. She will be able to get to Diploma level part-time over three years, but could clearly achieve a higher level than this and hopes to do that, if she can, in her

- first pastorate (while she recognises how hard and demanding that will be). She is doing this alongside a full time job, and with agreed time out for study, but is thinking of cutting down her
- work hours so that she has more time for the demands of placements, study and prayer. The URC pays all her fees and travel expenses, and her accommodation whilst in college, but otherwise she is self-funding.

### **Mix of part-time and full-time – MA in pastoral theology (Anglia Ruskin) plus Living Ministry Placement**

- W3 began life at the college by preparing part-time for Ministry of Word and Sacraments in non-Stipendiary service. He has a previous degree in Theology and has quite a lot of church experience as a lay preacher. He is doing the MA, designed for students with a high level of pastoral experience and some previous experience of theological study. He lives at home, about 50 miles away, and travels every week during term to college for MA classes. He has recently received a severance package from work which is why he has both time to undertake part-time study and the means to support himself for a short while at least. The URC pays his expenses, fees and travel. When, in the midst of this, he tests a call to stipendiary service, he completes the MA (after two years part time), but then proceeds to a full time pattern of training. One year is spent in a mix of learning opportunities and placements in both church and secular settings and in doing the college's Life and Service courses which are where he really begins to engage with what it means to minister in the URC. In the final year he undertakes a Living Ministry Placement, travelling to a placement 20 miles from his home and one day a week to college. For the two years part time he is paid expenses only, but as he moves into full time study he is paid a basic grant. In the first year of full time study he still has some resources from his severance package and so returns some of the grant, but in the second year he has need of it and is grateful for it.

### **Full-time BTh – University of Cambridge**

- W4 is married with three children. She is academically gifted and was delighted to be accepted for education for ministry and to study on the BTh degree. She can only do this by studying for at least three years full time and by being (for the first three of those at least) residential in Cambridge during term.

W4 and her husband (who is the prime carer for their children) have kept the family home, about 70 miles from Cambridge. The children remain in their schools and her husband cares for them there. W4 commutes weekly to Cambridge during term and has a college room Monday to Thursday, returning to the family home at weekends and engaging in a placement in a local church on Sundays. This arrangement means that she can study hard during the week and concentrate on family at the weekends, though of course life has to be flexible. Her husband has a small income from a part-time job. The grant from the URC means that they can keep the home (which they own and hope to rent out when they are called to a pastorate somewhere else in the country) and pay for a college room during term. The family are learning to economise (since W4 used to earn a good salary), but they know this is good preparation for life on a stipend.

### **Full time – Tripos (Cambridge) plus Living Ministry Placement – and PhD**

- W5 is a warm, rounded person with great interpersonal skills and innate wisdom. She is single. She is also academically a high-flyer. She is studying through Westminster but is also a member of a University of Cambridge College (necessary for matriculation). She has gained a bursary from her university college to cover part of the high level of fees for the Tripos degree. The URC pays the rest and gives her a basic grant, which she supplements through support from family and from working during the summer months, when placements permit. She is happy to live in a student room. During her Living Ministry Placement year she continues to live as cheaply as possible in a

- student room, and continues to do that as she begins the first year of a PhD. She is one of a small number of students doing a higher degree as part of EM1. She's a very determined person and will certainly finish the PhD, even if that means doing so while also serving a lively, and diverse, first pastorate. She keeps up study and research part-time and, after her second pastorate, is called to a teaching post in one of the URC's Resource Centres for Learning....

Prepared by the Principals of the three Colleges

5 April 2013