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Section One: Introduction

“The seminary can be seen as a place and a period in life. But it is above all an educational community in progress. It is a community established by the bishop to offer to those called by the Lord to serve as apostles the possibility of reliving the experience of formation, which our Lord provided for the Twelve. In fact, the Gospels present a prolonged and intimate sharing of life with Jesus as a necessary premise for the apostolic ministry. Such an experience demands of the Twelve the practice of detachment in a particularly clear and specific fashion, a detachment that in some way is demanded of all the disciples, a detachment from their roots, from their usual work, from their nearest and dearest (cf. Mk. 1:16-20; 10:28; Lk. 9:23, 57-62; 14:25-27).”¹

Aims of the Seminary

Priests should be men of faith, hope and love, who know themselves called to share the ministry and mission of Christ, the Teacher, Sanctifier and Shepherd, in the Church, building apostolic faith-communities within society by the power of the Holy Spirit. The primary function of the seminary, therefore, is two-fold:

- i. To help those who have been accepted by their Ordinaries as potential candidates for the Catholic priesthood to discern further their priestly vocation;
- ii. To form them for service as diocesan priests.

This means helping seminarians develop a clear sense of priestly identity and mission within contemporary culture.

Seminary Year

Formation for priesthood has many different aspects. Most of the time is spent living in community at Oscott in order to experience, in a particular way, the “prolonged and intimate sharing of life with Jesus as a necessary premise for the apostolic ministry”.² Also, a significant period of each year is spent in parish placements and with family and friends.

Faith

Oscott is a community of faith. It is our faith that has brought us here; without it our life here would be an absurdity. It is a community of discernment. We strive to discover what God’s will is for each of us, especially in regard to a possible vocation to the ministerial priesthood. We are all involved in this process of discernment and growth. Together we provide the atmosphere of mutual love and encouragement in which decisions are to be made. This community depends on the co-operation of each individual. Community life is not easy; it requires a great deal of selflessness and self-awareness, looking towards others rather than toward our comfort and convenience. A community such as ours needs much more than mutual tolerance; it demands openness to the difference of others; a willingness to learn from each other; and to develop and mature through this sharing of our lives.

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis* (1992), 60.

² PDV, 60.

Four Dimensions

The seminary is an "educational ecclesial community" in which there are four areas or dimensions of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. These are bound together into the one, organic journey of Christian and priestly living.³ The four dimensions are not to be thought of as distinct units or as criteria for allocating time and energy. Although different dimensions may necessarily take on greater significance at different moments, all four dimensions of formation are, nevertheless, to be continuously and vigorously pursued throughout a priest's life.

Community Life: an extract from the Rule of St Benedict

Oscott seminary is not a monastic community. It is, however, a community and a house of formation where we are called to steady perseverance in discerning our vocation and growing in our spiritual lives. The following extract from the Rule of St Benedict has something to say to us about the way in which we live and work together:

'The first of all things to aim at is to love the Lord your God with whole heart and soul and strength and then to love your neighbour as much as you do yourself. The other commandments flow from these two: not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to indulge our base desires, not to give false evidence against one another, to give due honour to all and not to inflict on someone else what you would resent if it were done to yourself.

Renounce your own desires and ambitions so as to be free to follow Christ. Control your body with self-discipline, don't give yourself to unrestrained pleasure; learn to value the self-restraint of fasting. Give help and support to the poor; clothe the naked, visit the sick and bury the dead. Console and counsel those who suffer in time of grief and bring comfort to those in sorrow.

Don't get too involved in purely worldly affairs and count nothing more important than the love you should cherish for Christ. Don't let your actions be governed by anger nor nurse your anger against a future opportunity of indulging it. Don't harbour in your heart any trace of deceit nor pretend to be at peace with another when you are not; don't abandon the true standards of charity. Don't use oaths to make your point for fear of perjury, but speak the truth with integrity of heart and tongue.

If you are harmed by anyone, never repay it by returning the harm. In fact, you should never inflict any injury on another but bear patiently whatever you have to suffer. Love your enemies, then; refrain from speaking evil but rather call a blessing on those who speak evil of you; if you are persecuted for favouring a just cause, then bear it patiently.

Avoid all pride and self-importance. Don't drink to excess nor over-eat. Don't be lazy nor give way to excessive sleep. Don't be a murmurer and never in speaking take away the good name of another.

³ PDV, 42.

Your hope of fulfilment should be centred on God alone. When you see any good in yourself, then, don't take it to be your very own, but acknowledge it as a gift from God. On the other hand, you may be sure that any evil you do is always your own and you may safely acknowledge your responsibility.

You should recognise that there will be a day of reckoning and judgement for all of us, which should make us afraid of how we stand between good and evil. But, while you should have a just fear of the loss of everything in hell, you should above all cultivate a longing for eternal life with a desire of great spiritual intensity. Keep the reality of death always before your eyes, have a care about how you act every hour of your life and be sure that God is present everywhere and that he certainly sees and understands what you are about.

If ever evil thoughts occur to your mind and invade your heart cast them down at the feet of Christ and talk about them frankly to your spiritual father or mother. Take care to avoid any speech that is evil and degenerate. It is also well to avoid empty talk that has no purpose except to raise a laugh. As for laughter that is unrestrained and raucous, it is not good to be attracted to that sort of thing.

You should take delight in listening to sacred reading and in often turning generously to prayer. You should also in that prayer daily confess to God with real repentance any evil you have done in the past and for the future have the firm purpose to put right any wrong you may have done.

Don't act out the sensuous desires that occur to you naturally and turn away from the pursuit of your own will. Rather you should follow in obedience the directions your abbot or abbess gives you, even if they, which God forbid, should contradict their own teaching by the way they live. In such a case remember the Lord's advice about the example of the Pharisees: accept and follow their teaching but on no account imitate their actions.

No one should aspire to gain a reputation for holiness. First of all, we must actually become holy; then there would be some truth in having a reputation for it. The way to become holy is faithfully to fulfil God's commandments every day by loving chastity, by hating no one, by avoiding envy and hostile rivalry, by not becoming full of self but showing due respect for our elders and love for those who are younger, by praying in the love of Christ for those who are hostile to us, by seeking reconciliation and peace before the sun goes down whenever we have a quarrel with another, and finally by never despairing of the mercy of God.

These then, are the guidelines to lead us along the way of spiritual achievement. If we follow them day and night and never on any account give up, so that on judgement day we can give an account of our fidelity to them, that reward will be granted us by the Lord which he himself had promised in the scriptures: what no eye has seen nor heard God has prepared for those who love him.⁴

⁴ Patrick Barry OSB, *Saint Benedict's Rule* (Ampleforth Abby Press: Ampleforth 1997), 13-16.

Safeguarding Statement

“The Catholic Church of England and Wales, the Bishops and Religious Congregational Leaders are committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church and affirm a ‘One Church’ approach⁵ to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk through the promotion of a sustained culture of constant vigilance.”⁶

The seminary must be a safe environment for all those who live, work and visit the college and we recognise the moral, social and legal responsibilities we all have as a community. Special care must be taken to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults whilst remembering that everyone can be vulnerable to abuse and the misuse of power. The term ‘abuse’ describes a range of ways people harm someone either knowingly, or by failing to act to prevent harm,⁷ and this harm could be institutional, sexual, physical, emotional, material, etc. or through neglect.

Oscott College sets out how we will manage our shared responsibilities in the Safeguarding policy and procedure document and as well in accompanying policies such as whistle blowing and health and safety. We provide training and regular reviews to ensure everyone is aware of how to achieve a safe community that is based on transparency, respect, dignity and courtesy at all times and that our policies remain legally compliant and offer best practice.

Responsibilities

The **Rector** in conjunction with the board of trustees and as part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham has overall responsibility to ensure that Oscott College is a safe, supportive and positive environment.

The **Safeguarding Representative** is responsible for the day to day management of safeguarding.

The **Human Formation Coordinator** is responsible for the training of safeguarding and for coordinating emotional support.

The **Whole Community**, all those who live, work and visit the college have responsibility to understand and adhere to the colleges policies and procedures

Safeguarding Training

The seminary provides mandatory safeguarding training. Everyone, full-time, part-time, resident, non-resident, diocesan or a member of a religious community, must take responsibility to adhere to policies and attend compulsory training. If you are part-time you must make sure you are available on the day the training is provided for your year group and for the whole house annual safeguarding update. Further information can be found in our Safeguarding Policy and in the Guide to the Intellectual Formation Programme.

⁵ The One Church approach refers to the commitment by the Church in England and Wales to using the same policies, procedures, standards and systems in relation to safeguarding.

⁶ Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service Policy Statement (June 2019 pg.1 available at <https://www.csas.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Policy-Statement.docx>

⁷ CSAS Safeguarding learning programme for seminaries serving the Roman Catholic church in England & Wales – Module 2 (2019 Pg10 §4.3)

Reporting Concerns

The seminary wants everyone to feel able to appropriately raise concerns about any potential safeguarding issue. If you have any safeguarding concerns please speak to either our Safeguarding Representative, Jayne Tomkinson, or in her absence, the Rector.

**Archdiocese of Birmingham
Safeguarding Office
0121 230 6240
safeguarding@rc-birmingham.org**



The Rector & Trustees



Safeguarding Representative

For reporting all safeguarding concerns or to seek advice speak directly in confidence to

Jayne Tomkinson

07414 469 765

jayne.tomkinson@oscott.org



Human Formation Coordinator

For all safeguarding training enquiries speak to

Pete Smallwood

07765 577 483

pete.smallwood@oscott.org



Section Two: Community Life

Weekly Routine: St Mary's College, Oscott, is a formation community. Our time together, in prayer, at table and in social situations, is therefore vital to our way of life. In practice, this means there are events on the timetable which we all attend. To miss such events effects both our formation and the quality of our community life. Attendance of the following events is, therefore, expected:

- i. Daily Mass (which on Wednesdays can be outside the College).
- ii. The daily Holy Hour.
- iii. Community Morning Prayer.
- iv. Community Evening Prayer.
- v. Rosary after lunch on Saturday.
- vi. Community liturgies and devotions, such as Stations of the Cross.
- vii. Lunch (unless otherwise stated) and House celebrations.
- viii. House Groups and all House Group events, such as liturgy planning.
- ix. House Talks.
- x. Pastoral work and all requirements of the Pastoral Programme.
- xi. Lectures and all requirements of the Intellectual Programme.
- xii. Human Formation Group sessions.
- xiii. Chant Practice.

Absences: On occasion, and with good reason, a member of the community may need to be absent from these events. Please discuss this in advance with the Vice Rector. If it is agreed that a seminarian is to miss a lecture or any other part of the formation programme, the Vice Rector will inform the Academic Registrar or relevant member of the Formation Staff.

All members of the community are expected to be in college overnight. If you wish to be out of the college overnight, please discuss this in advance with the Vice Rector. On Tuesdays (when they precede the *dies non*) it is generally possible to be out overnight without seeking agreement (though it is essential to sign out in the fire book, for safety reasons).

Should you miss any community events, including lunch or times of prayer, please acknowledge this absence promptly with your Formation Tutor. If you are unwell at any point during term time, please inform *both* the Vice Rector and your Formation Tutor, giving a brief description of the nature of your illness. An email is sufficient.

Silence: In a House of Formation we need to be "concerned about the keeping of external silence, without which there is no interior silence of soul and which is needed for thought and for the work and the repose alike of the whole community".⁸

Therefore:

- i. All should observe quiet in the sacristies and in the immediate vicinity of both chapels.

⁸ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Basic Norms for Priestly Formation* (1985), 57

- ii. All should respect the privacy of each other's rooms and the right each person has to peace and quiet for study and prayer. No one should cause a nuisance to his neighbours by making noise. Radios and other audio equipment should not be played so loudly that they disturb others.
- iii. Each evening after 10.00pm until breakfast the following day, the House should be quiet and restraint should be exercised on corridors.
- iv. On Days of Recollection and during Retreats, all should refrain from texting, the use of the internet, and any distractions. Telephones should only be used in the case of emergency.

Library: The rules laid down by the Librarian should be observed. Please do not remove any books except under the conditions laid down. It is important for the good of all that reserved or recommended books should not be removed from the library.

Domestic Arrangements: Other issues concerning the good order of the house

- i. If you are not able to be in College for a meal because of pastoral work, a packed lunch can be ordered by signing 'P' on the sign-in sheets, on or before the previous day. Please collect this from a member of the kitchen staff.
- ii. Apart from collecting packed lunches, no food, drink or utensils should be taken from the refectory or kitchen except by the duty Refectorian.
- iii. Access to the kitchen area is reserved to the Domestic Staff and the duty Refectorian. Trolleys are to be collected and returned to the fire door outside the top refectory door.
- iv. Any requests about food in general should be made to the Vice Rector by the Chief Refectorian.
- v. Every respect and consideration are to be given to the Domestic and Estates staff. Some parts of the College are reserved for their use, especially their common room areas.
- vi. No smoking is allowed within the building. The 'No Smoking Policy' can be found in the Oscott Health and Safety Manual.

Personal Responsibility: At times, the demands of community life may feel quite prescriptive, but they are there to provide a framework in which our formation takes place, and to encourage growth in charity. Within this framework, it is vital that each person takes responsibility for his own formation and development. The basics of community life are the starting point. Within that, each of us is called to give generously, driven not by obligation, but by the desire to grow and to give. Oscott is not just a place of work; it is our home. It is here that we build relationships, develop friendships, and extend our cultural interests. It is here that we learn to integrate the various elements of our life; the spiritual, the intellectual, the pastoral, and the cultural - prayer, work, and leisure. Experience has shown that there are some areas of personal responsibility that are essential not only for a healthy lifestyle in seminary but also for the future as diocesan priests:

- i. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the common good of the house through the various House Jobs and Common Room Jobs. It is also important that every seminarian contributes his own ideas and initiatives to the House Groups and any other house meetings in order to participate fully in the life of the house.

- ii. Everyone is expected to look after the room in which he lives; to keep it clean and tidy. The room is entrusted to him during his time here, but it is also for the service of the Church and may be needed for priests' retreats, other events during the summer months, and other seminarians after he has moved. Blu-tac or its equivalent must not be used to attach anything to the walls as it damages the paintwork.
- iii. Everyone is expected to look after his own health, to keep fit, and to use moderation and discernment in what he eats.
- iv. Everyone is expected to show moderation in regard to alcohol consumption and be aware of the danger of addiction both for himself and others. We should always exercise due discretion, especially in licensed premises near to the College.
- v. In preparation for a life-long commitment to celibacy, it is essential that we encourage each other to have chaste and wholesome relationships, within and outside the seminary.
- vi. It is the responsibility of each member of the house to abide by the Guidelines on Safeguarding for the Archdiocese of Birmingham and to ensure the protection of any children or vulnerable adults who visit the premises. <http://www.csas.uk.net/>
- vii. Text messaging, e-mail and other online media allow the possibility of almost unlimited communication. It is essential, therefore, for each individual to establish prudent boundaries in order to ensure the quality of his personal relationships and his commitment to celibacy.
- viii. When a seminarian accesses the internet, he needs to be aware that he does not do so as a private person but as an ambassador of the College, of the Church, and, therefore, of Christ. Whilst the internet can and should be used as a powerful tool of evangelisation and catechesis, it can, with inappropriate use, lead to scandal. It is important to be aware of the addictive nature of the internet and to be prudent about the amount of time spent on line. All internet sites containing narratives or images of racism, gratuitous violence, or pornography are inappropriate and need to be avoided at all times. A seminarian needs to reflect on when and where he accesses the internet so as to avoid situations when he is feeling vulnerable through tiredness or stress.
- ix. Everyone has a responsibility to maintain and uphold the good name of Oscott College and the reputable standing of seminarians and staff and all who live and work here. Appropriate discretion should be used when discussing community matters outside the College. This is particularly important when communicating on the internet. Great care should be given concerning the use of 'blogs' and membership of chat rooms and web-based communities. When publishing any information on the internet about other members of the community, whether it is a photograph, video clip, or piece of written text, permission must be sought from those individuals beforehand (refer to Acceptable Internet Usage Policy).

Behaviour towards others: Oscott College strives to be a place where all staff, seminarians, employees, and visitors are welcomed and made to feel comfortable and appreciated. The diversity of cultural backgrounds, life experiences and abundance of skills present within the college provide a rich canvas which all can contribute to, as well as draw from, as a source of guidance and support. As such, behaviour towards others, regardless of their status and position within the college,

which is perceived to be disrespectful, offensive and contrary to Christ's teaching, is unacceptable.

Deportment: How we present ourselves to others matters. It is significant that we learn to dress appropriately for different occasions. When formal dress is required at a House event, jackets should be worn. Clericals are the norm at formal events after a seminarian has been made a Candidate for Holy Orders. Before then, they are only to be worn with a superior's permission.

Obedience: Keeping the Rule of Life at College is possible because of respect and obedience. The entire seminary community – Formation Staff and seminarians – live under obedience to the Rector, who represents our bishops. In different ways, he shares this responsibility with the Formation Staff. Obedience can be difficult because it makes demands upon our will. Respect can be very difficult when we dislike a decision; however, it is much easier when we trust that decisions are being made in our best interests and those of the community. To embrace an attitude of respect and obedience in the seminary is how we prepare to live well the promises that we shall make to our bishop at ordination.

Hospitality

Oscott College recognises the virtue of hospitality as an integral part of the Gospel message, and so strives to welcome visitors and guests as Christ would receive them. At the same time, it must be attentive to its character as a seminary. It is with this in mind that we welcome visitors to Oscott College according to the following guidelines:

Definitions

The Policy: This policy applies to individual, overnight guests of staff, of seminarians and of the College itself. It does not apply to day visitors.

The Guest: There are two categories of guest:

- i. Guests of staff or seminarians.
- ii. Guests of the College.

The Staff Guest Master is the Vice Rector, who has overall responsibility for matters to which this policy refers.

The Seminarian Guest Master: The seminarian whose nominated House Job as Guest Master involves certain responsibilities relevant to this policy, as well as other duties relating to guests which fall outside the scope of this policy.

The Host: The College cannot welcome guests who are not hosted. In the case of guests of staff and seminarians, the staff member or seminarian who has invited the guest to stay, will be the host of that guest. In the case of guests of the College, the person inviting that guest in liaison with the Staff Guest Master will agree the host.

Procedures

Comportment: All guests are expected to respect the good order of the House, acting at all times in a manner that is consonant with the mission of the College.

Order of preference for guests:

- i. Bishops and vocations directors.
- ii. Family members, colleagues, and friends of the resident staff.
- iii. Staff from other seminaries.
- iv. Family members of seminarians.
- v. Guests of seminarians.
- vi. Seminarians from other seminaries.
- vii. Others as approved by the Vice Rector.

Seminarians may speak to the Vice Rector to request an overnight room for a guest. If the guest is attending a meal, the seminarian should sign them in, using the section for guests on the sign-in sheets, and noting any allergies or dietary requirements.

Responsibilities of the Host:

- i. To ensure that the guest understands how to gain access to the grounds and the building and to be available to meet and welcome them when they arrive.
- ii. To show the guest to their rooms and ensure that they have what they need.
- iii. To explain the daily schedule and all fire, security and safety procedures.
- iv. To sign the guest in for all meals required and note any dietary requirements.
- v. To host the guest during the entire period of their stay.
- vi. To explain to the guest, the areas reserved for staff or community use.
- vii. To explain the departure procedures to the guest.

In the case of guests of the College, (category 2), the responsibilities of the host may be shared by more than one person, including the Seminarian Guest Master. This will be established, as far as possible, at the initial contact with the Vice Rector.

Notification: A list of guests staying in the College will be posted on the notice board near the Refectory. This list will detail the names of the guests, the night(s) of their stay, and the allocated room.

Cooking: St Chad's, St Cedd's and Louis' Diner should not be used by guests for the preparation of food.

Costs: Guests may wish to donate towards their stay. Donation envelopes can be found in guest rooms and must be placed in the Guest Donation box situated by the main front entrance.

Blackout Dates: There are certain times in the year when seminarians may not have guests. These include:

- i. Induction week.
- ii. Completion and exam weeks.
- iii. Days of recollection and retreats.

Liturgy and Prayer: Guests are most welcome to join the community for liturgies or to use the Main Chapel for private prayer.

Holiday Periods: Outside term-time, the procedures remain the same for staff and college guests.

Personal Liability: The host should remind the guest that Oscott College cannot be held responsible for them or their property whilst they are a guest here.

Section Three: Human Formation

The Human Formation Programme at Oscott is based on *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 43-44, which sees human formation as the basis of all priestly formation, and the *Ratio Fundamentalis* (2016).

The Purpose of Human Formation

The focus of human formation is a lifelong commitment to personal growth. This is a process of change towards becoming the person, in the light of faith, that God created you to be.

Each one of us is invited to 'know yourself'; to have a deeper understanding of self in relation to others and his own inner life; to integrate his faith with his humanity; to let himself and the way he lives be shaped by the necessary search for truth and goodness.

"It is a journey which unfolds – as it must – within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know themselves and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming more pressing. That is why all that is the object of our knowledge becomes a part of our life. The admonition 'Know yourself' is testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimum norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as "human beings", that is as those who "know themselves".⁹

The priest is called to be a living image of Jesus Christ and so should try to "reflect in himself, as far as is possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God".¹⁰

The seminarian is encouraged to be honest with himself, flexible and open, sensitive to his own needs and the needs of others and reflective about internal resistance to change and any tendency to become defensive.

Human perfection is only achieved through grace. Human development, therefore, should not be seen as a task that has to be completed before spiritual development takes place; they go hand in hand. Human development is the enterprise of entrusting our human nature to respond to, and cooperate with, the Holy Spirit in order for it to be restored to its original beauty and dignity. "He who believes in Christ becomes a son of God. This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the ability to follow the example of Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and doing good. In union with his Saviour, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Having matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the glory of heaven."¹¹ This enterprise of responding and cooperating with the Holy Spirit on the journey to perfection is achieved through the practice of the virtues. The

⁹ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (1998), 1.

¹⁰ PDV, 43.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1709.

purpose of human development, therefore, is to lead a virtuous life and “the goal of a virtuous life is to become like God”.¹²

The Virtues

Amongst all the virtues there are four which have long been recognised, both by the Ancients and the Church, as pivotal for human development and from which all other human virtues are derived: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. For this reason, they are called the cardinal virtues; upon them everything else hinges ('cardinal' comes from the Latin word *cardo* for a hinge). These virtues are called human because they can be developed in our lives by our own effort and daily practice. For the Christian, these, and all the other human virtues are practiced in the light of the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. These virtues are called theological because they are only possible by God's grace. They “adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature”.¹³ From this it can be understood that in practice it is not possible to separate human formation from spiritual formation because for the Christian, it is the Holy Spirit who perfects human formation by infusing the theological virtues “into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life.”¹⁴ Therefore, the theological virtues can help us to live the cardinal.

The Task of Human Development

Seminarians, by the nature of their calling, are required to learn to live the cardinal and theological virtues. The practice of each virtue has many benefits for our lives. The following examples are not exhaustive.

Prudence 'is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it.'¹⁵ It allows us to make good judgements, including the goals of our life and the organisation of each day. It involves self-knowledge, the formation of our conscience, and an openness to change. Prudence allows us to assess how we are developing in formation and what needs particular attention. As a virtue, prudence can particularly guide the use of our tongue. It helps us to discern and maintain boundaries, and to judge when and where it is appropriate or inappropriate to share information. It enables us to be discrete, and avoid gossip, calumny, and defamation.

Justice 'is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour.'¹⁶ In other words, we must do right by each other; give each person what is properly owing to them. Growth in this virtue will involve careful consideration of how we treat others. We must do not what is easy or comfortable but what is right. Acting justly demands humility as we challenge our reasons for our choices. Just actions towards the seminary and others can consist of simple matters as being attentive at the dinner table, signing out books before we remove them from the library, turning off electrical appliances.

¹² St Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus* I, PG 44, 1200D.

¹³ CCC, 1812.

¹⁴ CCC, 1813.

¹⁵ CCC, 1806.

¹⁶ CCC, 1807.

Fortitude 'is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good.'¹⁷ Having prudently discerned what is just, we need fortitude to act on our resolutions. Without fortitude, we are unable to withstand temptation or persevere in the good. Examples of fortitude in our lives are doing right thing though it is unpopular, waking early to pray despite tiredness, and speaking up when we see immoral behaviour.

Temperance 'is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.'¹⁸ It allows us to do what is good for both our souls and bodies. Temperance enables us to curb any excesses in our life, including what we eat and drink. It also shapes our attitude to the natural world, a gift which must be nurtured and not exploited. Therefore, for example, in a world increasingly marked by climate change, temperance can inform our choices regarding travel or diet. In all ages, saints have encouraged the clergy to live a life of simplicity.

Faith 'is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that He has said and reveals to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself.'¹⁹ Faith flourishes when our personal relationship with the Lord is strong. Seminarians should seek to grow their desire to know and love Christ through prayer, study, and service of others. As faith is a divine gift, we should pray for its increase. We believe because the Church has revealed God to us. Charity demands that we seek to strengthen the faith of others.

Hope 'is the theological virtue by which we desire the Kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.'²⁰ Do we truly believe God's promises? How do we cope with disappointments? Paradoxically, hope for the Christian is a certainty: that God can be trusted and His love for us is sure. Hope empowers us to live a life of faith and charity. Even when we are in pain – physical, emotional or spiritual – hope allows us to persevere. It teaches us that any difficulty can be an opportunity for salvation.

Charity 'is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God.'²¹ Charity is the new commandment. It is the way Jesus has asked us to live. It is our reason for doing what is asked of us by God and His Church. As we are called to love even our enemies, we must also love all those we live with and serve. This commandment cannot be evaded if we are to be preachers of the Gospel. This theological virtue is necessarily more than we can achieve by our own efforts. We must pray to love each other.

The seminarian who grows in both the cardinal and theological virtues will become the priest the world needs. He will be mature enough – intellectually, affectively, and spiritually – to keep his promises and witness effectively to Christ. He will, in himself, be the best homily he preaches.

¹⁷ CCC 1808.

¹⁸ CCC 1809.

¹⁹ CCC 1814.

²⁰ CCC 1817.

²¹ CCC 1822.

“Of special importance is the capacity to relate to others. This is fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a ‘man of communion.’ This demands that the priest not be arrogant or quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet. He should be generous and ready to serve, capable of brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console (cf. 1 Tm. 3:1-5; Ti. 1:7-9). Many people, especially in large urban centres, are trapped in situations of monotony and loneliness, and, therefore, can be more appreciative of the value of communion. Today this is one of the most eloquent signs and one of the most effective ways of transmitting the Gospel message.”²²

Consequently, seminarians for the diocesan priesthood should aim for a simple standard of life, avoiding a complaining spirit, in order to seek a spirit of detachment. They also need to see and encourage the best in others rather than simply highlighting their faults.

Affective Maturity: The growth towards affective maturity includes an education in sexuality and an appreciation of the virtue of chastity by which a man becomes “capable of respecting and fostering the ‘nuptial meaning’ of the body”.²³ Consequently, human formation implies developing true, serene friendships in which the seminarian learns to bring to human relationships a strong, lively and personal love for Jesus Christ. The community life of the seminary itself encourages this by fostering that essential training in freedom and self-responsibility by which we learn to master ourselves, to become more maturely open to others and to resist, fight, and defeat selfishness and individualism.

Internal Forum and Confidentiality

The Human Formation programme is carried out in an environment of confidence. Respecting individual privacy and confidentiality are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting each other’s autonomy.

The level of trust and confidentiality may vary from *public*, less bounded/controlled settings such as in the whole community, to *semi-public* group agreements in workshops and to *individual*, more defined and confidential settings such as in monthly Human Development meetings or in counselling.

The human development team will help you to explore a deep understanding of the boundaries, rights, and responsibilities that facilitate a safe enough space for all of us to work in.

St John Paul II Centre for Human Formation: All human development meetings and workshops take place at the St John Paul II Centre unless otherwise stated.

²² PDV, 43.

²³ PDV, 44.

Human Development Meetings and Counselling

To support each seminarian's human development, monthly meetings with one of the Human Development Directors will be arranged. The purpose of these regular meetings is to offer support to the seminarian in their “self-formation”²⁴. It is an opportunity for the seminarian to talk about issues and events that are currently affecting them and to explore how this relates to their human formation. Greater self-awareness cultivates positive human qualities²⁵ and helps to overcome barriers to building positive clear and brotherly relationships.²⁶ Seminarians take responsibility for their own self-directed personal development process both during and after their time in seminary. The monthly meetings with the Human Development Director are seen as a regular support in this process and a help to develop a regular habit of seeking pastoral accompaniment and support once ordained. The seminarian can expect to experience being in a confidential, non-judgmental, authentic, and empathic relationship.

Some seminarians may experience periods when personal issues are becoming more difficult to manage and then the College can offer counselling support. Counselling sessions are an opportunity for seminarians to explore more deeply issues that are affecting them, exploring how personal values, emotions and life experiences are affecting an individual's sense of self-worth. Counselling “can furnish the candidate with a deeper knowledge of his personality, and can contribute to overcoming, or rendering less rigid, his psychic resistances to what his formation is proposing”.²⁷

Counselling sessions are generally held weekly in an accepting, non-judgmental relationship with a trained counsellor who “openly shares the Christian vision about the human person”²⁸ and who will actively listen and strive to understand the seminarian. The aim of counselling is always to facilitate self-awareness and autonomy in order to help see life choices more clearly.

Group Workshops: There will be a range of group workshops during the six-year programme ranging from introduction to human development to pastoral counselling skills. These are an opportunity to encounter each other in group settings and help to develop inter-relationship awareness. These skills are necessary for effective leadership and coresponsibly working as a pastor.

Rule of Life: The first priority in a formation community is an agreed way of life on a human level to which all are called to adhere. Although far from being the main purpose of seminary life, such a requirement provides the minimum basis from which we can grow and mature in our vocation. With a secure human foundation, we can grow spiritually and intellectually and be able to develop pastoral skills. Life after seminary may well not be lived in community, but the experience, self-knowledge, and skills that will be learnt here will form in us the human qualities that are essential

²⁴ PDV, 69.

²⁵ PDV, 43.

²⁶ PDV, 43.

²⁷ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for Priesthood* (2008), 9.

²⁸ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the use of Psychology*, 6.

for future ministry. Of course, priestly ministry demands some rule of life to ensure that each day the priest does those things, such as prayer, which are essential.

Within this context, time spent away from the seminary community, during holidays, is just as important as time spent at Oscott, both in terms of discernment of vocation and in preparation for priesthood. The style of life adopted by anyone when away from the seminary should be congruent with the rule of life considered appropriate when at the College, and forms a significant part of the formation process. For example, during the holidays a seminarian should be seeking to pray and attend Mass daily, and consider how and with whom he spends his time.

Section Four: Spiritual Formation

The Spiritual Formation Programme at Oscott is based on *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 45-50 and the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, 101-115.

Core of formation

Spiritual formation is at the core of formation for the priesthood and is central to the future priest's identity and mission. Because it is chiefly the work of the Holy Spirit in cooperation with human freedom, the responsibility for spiritual growth and formation lies principally with the seminarian. The aim of the Spiritual Formation Programme is thus to help the seminarian learn the life-long habit of living in intimate union with Jesus Christ, constantly seeking his friendship. This involves:

- i. Learning the genuine meaning of Christian prayer and prayerful reflection upon the Word of God, as put forward in the Church's Scriptures and Tradition, so as to become a man of God and one who can help others turn to God.
- ii. Learning how to participate lovingly and actively in the sacred mysteries, above all in daily Mass, the "summit and source"²⁹ of the sacraments and the Church's life; how to cultivate the virtue and discipline of the Sacrament of Penance; how to recite the Liturgy of the Hours so as to become inserted in a living way into the Paschal Mystery.
- iii. Developing a spirit of humble and disinterested service of others, especially the poor, with a love that is both strong and tender, in imitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so as to become a man of charity living in obedience, celibacy, and self-denial.

Spiritual formation will also pay particular attention to preparing the future priest to know, appreciate, love, and live celibacy out of genuine evangelical, spiritual, and pastoral motives and in accordance with its true nature and purpose.

Various Elements

The Spiritual Formation Programme at Oscott is not the sole responsibility of the College's Spiritual Directors but is blended with the other dimensions of formation. Its specific elements include:

- i. Daily preparation for, and celebration of Mass, the centre of College life.
- ii. Regular exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, with the possibility of private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.
- iii. The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. Where this celebration does not form part of the public timetable of the College, commitment to the recitation of the Divine Office in private remains a priority.
- iv. Frequent opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

²⁹ *Lumen Gentium* (1965), 11.

- v. The cultivation of daily private prayer, meditation alone and with others, self-discipline and spiritual reading, especially Scripture, *lectio divina* and the classics.
- vi. Devotion to Mary and the saints, including the recitation of the Rosary.
- vii. A weekly House Talk or Spiritual Conference.
- viii. The provision of annual College retreats and occasional days of recollection, as well as retreats in connection with ministries, plus an annual pilgrimage.
- ix. Year-specific courses on spirituality and Christian living.
- x. Opportunities for more informal styles of communal prayer, such as in groups, together with the development of the ability to offer extempore prayer.
- xi. Personal self-denial and fasting in accordance with the liturgical season or need;
- xii. Appreciation of and familiarity with traditional Catholic devotions as well as new movements and ways of prayer.
- xiii. The cultivation of a virtuous, morally converted life as the Gospel requires.

Spiritual Direction

In addition, each seminarian is required to select a Spiritual Director. Spiritual Direction in the Oscott context seeks to support, advise, and direct the seminarian in his personal development towards the overall goal of the formation programme in its four dimensions. It helps him to discern further his priestly vocation and to become better formed for service as a diocesan priest with a clear sense of priestly identity and mission within contemporary culture. Styles of spiritual direction will vary, but:

- i. It is the responsibility of the seminarian to ensure regular meetings, that is, about once a month, with his Spiritual Director.
- ii. In Year One, the seminarian's director will be one of the College Spiritual Directors, but after Year One seminarians are free to select a director from the approved list. Seminarians should inform the Rector of their choice and of any subsequent change. Frequent change of directors is discouraged.
- iii. Spiritual direction will include preparation for the annual scrutinies that form part of the Oscott Scrutiny Programme together with the establishment of any subsequent goals.
- iv. In the annual and other scrutinies, the comment or vote of the seminarian's Spiritual Director is never sought.
- v. Whilst seminarians are free to approach any confessor outside the seminary, Oscott will normally provide the opportunity for the seminarian to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- vi. The effectiveness of spiritual direction is determined by the openness, honesty and trust with which a seminarian approaches his director.
- vii. Spiritual direction should include some attention to and supervision of the seminarian's spiritual reading.
- viii. Matters raised in spiritual direction by the seminarian will always be treated as absolutely confidential except where there is a mandatory requirement of disclosure in case of:

- notification to do harm to self or another;
 - the paramouncy principle;³⁰
 - illegal behaviour by self or others;
- ix. The seminarian or director may suggest referral to professional counselling services on particular issues of human development.
- x. Matters raised within the Sacrament of Reconciliation are in the internal forum and bound by the seal of confession.

Seminarian Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the seminarian at the start of each level of the Formation Programme and after each scrutiny-period to discuss and work out with his Spiritual Director a personal programme of spiritual formation for the year ahead. The aim will be to develop the virtuous habits of prayer and spiritual development. The specifics of this will vary considerably according to need. Each programme will include at least the following common features:

- i. Mass each day
- ii. Public celebration of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer according to the timetable and recitation of the Divine Office in private at other times
- iii. Attendance at the community Holy Hour each day
- iv. Recitation of the Rosary with the community on Saturdays
- v. Participation in other aspects of the devotional life of the college

³⁰ The paramouncy principle is the principle that "the best interests of the child will be paramount in the decision-making process" *Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018 §31)*

Section Five: Intellectual Formation

The Gift of the Priestly Vocation (Ratio Fundamentalis) states that the purpose of intellectual formation is to provide a solid foundation in philosophical and theological studies to enable seminarians to proclaim the Gospel in a credible way to the contemporary culture.³¹ Candidates for the priesthood study divine Revelation to come to a deeper knowledge of Christ, “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14: 6), as well as to prepare to “bring all peoples to the obedience of faith (cf. Rom 16,26).”³² They study philosophy so they can dialogue with the culture and discern the voices of the age in light of Revelation (GS 44).

Intellectual formation in the seminary is part of an integral vision of formation, including intellectual, human, spiritual and pastoral dimensions.

The Ratio explains that what is studied in intellectual formation supports spiritual formation and *vice versa*.³³ Theological reflection is nurtured through prayerful reading of the Scriptures, common prayer and the liturgy of the Eucharist. Study, like prayer, enables “a renewal of the mind” (Rom 12,2), supporting ongoing conversion and the possibility to discern the culture. The practice of study calls for discipline, sacrifice, perseverance and thereby an opportunity to grow in maturity and self-giving. It calls for time-management, which is a useful organisational skill for future priestly ministry. Having a deep and well thought through knowledge of Revelation and philosophy contributes to a more effective pastoral ministry and enables seminarians “give an account of the reason for the hope” they have (1 Pet 3:15). Intellectual formation fosters the skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation of ideas, as well as oral and presentation skills, all of which will feed into pastoral ministry.

Teaching and learning at Oscott

Teaching and learning at Oscott reflects current best practice in pedagogical methods. Full time teachers include priests and lay people who are specialists in their field with the appropriate pontifical qualifications. It is supported and monitored through Oscott’s collaborative arrangement with the University of Birmingham and the Catholic University of Leuven.

During the first three years of the programme, seminarians undertake study for a BA in Fundamental Catholic Theology which is validated by the University of Birmingham. This degree contains all the philosophy modules required for priestly ordination as well as theology modules which will also count as prerequisites for the conferral of the KU Leuven degree. Years one and two prioritise modules in philosophy, helping to ground Catholic theology in reasoned discourse and the questions that have always arisen for human beings about their nature and relationship with God. By year three most of the modules are in theology, enabling the seminarian to give an “account for his hope” (1 Pt 3,15).

³¹Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation (Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis)* (December 8, 2016), 116.

<https://www.clerus.va/content/dam/clerus/Ratio%20Fundamentalis/The%20Gift%20of%20the%20Priestly%20Vocation.pdf>

³² *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, 116.

³³ *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, 117.

Each year of the BA programme also provides seminarians with classes in spiritual reading, the art of spiritual accompaniment and discernment and the history of spirituality. Pastoral theology modules in years one and two provide seminarians with the opportunity for theological reflection and teach how to be attentive to God's presence in their ministry.

From year four onwards, seminarians will commence studying for the STB degree which is accredited by KU Leuven. Year four includes an extended pastoral placement. In the second semester of that year, seminarians develop a proposal for their STB extended essay thesis and begin researching and writing. The final thesis will be submitted at the end of year 5. The final two years of the programme also incorporate courses with more practical relevance for priestly ministry such as Pastoral Diaconate, *Ars Celebrandi* and *Confession Practicum*.

All full-time residential seminarians are expected to participate in all elements of the intellectual programme and to complete the forms of assessment as required, as outlined in the *Guide to the Intellectual Formation Programme*. Assessment methods during the Semester are formative, meaning that they are weekly tasks to enable the seminarian to absorb and understand the material. Summative assessment for the modules take place during completion week (week 13) of the Semester and take the form of written essays, written exams, oral exams or presentations. These represent the total percentage of marks (100%) for each module for the two degrees. Exemptions from some modules may be granted to some candidates with previous theological or philosophical studies.

The Director of Studies will comment on seminarians' academic progress at academic boards and formation meetings. Any issues of a disciplinary nature that arise will be brought to the weekly meetings of formation staff.

The following is expected from all seminarians:

- **Attendance at all classes:** Seminarians must attend all the classes for which they have been timetabled. Seminarians who need to miss class for any reason, must first seek the agreement of the Vice Rector. Illness is an exception, but the ill seminarian must make every attempt to communicate his absence before class to the class rep or another seminarian to inform the lecturer and academic office on his behalf. In case of illness, as soon as he can, the seminarian should also inform both the Vice Rector and his Formation Tutor that he has missed a class and keep them updated if absence is ongoing.
- **Study outside of class:** All seminarians are expected to give dedicated weekly time periods of study to every module. This is usually a *minimum* of one and a half hours per subject, per week (which can be broken into shorter periods), but the seminarian is encouraged to avail of opportunities to study as part of taking responsibility for his own formation and recognising how study is a rich resource which nourishes other strands of formation. This time can be used to complete their weekly reading in preparation for class, to revise class notes, do further reading and consolidate learning. The formation tutor is to hold them accountable for this engagement. Failure to show engagement in formative intellectual work, may be raised as a formation issue and may impact progression towards priesthood.

- **Assessments:** At Oscott, summative assessments account for 100% of the marks for each module. These assessments include exams, essays, oral exams, presentations and should be completed on time, on or before the deadline of completion week (Week 13) and submitted through SMILE (St Mary's Interactive Learning Environment). Essay titles will be released in week 2 and seminarians are encouraged to use the weeks of the Semester wisely to research, prepare and write essays so as not to leave them all to the last week when revision time is also needed for oral exams. Each tutor may suggest different forms of creative ongoing formative assessments weekly, to test learning including setting questions and quizzes in class, class seminar discussions, and short class presentations. Some forms of weekly intellectual formation may require engagement with SMILE or completion on SMILE (for example discussion forum posts or quizzes).
- **Assessment extensions:** The expectation is always that seminarians will keep to deadlines for submission of work. An extension to a submission date may be given only by the Director of Studies in cases of illness, bereavement, or serious personal circumstances and sometimes in consultation with the seminarian's formation tutor or the Rector. Any extension must be sought before the submission date.
- **Late submissions:** Any assessment submitted late without permission, or without good cause, will have marks deducted as defined by the University of Birmingham.
- **Seeking Support:** Seminarians are encouraged to seek out the support of the module tutor for clarification/guidelines on assignments by making appointments. Seminarians can also by appointment consult the Director of Studies. The possibility of language support tuition is available for all seminarians. In certain cases, the Director of Studies will make specific recommendations that a seminarian meet the Language support tutor. Please see the *Guide to the Intellectual Formation Programme* for further information.
- **Essay drafts:** The module tutor may (if time permits) read one draft of an essay s/he has set. This must be submitted by a seminarian before the end of week 10.
- **Plagiarism and use of Artificial Intelligence:** Plagiarism is a serious offence. The norms in the *Guide to the Intellectual Formation Programme* will be followed if plagiarism is suspected. Please familiarise yourself with the norms. The use of artificial intelligence in all written work is not permitted and norms and penalties outlined in the handbook will apply. Turnitin software will enable all tutors to detect if there have been breaches in academic integrity through the use of plagiarised material or material generated through AI. Using such material may have an impact on ongoing formation towards priesthood and participation in the programme.
- **Academic methodology:** All students are required to familiarise themselves with the methodology and referencing system of the University of Birmingham and KU Leuven and to use it in all written work. Oscott uses Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 9th edition style guide, which is based on the Chicago style methodology.

- **Obligation to do the STB:** It is expected that all seminarians, unless on a shortened course and with the agreement of their Bishop and the Rector, will complete the STB, including the essay and the final exam. If during year 4 or 5, there has not been sufficient progress according to an adequate standard, it may be determined by the supervisor, Director of Studies and Rector, that the seminarian does not have the ability to complete the STB. In this case, he will continue attending classes which are needed for progression to ordination according to the norms of *Veritatis Gaudium* (2017), but will not write the extended essay or obtain academic credit for completion of further modules.
- **Feedback:** Seminarians have opportunities to give feedback about modules and teaching and learning styles in evaluation forms which are distributed at the end of each Semester as well as through quality assurance forums via their class rep/ house QA rep. During the Semester, Seminarians can directly feedback to lecturers on teaching or content. This should always be done in a polite and respectful manner, recognising the expertise and authority of the teacher. Such feedback will be listened to and brought to further Academic meetings for discussion and further consideration, but not necessarily implemented.

For any further information regarding Intellectual Formation, please consult the *Guide to the Intellectual Formation Programme*.

Section Six: Pastoral Formation

The parish is the place where most Catholics engage with the Church. This provides wonderful opportunities, tremendous variety, and inevitable challenges for priests who work in parishes, in other words the significant majority of priests. This is the life of priestly ministry and pastoral service for which St Mary's College aims to prepare seminarians. Pastoral Formation at Oscott is based on the principles laid down in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I will give you shepherds) and in the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, 119-124. We read in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV), "The whole formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ the good shepherd. Hence their formation in all its different aspects must have a fundamentally pastoral character."³⁴ Seminarians are encouraged to experience a variety of practical pastoral activities and to reflect on them critically and theologically. As such, pastoral formation cannot, and does not, exist in isolation from the human, intellectual and spiritual formation. It provides the locus for all four dimensions to find their practical expression.

Saint John Paul II in his Encyclical *Christifideles Laici* describes the parish as "The Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters,"³⁵ words Pope Francis repeats in his Encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*. The parish is therefore of prime importance and PDV states that, "when it comes to choosing places and services in which candidates can obtain their pastoral experience the parish should be given particular importance."³⁶ To ensure this, seminarians are grouped together into House Pastoral Groups which have one local parish as their principal focus for pastoral activity, reflection, and prayer. With this in mind, seminarians belonging to the various House Groups, are encouraged to participate along with parishioners at the celebration of Sunday Mass. In this way, they can begin to foster ongoing relationships of fraternity with the Parish Priest, but with his parishioners also.

The aim of the various pastoral courses provided within the intellectual programme is to assist seminarians in becoming confident and competent pastors. The first-year course explores the theological foundations of ministry and helps the participants to see how they can better live out their baptismal vocation. Subsequent courses build on this and help the seminarians to see how they will exercise the new ministries they will receive. In Pastoral Theology seminarians are encouraged to engage in theological reflection. They will grow in their understanding of how to reflect on a particular situation, to explore the various pastoral approaches available and to evaluate their outcomes critically so as to be able to improve their own pastoral practice. Without this classroom-based element, pastoral formation is reduced to a mere apprenticeship, which PDV cautions us to guard against.

Seminarians gain practical experience by engaging in a range of activities which include Social Outreach Projects, Chaplaincy in Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, Hospitals and Prisons, RCIA and Adult Catechesis. At first, they go in pairs or groups of three but as their experience and confidence increase they are often sent out alone. It is impossible to give every seminarian experience of every pastoral

³⁴ PDV, 57.

³⁵ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* (1998), 26.

³⁶ PDV, 58.

activity, but we hope these placements will give them the opportunity to learn a variety of skills which they can then use in any pastoral encounter. Before seminarians go on placements to institutions such as hospitals and schools, or on RCIA courses, a certain amount of guidance will be given by people who have significant experience of working in those particular fields. Prisons and Hospitals also have their own induction programmes which introduce volunteers to the institution. Pastoral work also requires a certain amount of initiative and an ability to think on one's feet; this is something that cannot be taught and is gained by reflection upon experience.

In January of each year the seminarians undertake a pastoral placement in a parish in their own diocese. These are arranged by the seminarian's own Vocations Director in collaboration with his bishop. This places the pastoral placement at the heart of the seminary year and is a good time to see parishes at a busy time.

The most significant pastoral placement takes place in the first semester of the Fourth Year. This Extended Pastoral Placement (EPP) lasts for almost five months and is an in-depth exposure to the realities of parish and presbytery life. It offers an opportunity to engage in a parish at a deeper level than the January placement. It is of crucial importance to the seminarian's own discernment of whether he is truly called to the priestly ministry. During the EPP, the seminarians return regularly to Oscott to reflect on their experiences.

Following ordination to the diaconate, the newly ordained will exercise their ministry in the seminary and on weekend placements in a local parish.

Seminarians are expected to demonstrate growth in confidence and in pastoral competence as they progress through the formation programme by undertaking increasing levels of challenge and responsibility. Reflecting on their experiences in the light of the Gospel and the challenge to conform their lives to the model of Christ the good shepherd, will, we hope, help them to become a credible witness to the love of God revealed in Jesus.

At the completion of each placement the person who has been supervising the placement is asked to submit a report on the seminarian's engagement with the placement. This contributes to the yearly Pastoral Report which is a major part of the annual scrutiny process. At the end of each College year the seminarians present, within a pastoral seminar, a written theological reflection on that year's pastoral engagement. This seminar is assessed, marked, and contributes to the degree programmes at Oscott. Our long-term aim is that, as priests, they will continue to reflect theologically on all their pastoral experiences.

Section Seven: Formation, Discernment & Scrutiny

Vocation and the Seminary

Holistic View of Vocation in the Church: We are both body and spirit and, when God calls us, he calls the whole person. Formation is a holistic enterprise through which we become more fully the persons we are called to be: we become more fully human. Vocation is not about what we can do; it is about who we are. God does not call us because he needs us, he simply calls us.

A vocation is a fathomless mystery involving the relationship established by God with human beings in their absolute uniqueness. Hence, pastoral formation certainly cannot be reduced to mere apprenticeship, aiming to make the candidate familiar with some pastoral technique.³⁷

Vocation is not, however, restricted to the ministerial priesthood, to the exclusion of the common priesthood of all Christ's faithful. The call to holiness is a universal call and to respond to this invitation is to enter into the formative process.³⁸ Discernment and formation, though distinct, cannot be isolated from one another. To discern one's vocation, and to be formed in that vocation, are two sides of the same coin. Our discernment is nourished by our ongoing formation, and our formation is directed by our ongoing discernment.

Priestly Vocation and the Seminary: Notwithstanding the universal nature of vocation, it is recognised that the ministerial priesthood differs not only in degree but essentially from the priesthood of the faithful.³⁹ Hence,

although (priestly) formation has many aspects in common with the human and Christian formation of all the members of the Church, it has, nevertheless, contents, modalities and characteristics which relate specifically to the aim of the preparation for the priesthood.⁴⁰

The seminary exists to provide for

the vocational accompanying of future priests and therefore discernment of their vocations, the help to respond to it and the preparation to receive the Sacrament of Orders.⁴¹

The object, therefore, of the seminary's work is twofold: the discernment of vocation and the preparation for priesthood (formation). Thus, the nature

³⁷ LG, 10 and PDV, 17.

³⁸ LG, 10 and *Christifideles Laici*, 16.

³⁹ LG, 10 and PDV, 17.

⁴⁰ PDV, 61.

⁴¹ PDV, 61.

and purpose of scrutiny will derive from this twofold purpose of the seminary.⁴²

The Seminary Community: In its furthering of the discernment and formation of the priestly vocation in the Church, the seminary acts not merely as an institution, but as an educational ecclesial community,⁴³ “reflecting the ecclesial dimension which naturally marks every Christian vocation, and the Priestly vocation in particular”.⁴⁴

Its various members, gathered together by the Spirit, co-operate in the growth and preparation of all,⁴⁵ for all are on the same journey and, as a community, provide for each other the agency through which God forms them, and through which they can come to discern his will. The seminary lives and works within the context of the local Churches, which have, in the person of the bishop, the ultimate responsibility for the preparation of their seminarians.⁴⁶ Thus the seminary, always acting in collaboration with the diocese, seeks to adapt its programme to the actual situation of the Church in England, Wales and Scotland.

The Stages of Formation

The *Ratio Fundamentalis*, which governs the work of priestly formation, identifies five stages in which this work takes place:

Propaedeutic Stage:⁴⁷ This stage takes place before a seminarian enters the major seminary, and lays a solid foundation for life at Oscott.

Discipleship Stage:⁴⁸ This stage, which typically takes place in the first two years of major seminary, emphasises the importance of Christian discipleship – a relationship with Jesus Christ – for those discerning a priestly vocation. As for the first disciples, this growth takes place in a faith community with Christ at the centre.⁴⁹ In this environment, the seminarian grows in personal and spiritual maturity, and in closeness to Christ. Philosophical studies form the majority of the intellectual programme in this stage. At the end of this stage, a seminarian may be recognised as a Candidate for Holy Orders, and progress to the ‘configuration stage’.

Configuration Stage:⁵⁰ Building on the work of discipleship, this stage invites the seminarian to consciously become more configured to Christ by a more developed inner life, growth in virtue and study of sacred theology. Seminarians continue to develop a spirituality appropriate to their vocation. During this stage, which ordinarily lasts up to four years, a seminarian is usually instituted as Lector and Acolyte.

⁴² “It is the specific goal which determines its [the seminary’s] physiognomy.” PDV, 61.

⁴³ PDV, 61.

⁴⁴ PDV, 37.

⁴⁵ PDV, 60.

⁴⁶ PDV, 35.

⁴⁷ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation-Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (2016), 59-60.

⁴⁸ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation-Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (2016), 61-67.

⁴⁹ PDV, 60.

⁵⁰ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation-Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (2016), 68-73.

Pastoral Stage (Vocational Synthesis):⁵¹ At the end of his formal studies, the seminarian enters the Pastoral (or Vocational Synthesis) stage, which takes place in his home diocese. Usually a seminarian would be ordained deacon in the college before returning to the diocese to undertake this stage of formation. The Vocational Synthesis inducts him into the Church's pastoral ministry, whilst being accompanied as he makes his final preparations for priesthood. The length of this stage depends on the maturity and readiness of the seminarian, and priestly ordination takes place at a time judged suitable by the diocesan bishop and his advisors, which may include members of the seminary formation staff. It is, however, not less than six months.

Ongoing Formation:⁵² Ordination to the priesthood does not imply the end of formation. Out of a love for the Lord and the people he serves, every priest will wish to continue to grow in the four areas of formation throughout his life, nurturing his human development, deepening his spiritual life, devoting time to study and developing his pastoral skills.

Formation in the Seminary: Internal and External Forum

The Distinction: In considering the function of scrutiny, the distinction between the internal and external fora must be made and protected. A seminarian's Confessor, Spiritual Director and Human Development Director will assist him in the strict confidentiality of the internal forum. Other aspects of seminary life make up the external forum. Significantly, the distinction does not refer to the type of material discussed, rather the situation in which the discussion takes place.

The Internal Forum: The seminarian explicitly establishes the internal forum by seeking sacramental absolution or by meeting for spiritual direction and/or human development. The seal of confession is absolute. Matters raised by the seminarian in spiritual direction or in human development will always be treated as confidential, except where there is a mandatory requirement upon the director of disclosure in case of:

- i. notification to do harm to self or another;
- ii. the paramountcy principle;
- iii. illegal behaviour by self or others.

Although the internal forum does not apply strictly to matters of confidentiality raised between seminarians and/or between seminarians and individual members of staff, there is still a mandatory requirement of disclosure in the cases mentioned above. In scrutiny meetings, the comment or vote of the seminarian's Spiritual Director or Human Development Director, if present, is never sought.

The External Forum: The external forum is every other situation, including the seminarian's meetings with his Formation Tutor. This does not prejudice the personal rights and duties of discretion and confidentiality, but, in regard to scrutiny and discernment, does allow and oblige those responsible to share appropriately their knowledge of the seminarian in order to discern his vocation. For this reason, both

⁵¹ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation-Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (2016), 74-79.

⁵² Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation-Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (2016), 80-88.

staff and seminarians should avoid any confusion of the internal and external fora. When a seminarian's Spiritual Director and/or Human Development Director is also currently lecturing him, he may, if necessary, be invited to inform the Staff Meeting of the seminarian's academic progress in his course but will make no other comment.

The Agents of Formation, Discernment, and Scrutiny

Those responsible for the processes of discernment and formation are all 'agents of formation'⁵³ since all are actively involved, including the seminarian himself. Each have different roles in these processes but hold responsibility in carrying them out, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Bishop: The seminarian's bishop, presiding over the Church's mediation of vocation and formation, has the ultimate responsibility, as the representative of Christ in the Church, for the discernment, training and ordination of the candidate.⁵⁴ He is advised and helped in this task by the other agents, including the Diocesan Vocations Director, but principally by the Rector of the seminary,⁵⁵ so that he can make a safe judgement about the candidate's vocation. ⁵⁶ Since it is the bishop, who, with the help of God, makes the definitive scrutiny of the seminarian's vocation and readiness for ordination, the procedures for scrutiny should give him as complete a picture of the seminarian as possible.

The Rector: The Rector, in whose ministry the bishop is present,⁵⁷ in collaboration with others, especially the staff, and fostering the communion of the seminary,⁵⁸ directs the process of discernment and scrutiny and co-ordinates the involvement of the other agents of scrutiny. He has the personal responsibility for advising the bishop.

The Resident Formation Staff: These have the canonical duty "to foster and verify in the first place the suitability of candidates"⁵⁹ advising the Rector and assisting the seminarians in discernment and formation. Chief amongst these is the Formation Tutor whose role is to accompany a seminarian in all areas of his formation.

Others, both clergy, and laity: These include both those involved in the College programme and those directing pastoral placements, together with the seminarian's own parish priest, family, and friends. All have a valuable role in fostering his vocation and formation, and it is considered prudent to involve them, as far as is appropriate, even in the process of scrutiny. ⁶⁰

Fellow Seminarians: The community of disciples, which is the seminary, "co-operate, each according to his own gift, in the growth of all in faith and charity".⁶¹ Realism demands recognition of the mutual influence of fellow seminarians in formation who

⁵³ PDV, 65.

⁵⁴ PDV, 65.

⁵⁵ PDV, 66.

⁵⁶ BNPF, 41.

⁵⁷ PDV, 60.

⁵⁸ PDV, 60.

⁵⁹ PDV, 66.

⁶⁰ PDV, 66.

⁶¹ PDV, 60.

also have the solemn responsibility to share in the process of discernment of the truth, for the good of the Church and of the individual.

Fellow seminarians are not involved formally in the scrutiny process, except in so far as they are bound to inform the Rector if they have knowledge of any reason why a seminarian should not proceed to any ministry, candidacy or ordination. Their inclusion among the agents of formation and scrutiny reflects the informal role they play, in fraternal charity, as members of the formation community of the seminary.

The Seminarian himself: The seminarian is “the necessary and indispensable agent in his own formation ... which, as all formation, is ultimately self-formation”.⁶² Thus, the seminarian’s principal task is to examine the reality of his own vocation and to prepare himself to follow it.⁶³ Seminarians must do this, not by imposing their own conditions, but by freely co-operating with the Church’s ministers and sincerely “abandoning themselves with real confidence to their guidance and scrutiny”, in this way anticipating the priestly service of the People of God.⁶⁴

Given what is said about the role of the seminarian himself, self-reflection is clearly a valued aspect of the formation process.⁶⁵ The crux of self-reflection will be the seminarian’s knowledge of self, his knowledge of Christ, and his understanding of the priesthood. These, it is hoped, he will bring into a genuine dialogue with the discernment and scrutiny of the other agents of formation so that he may take a full part in arriving at an accurate judgement of his progress and in framing mutually agreed aims for the future.

Formation Tutor System:

- i. The role of the Formation Tutor is to accompany a seminarian in all areas of his formation and to help him discern his vocation. The seminarian is expected to meet with his Formation Tutor at least once a month during term time to discuss human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral issues. The Formation Tutor instigates the first appointment and thereafter the next appointment is arranged at each meeting. It is an opportunity for the Formation Tutor to discuss with the seminarian his growth and development, relating to the four areas of formation. The Formation Tutor is expected to challenge the seminarian and to encourage, guide, and support him. The seminarian may raise any issues that he wishes to discuss concerning his formation.
- ii. The context of these meetings is the external forum.
- iii. The discussion on human and spiritual issues is in the external forum, bearing in mind that:
 - Each seminarian meets once a month with his Spiritual Director in the internal forum. The Spiritual Director does not take part in scrutiny process.

⁶² PDV, 69.

⁶³ BNPF, 39.

⁶⁴ PDV, 68.

⁶⁵ Cf. BNPF, 39.

- Each seminarian also meets once a month with his Human Development Director in the Internal Forum. The Human Development Director also does not take part in scrutiny.

It remains, however, the responsibility of the Formation Tutor, within the contexts of the external forum and those of scrutiny, to challenge, encourage, guide and support the seminarian in regard to human and spiritual matters.

- iv. Every seminarian is allocated to his Formation Tutor by the Rector. This appointment would only be changed if the seminarian or staff member brought a strong reason before the Rector.
- v. After consultation with his Formation Tutor, the seminarian agrees aims in each area of formation for the period ahead. As a guide these may be drawn from the Ratio's directives.
- vi. During the Extended Pastoral Placement, the Formation Tutor makes one visit to the seminarian in the parish.

Pastoral House Groups:

- i. Pastoral House groups have a significant role in the life of the college. They enable formation in fraternity, prayer, and parish apostolate according to a programme established by the senior seminarian, in collaboration with the members of the House Group. They provide opportunities for:
 - Experiences of group work.
 - Developing relationships between seminarians.
 - Discussion of House matters involving all four dimensions of formation.
 - The celebration of Mass together and other experiences of group prayer.
 - Social activities.
 - Apostolate in the Pastoral House Group parish.
- ii. Each Pastoral House Group is led by a seminarian appointed by the Pastoral Director. This seminarian has a care for the members of his House Group and through fraternal bonds of charity, all members seek to support each other on the journey of formation and encourage one another to take responsibility within the group.
- iii. Pastoral House Groups are in the external forum. They are supported by a member of the formation staff, who signs off the programme for the semester and who participates in the activities of the group.
- iv. In order to develop relationships in the parish that are pastorally significant, insofar as it is possible, a seminarian remains with the same Pastoral House Group and parish throughout his time at Oscott.

The Purpose of Discernment and Scrutiny

Twofold Purpose: Any process of scrutiny or appraisal seeks to arrive at a judgement about the true qualities of a thing by weighing it against established criteria. The twofold object of seminary life shows that scrutiny has a dual purpose: to establish the truth of the seminarian's vocation and to establish his readiness for ordination.

Assistance with Discernment and Formation: Scrutiny in the seminary, however, not only seeks to make a judgement in these matters but also seeks to help and guide the seminarian in the continuing processes of discernment and formation. These aims are positive: to affirm personal strengths and gifts, to encourage growth and to equip him for ministry. Formation will involve pastoral placements and, possibly, time out for some or all seminarians.⁶⁶ The scrutiny process will involve discussion of such questions. The process of discernment and scrutiny may reveal that the seminarian's vocation is to some service other than the priesthood, in which case the seminary, with the bishop, must, in all kindness, help the seminarian to take up a different state of life within the Church, for his own good and the good of the Church.⁶⁷

Given the seminary's role in the discernment of vocations, everything should be done to ensure that, when a seminarian leaves during the period of seminary formation, his immediate needs, practical or otherwise, are taken into consideration, whilst bearing in mind that the primary responsibility remains with his diocese. The seminarian is encouraged to avail himself freely of any help the seminary staff may be able to offer, such as references, including the help of his Internal Forum Directors and Formation Tutor.

The Nature of Scrutiny

The Fruit of Faith and Prayer: Both vocation and formation are affirmed principally as the work of the Holy Spirit, calling and forming the seminarians into conformity with Christ. These processes are mediated by the Church, particularly through those given a ministry of responsibility for vocations and formation, though all the agents of formation and scrutiny are given a share in the tasks of discernment and formation. This perspective recognises the vocational dialogue between divine initiative and human response: vocation "cannot be forced in the slightest by human ambition and it cannot be replaced by human decision".⁶⁸ Thus discernment and scrutiny is an act of faith and the fruit of prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Positive Encouragement: Since the purpose of scrutiny is positive, so is the nature of its task. Hence scrutiny has a role in fostering and encouraging the vocation of a seminarian in the face of doubt, and in assisting him in his preparation for ordination, as much as in determining his suitability or otherwise. It will seek to affirm skills and gifts, to strengthen weaknesses, and to correct mistakes in good time in order to promote the growth of the seminarian in the four dimensions of formation as outlined in the scrutiny criteria.

⁶⁶ BNPF, 42.

⁶⁷ BNPF, 40.

⁶⁸ PDV, 36.

Reflection of Areas of Gradual Development: The processes of discernment of vocation and formation are concurrent yet, in the course of the seminarian's formation, the focus will pass from discernment of vocation to preparation for ordination and the application of criteria for scrutiny will vary accordingly.

Adaptation to the Individual: Since God calls individuals to his service, discernment of vocation and formation are uniquely personal processes. Respect for the particular gifts and experience of each seminarian will be considered in the process of scrutiny. At the same time, scrutiny should help the seminarian to grow in understanding of his personal discernment of vocation.

Necessity of Mutual Trust: The intimate nature of discernment and scrutiny also requires that an atmosphere of mutual trust between staff and seminarians be actively fostered. Any improper favouritism or personal prejudice must strictly be avoided and every effort made to be objective, so that seminarians and staff may enter into a genuine dialogue in order that decisions can be made fairly and confidently. Attention should be given to the maintenance of professional and personal boundaries

Scrutiny Guidelines

In every seminary there should be clear guidelines for important aspects of the seminarians' lives.⁶⁹ This is evidently true of scrutiny, which is an essential function of the seminary and a major concern for both seminarians and staff.

They seek to explain the nature and purpose of scrutiny, the criteria used, and the procedures followed at Oscott to arrive at that accurate scrutiny of seminarians required by the Church.

They are intended to emphasise the positive contribution of scrutiny in the seminarian's personal development and the assistance it gives to his formation.

Criteria for Scrutiny

The criteria for scrutiny in the seminary, as stated below, are to the scrutiny process what a written examination of conscience is to a proper act of contrition. They do not form a blueprint to be copied or a checklist to be 'ticked off', rather, they are an aid to reflection, providing a degree of structure and comprehensiveness to help both staff and seminarians achieve a thorough and balanced review of the progress of discernment and formation. No order of priority is implied, nor a dissection of the person, since they are intended to reflect the unified and holistic reality of the processes of discernment and formation.

No claim is made that the list of criteria is exhaustive; rather they provide some examples of the many and various qualities and gifts needed by a priest in today's Church. They are drawn from a variety of sources, including the Church's own descriptions of the ministry of priests.

⁶⁹ BNPF,25.39

The stated criteria will assist in the better recognition of the individual seminarian's own particular strengths and weaknesses, enabling him to participate actively in his formation and to seek out opportunities to utilise more fruitfully his time in the seminary; to grow in his appreciation of the manifold gifts and talents he has to offer, and to overcome, or come to terms with, his own particular weaknesses. This clearly requires not merely a setting and achieving of goals, but a deep commitment to formation marked by a willingness to grow and develop.

The four dimensions should never be understood in isolation and it is important to ensure an integrated process of formation enabling a seminarian to seek a fuller knowledge of self, a deeper relationship with Christ and a better understanding of priesthood. This integrated process is also reflected by the way in which the seminarian engages fully and positively with the life of the seminary community.

Human Development

The whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation.⁷⁰
Freedom requires ... true mastery of self and determination to fight and overcome the difficult forms of selfishness and individualism.⁷¹

Self-care: Physical health E.g. cleanliness, personal hygiene, moderation with food, use of alcohol, tobacco, other addictive stimulants, recreation, physical exercise, etc.; mental health e.g. self-esteem, confidence, ability to relax, balanced life-style.

Outside interests: Use of leisure for hobbies and sport; keeping oneself informed of contemporary issues, news and culture.

Self-discipline: E.g. modesty in dress and appearance, time-management, right order and priorities, coping with stress, reliability, industry and motivation.

Maturity: E.g. leadership skills, flexibility, sincerity, trustworthiness, ability to collaborate, responsibility, attitude towards authority and community, common-sense, realism.

Relationships with others: E.g. obedience and respect towards the Formation Staff, friendliness, ability to make and keep friendships, willingness to forgive, sense of humour, ability to relate widely, approachability, good manners and sensitivity, hospitality, generosity, good judgement of character, commitment to justice.

Celibacy and emotional integration: E.g. openness to all, ability to relate well to women and men, appropriate relationships, maturity of sexuality, responsibility, chastity.

⁷⁰ PDV, 43.

⁷¹ PDV, 44.

Spiritual Development:

I no longer call you servants, I call you friends (Jn 15:15). Just as for all the faithful... so too for every priest his spiritual formation is the core which unifies and gives life to his being a priest and his acting as a priest.⁷² Spiritual formation should be conducted in such a way that the seminarians may learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God...⁷³

Practice of basic forms of Catholic spiritual life:⁷⁴ E.g. friendship with Christ, reverence for the Word of God, daily Mass and love for the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Liturgy of the Hours, private prayer, devotion to Mary, patron saints, love of the Church.

Use of opportunities to grow in spiritual life: E.g. consultation of a spiritual director, spiritual reading, retreats and spiritual exercises, knowledge and love of the priesthood, openness to a variety of Liturgy and prayer.

Holiness of life: Christ-like life-style, living the Beatitudes e.g. sense of devotion, acceptance of poverty, chastity, obedience to rightful authority, passion for truth, justice and love of neighbour.

Intellectual Development

The intellectual formation of candidates...finds its specific justification in the very nature of the ordained ministry... For the salvation of their brothers and sisters they should seek an ever-deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries.⁷⁵

A loving knowledge of the Word of God and a prayerful familiarity with it are specifically important for the prophetic ministry of the priest.⁷⁶

Studies: Ability to study e.g. perseverance amidst difficulties, growth in knowledge and understanding, passion for truth, serious desire to learn and know more, meeting academic targets and deadlines, commitment to ongoing formation, sense of Catholic Tradition with openness to new ideas.

Integration: E.g. ability to integrate pastoral, intellectual and spiritual life, knowledge of main doctrines of Catholic faith, tolerance of other opinions, ability to contribute to seminars and group discussions, ability to communicate well and to teach the faith.

Theology of priesthood: E.g. vision of priesthood, clear sense of identity, of service, of ministry of reconciliation, of collaboration with the Bishop, priests, deacons and

⁷² PDV, 4.5

⁷³ PDV, 43.

⁷⁴ These criteria refer to outward practice only. The inner reality of the seminarian's spiritual life is a matter for discussion with the Spiritual Director.

⁷⁵ PDV, 51.

⁷⁶ PDV, 4.7

the people of seminarian's diocese, experience of different ministries, personal reflection.

Pastoral Development:

[Formation] aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ ... Hence; [it]... must have a fundamentally pastoral character.⁷⁷

Pastoral sense: E.g. genuine care and love of others especially the sick, poor, or dying, generosity in all types of pastoral work including the uncongenial, courage to witness, ecumenical sensitivity, sense of mission.

Skills: E.g., leadership of liturgy, preaching, preparation for liturgical celebration, ability to administer goods, basic counselling skills, ability to listen, to be non-judgmental, to initiate, to collaborate, to delegate and facilitate others, willingness to learn new skills.

⁷⁷ PDV, 57.

Section Eight:

The Procedures of Scrutiny

The Language of Scrutiny

The term 'scrutiny' is given us by the Church to describe the formal part of the process by which the Church discerns a man's suitability to continue his formation and, ultimately, to be ordained. The word itself can sound negative, but it is not intended to be so. Instead, it reminds us of the importance of looking closely at ourselves, examining our inmost heart, to search for the areas where God desires to give us new growth. In the first place, the seminarian is called to be the agent of his own scrutiny: growing in awareness of his own gifts and his shortcomings, he is able to cooperate with the grace of God and the support of the formation programme to be more configured to Christ. His awareness of himself will grow, partly through the formal process, but equally through living in community. It happens, often unnoticed, each day. The 'scrutiny' is intended to recognise this growth and to take stock of the journey made so far, whilst also giving a formal opportunity for both the seminarian and the Church to pause, pray, deeply reflect and discern how clear is the man's call to priestly ministry.

Procedural Principles

Respect for Individual Dignity: The procedures of scrutiny are intended both to respect the seminarian and to involve him actively in his own scrutiny process. All discussions, formal and informal, about the contents of any of the reports are treated in strictest confidence. Whilst acknowledging the collaborative nature of these procedures, an individual's right to privacy and personal dignity must be respected. There are two elements in the procedure of scrutiny: the Seminarian Self-Reflection and the Staff Scrutiny, including Staff Reports, a Pastoral Report and Formation Tutor Report.

The aim of the procedure of scrutiny is to bring these two elements together in such a way as to produce a comprehensive and accurate Annual Scrutiny, which will also be a useful guide towards future development, and which, through the Rector, will result in a Final Report for the seminarian's bishop.

General and Major Scrutinies: These are the basic forms of Annual Scrutiny. The aim of the Annual Scrutiny is to consider how goals set at the last scrutiny have been met, the vocational signs the seminarian is showing, progress in formation, and what pointers for future development need to be established. General and Major Scrutinies seek to strengthen the gifts a seminarian possesses and to assist him in overcoming weaknesses. General Scrutinies take place in year one. Major Scrutinies are undertaken at the end of Year 2, before Candidacy, to the lay ministry of lector in year four and the lay ministry of acolyte in year five. Candidacy, by which the seminarian is admitted as a candidate for holy order in a public liturgical rite, facilitates the process whereby the candidate prepares himself for ordination, reminding him to care for his vocation in a special way, whilst the Church, in the person of the bishop, accepts this petition and invokes God's blessing upon him. Before ordination to the diaconate, typically in year six, and to priesthood at a time

determined by the diocesan bishop, a Major Scrutiny takes place regarding the candidate's suitability for ordained ministry.

At the Formation Staff Meeting a consultative vote is taken. Admission to the lay ministries, to Candidacy or to Ordination is a positive indication that the seminarian is showing the qualities that the Church looks for in someone about to be ordained or preparing for ordination. A seminarian will not be allowed, however, to receive the ministries, be admitted as a candidate or receive holy orders, where there exists a prudent doubt concerning his suitability.

Informal Review: In addition to Annual Scrutinies, Staff Meetings will include brief, informal reviews. These are not formal Scrutinies, although they may contribute, over time, to the scrutiny process. Hence, the Scrutiny Timetable includes informal reviews of year groups in order to assist the seminarian in his ongoing self-reflection, and to aid the Rector in any meetings with the seminarian, bishop or diocesan vocations director.

Procedures for Scrutiny

Calendar: At the beginning of each College year the programme for celebrations of Ministries, Candidacy and Orders will be published on the Chapel Noticeboard, along with the dates of Formation Staff Scrutiny Meetings. The Scrutiny dates will allow enough time for applications to be scrutinised and subsequent reports prepared prior to sending the final documents to bishops. Submission dates for all reports are also included in this calendar. In consultation with his Formation Tutor, Human Formation Director, and Spiritual Director, a seminarian will discern whether to submit an application. He must ensure there is enough time for this discernment and for the preparation of reports by himself, his Formation Tutor and the Pastoral department.

Preparation for Annual Scrutiny: Seminarians and staff prepare for each Annual Scrutiny as follows:

Seminarian Self-Reflection: In preparation for each Annual Scrutiny, the seminarian reviews his progress since the last scrutiny. He then drafts a series of short paragraphs in which he appraises his own human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development, and the way in which he is integrating these four strands of formation. He is encouraged to do this in conversation with his spiritual Director and Human Formator. Before submitting his self-reflection to the Rector, he must discuss it with his Formation Tutor for his final guidance.

Pastoral Report: Prior to the seminarian writing his self-reflection, the Pastoral Director/Coordinator discusses with the seminarian the various Pastoral Placement Reports sent in by those who have supervised placements. The Pastoral Director/Coordinator then writes up a summary of these and his own pastoral assessment. These form the seminarian's annual Pastoral Report, a copy of which is given to the seminarian and all the Formation Staff. This report is sent to the bishop by the Rector as part of the Final Report.

Formation Tutor's Report: In liaison with the seminarian, the Formation Tutor writes a Formation Tutor Report reflecting upon the discernment and formation journey since the last scrutiny; this report is read out loud at the Scrutiny Meeting. Copies are given to the seminarian and, at the Scrutiny Meeting, to the Rector.

Formation Staff Scrutiny Report: These are very brief, bullet-point reports drafted by the individual members of staff, with the help of the Ratio procedures for Scrutiny, on their overall scrutiny of the seminarian together with suggestions for his future development. These reports are only used at the Staff Scrutiny Meeting and as an aid to the Rector in preparation for his Report. They are then destroyed.

Marks Transcript: A transcript of the most recent Course Results and comments from Course Tutors is compiled by the Academic Office for each seminarian. Copies of this report are given to the seminarian, the Formation Staff and also to the Rector for inclusion in the Final Report.

Staff Scrutiny Meeting: At the Staff Scrutiny Meeting, the following reports are considered:

- i. Seminarian's own Self-Reflection
- ii. Pastoral Report
- iii. Formation Tutor's Report
- iv. The Marks Transcript

Based on their preparation and notes, the Formation Staff each gives their scrutiny and then engages in a round-table discussion. This discussion concerns the present and future development of the seminarian. The Spiritual Directors and the Human Formation Co-ordinator, if present, take no part in the scrutiny. At Major Scrutinies, the Formation Staff take a consultative vote.

From all these consultations, the Rector writes his Report. A copy of this report is given to the seminarian in preparation for his meeting with the Rector.

Rector's Report: The Rector completes his report having listened to the Formation Staff in the scrutiny meeting. This report outlines the progress made since the previous scrutiny and propose areas for future development. A draft copy of the report is given to the seminarian prior to his meeting with the Rector.

Rector's Meeting with the Seminarian: The seminarian meets the Rector to discuss the feedback from the Scrutiny, with regard to progress made so far and to future developments. A key aim of this discussion is to reach a consensus as to the seminarian's future development in formation. At this meeting with the Rector, the seminarian may amend his Self-Reflection and the Rector may amend his report. Both of these reports are then signed.

The Bishop's Report: This includes

- i. The Rector's Report
- ii. The Seminarian's Self-Reflection
- iii. The Pastoral Report
- iv. The Marks Transcript

These are sent to the bishop or religious superior at the appropriate time and a copy is kept in the Rector's Secure Archive. A copy is also given to the seminarian's Formation Tutor, who retains it as long as he is their Formation Tutor.

The Bishop or Superior: The seminarian's bishop or religious superior receives the Rector's Report. The bishop or superior, usually with the Vocations Director and any others whom he wishes to consult, makes the final judgement concerning the seminarian. The bishop, however, is urged by the Church to give serious regard to the advice of the seminary Rector.

Retention of Reports: Apart from the copies of reports held in the secure archives of the bishop and the Rector, all other copies being held by Formation Staff will be destroyed once the seminarian is no longer in seminary formation. All personal information held by the college is retained in accordance with the data protection policy of the college and current data protection legislation. When a seminarian leaves Formation, either before or after ordination, his personal file, including all reports, is returned to the diocese or religious order, to which the seminarian belongs.

Scrutiny Timetable

Year ONE	General Scrutiny Late 2nd semester	Informal Review Late 1 st semester
This first Scrutiny considers how the seminarian is settling in, the experience and skills he brings, how his gifts might be developed, his intellectual prospects and needs, his initial exposure to pastoral work, his commitment to the life of the house and the human qualities he displays.		A general review of the Year Group.
Year TWO	Major Scrutiny for Candidacy Late 2nd semester	Informal Review Mid 1 st semester
Taking into account how the expectations of the first Scrutiny are being met and how basic human and Christian qualities are flourishing, this scrutiny considers whether the seminarian should be admitted as a candidate for Holy Orders. This is a recognition by the Church that the seminarian is ready to enter the 'configuration stage' of his formation.		This considers how the aims drawn up from the first year General Scrutiny are being met.
Year THREE	General Scrutiny Late 1st semester	Informal Review Mid 2 nd semester
This scrutiny considers the seminarian's overall progress and identifies any considerations for continuing formation, including the forthcoming Extended Parish Placement.		A general review of the Year Group.
Year FOUR	Major Scrutiny for Lectorate Mid 2nd semester	Informal Review Mid 1 st semester
This scrutiny takes into account the feedback from the Extended Parish Placement, as well as other aspects of the formation programme. It considers whether the seminarian is ready to be formally instituted as a lector, recognising his call to proclaim the Word of God.		A review of the Year Group during Extended Parish Placement.
Year FIVE	Major Scrutiny for Acolytate Mid 1st semester	Informal Review Mid 1 st semester
Taking place in the latter stages of formation, this scrutiny represents an important moment to consider the seminarian's love for the Eucharist and his willingness and suitability to minister this sacrament to Christ's faithful.		A general review of the Year Group.
Year SIX	Major Scrutiny for Diaconate Early 1st semester	
Ordination to the Diaconate involves a life-long commitment to ministerial service and to celibacy. At this scrutiny, both the seminarian and the Church discern definitively a man's call to ordained ministry.		
Year SIX or beyond	Major Scrutiny for Priesthood	
This scrutiny takes place at a timing decided by the diocesan bishop and his advisors. It may be a partnership between the diocese and the seminary formation staff. Its purpose is to discern whether a man is ready to be ordained as a priest, and identify any ongoing needs he may have.		

Further Documents

Other documents which apply to our life at Oscott and should be consulted are:

- The college GDPR Policy
- Seminarian Privacy Notice
- Internet and Social Media Usage Policy
- Guide to the Intellectual Formation Programme

The Guidelines for Scrutiny were adopted on 23rd May 1997
The Second Edition was published on 1st November 1999
The Third Edition was published in September 2001
The Fourth Edition was published in October 2002
This Fifth Edition of *Discerning A Vocation: Guidelines for Scrutiny* was published in November 2004
The Sixth Edition was a compilation of the *Guidelines for Scrutiny* with '*Life at Oscott*' in August 2005
The Seventh Edition was published in November 2007
The Eight Edition was published in September 2009
The Ninth Edition was published in September 2010
The Tenth Edition was published in September 2011
The Eleventh Edition was published in September 2012
The Twelfth Edition was published in September 2013
The Thirteenth Edition was published in September 2014
The Fourteenth Edition was published in September 2015
The Fifteenth Edition was published in September 2016
The Sixteenth Edition was published in September 2017
The Seventeenth Edition was published in August 2018
The Eighteenth Edition was published in August 2019
The Nineteenth Edition was published in August 2020
The Twentieth Edition was published in August 2021
The Twenty-First Edition was published in July 2022
The Twenty-Second Edition was published in August 2023