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Hello

I am delighted to present the Blake Stevenson *Review of Training and Support for Ministers* as part of the *Rethinking Initial Training* (RIT) programme of change.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those that were able to participate in this consultation. I am aware that these initiatives demand time from those that are already very busy, but I want to assure you that the Council is taking the findings of such research seriously and planning changes in accordance with the evidence presented.

The full Change Plan will be available in 2019; the Interim Report will be available at General Assembly 2018.

If you have any questions or comments about the research, please contact Mr David Plews – Education & Training Secretary and Project Lead for RIT – by email at **dplews@churchofscotland.org.uk**

Once again – thank you for your support.

Kind regards,

Neil Glover
Convener

Review of Training and Support for Ministers

Church of Scotland

January 2018

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Executive Summary

Blake Stevenson Ltd was commissioned by the Church of Scotland to review the training and support that is provided to ministry candidates through Initial Ministerial Education (IME), and to ministers through Continuous Ministerial Development (CMD).

In undertaking the review, Blake Stevenson examined the Church's internal operational systems and structures relating to training and support, and reviewed current training provision, considering content, structure, delivery methods and providers. Through desk research, online surveys and focus group consultation Blake Stevenson examined what ministry candidates need to effectively prepare for their duties as ministers, how well the current provision meets these needs, and what changes need to be made to better prepare ministry candidates.

The review also addressed how well CMD meets the ongoing training needs of ministers once they are ordained, and considered the unique experiences and training and support needs of Ordained Local Ministers (OLMs), Readers, and Deacons.

The emerging picture is one of significant need, with ministers' roles and responsibilities increasingly demanding, and competing priorities leading to people working under pressure to fulfil their obligations. The unique nature of the profession, with ministers being called to their post and working as office-bearers rather than employees adds to the complexity of the environment within which training and support must be provided.

The research identified gaps in training and support for both candidates and ordained ministers (including OLMs), as well as Deacons and Readers. The support needs related to both building confidence and the ability to manage ongoing duties and change, and competence in relation to specific skills required to meet congregations' and the Church's needs.

Some 78% of current ordained ministers did not feel that their education and training has adequately equipped them for the challenges they currently face. 35% also indicated that the training and support they had received from the Church of Scotland since they were ordained had not prepared them well for their duties as a minister. Furthermore, 57% felt that this support had not been sufficient to support them to develop their competency.

More specifically, for candidates and probationers, gaps identified related to support for innovation, and a need to further develop candidates' sense of resilience and ability to manage their own wellbeing.

For ordained ministers, gaps identified included support to develop knowledge and application of social media, leadership development, financial and conflict management, and issues related to church law and property.

Amongst current candidates and probationers, only 69% of those we surveyed indicated that their academic course had been effective preparation for becoming a minister, but 100% felt that there had been a high standard of teaching, and that support by academic staff was good. However, feedback suggests a lack of integration between academic learning and practical application post–

ordination, and a lack of cohesion between training received through universities, and the training and support provided by the Church of Scotland centrally.

Candidates and probationers also indicated a lack of consistency across academic institutions. A desire for more interaction between Church of Scotland candidates was seen to be hindered by the student body being fragmented across five institutions. This fragmentation of the students across institutions was also raised by academics consulted, some of whom could see benefit in concentrating provision for Church of Scotland candidates in fewer institutions.

Training and support provided to candidates and probationers was generally felt to be in need of further improvement, whilst recognising recent positive developments. Placements were felt to be important, but lacking in consistency and breadth of experience. The Ministries Training Network was valued as a means of connecting students to each other, but the demands related to taking part (for example, journaling tasks), and the Training Portfolio were both felt to be time consuming but lacking in value.

Post-ordination training and support was also recognised as having improved recently but with further development required. Particular priorities related to extending the nature and extent of support on offer and tightening the relationship between central office and the individual presbyteries. In addition, a significant number of people were concerned that the current system relies on those in need asking for support, and a risk that those most in need may not be receiving support (or not receiving the support until point of crisis) as a result. Particular gaps cited related to having robust review processes in place, informed by a comprehensive competency framework to enable training and support needs to be more easily and clearly identified.

Recommendations

Academic study

1. Work with academic institutions to explore opportunities to reduce the number of providers and ensure that the Church of Scotland has more extensive input to course content.

2. Take steps to integrate the Church of Scotland training support more seamlessly with university provision – options for further integration include facilitation of functions such as Ministries Training Network or similar through the university providers; a shared post to offer pastoral support to students; and more regular engagement between the Church of Scotland and university representatives.

3. Consider introducing more digital and blended learning opportunities for initial ministerial training to ensure that there are more flexible entry routes in to the Church.

Church of Scotland support pre-ordination

4. Review of functions and associated requirements of Ministries Training Network and the Training Portfolio to ensure that the work involved in these is merited and valuable.

5. Closer monitoring of candidates and probationers' experiences of placements to ensure that these are valuable and offering the necessary range of experiences to equip people for ministry.

6. More pastoral support for candidates, including development work with Presbyteries to develop their role in pastoral support for candidates/probationers, and more extensive pastoral support from central office/Ministries Council.

7. More extensive training for supervisors to ensure consistency of approach, clear understanding of any revised processes following this review, and regular updating of training.

8. Development of a comprehensive competency framework to inform the selection process for candidates, and progress whilst undertaking their pre-ordination training. This competency framework would also create a direct link between IME and CMD and ensure continuity of learning beyond ordination.

9. Ensure the candidature recruitment process is based around any new competency framework developed, while also supporting candidates to follow their calling by using a values-based approach to recruitment.

10. Consider candidate representation on the Training Task Group or Education and Support Group (or other group as appropriate).

11. Simplification and improved presentation of paperwork associated with training and support.

12. Overhaul of the candidate review process to ensure transparency, an effective mechanism for reviewing progress and consistent application by all those involved. An important consideration within this is how best to have supervisor input to the review process, without compromising the candidate's ability to speak candidly (a two-part process, with the supervisor only attending the first part of the review process may be a simple step to address this current gap).

13. Maintain clear, transparent and coherent communications between recruitment and training bodies within the Church to ensure recruitment and training processes are more closely linked and consistent.

Training and support post-ordination

14. Introduction of a robust regular process of review, informed by the development of a comprehensive competency framework to inform monitoring of ministers' progress throughout their career and provision of necessary training and support.

15. Improve training and support in relation to gaps identified in this review including church law and procedure, business skills, self-confidence etc.

16. Consider introduction of a more extensive package of pastoral support, and consider the introduction or development of mentoring schemes.

17. Review the provision to support innovation and other more recent demands related to church management, including the use of social media, to ensure that ministers are equipped to manage change within their Presbyteries.

1.   Introduction

1.1   Blake Stevenson Ltd was commissioned by the Church of Scotland (the Church) to review the training and support that is provided to ministry candidates through Initial Ministerial Education (IME), and the support provided to ministers through Continuous Ministerial Development (CMD).

1.2   The review encompassed an assessment of the Church's internal operational systems and structures relating to training and support, as well as a review of current training options, with reference to non-theological content, structure, delivery methods and providers.

1.3   The findings of this research will be used to develop proposed actions for change that will provide a foundation for the Church of Scotland to develop and implement a training and support framework that is fit for purpose.

Context

1.4   The Church of Scotland Ministries Council is currently undertaking an extensive reform project, Rethinking Initial Training (RIT), to better align the Church's current education and training programme with the changing needs of ministry in the 21st Century.

1.5   RIT was formed by the Ministries Council in December 2015 to determine whether changes to the IME programme were needed, and if so, what types of changes should be made. Phase 1 of the project, which ended in February 2017, established a need for changes to be made to the current IME programme. In particular, Phase 1 of the project concluded that there was a need for a full-scale review of training operations, and the development of change options for IME. It also determined that CMD should be clearly linked with IME.

1.6   Drawing on the findings from Phase 1 of the RIT project, 11 principles for a future model of IME were devised. Namely, IME should be:

- Attractive;
- Collaborative;
- Cost-efficient;
- Denominational;
- Flexible;
- Formative;
- Habit-forming and sustainable;
- Integrated and clear;
- Mission-orientated and contextual;
- Multi-dimensional; and
- Supported.

1.7   These principles will inform the change programme that will be developed for a revised IME programme.

1.8   Following on from Phase 1 of the RIT project, Phase 2 includes a complete analysis of IME, along with the development of a change programme. In particular, Phase 2 will involve examining the purpose of training, interrogating operating systems, testing funding patterns, and analysing management and leadership.

1.9   The research conducted as part of this review forms a key component of Phase 2. The findings and recommendations that are included in this report, along with the proposed actions for change, will be provided to the Ministries Council in January 2018, and will be taken to the 2018 Church of Scotland General Assembly.
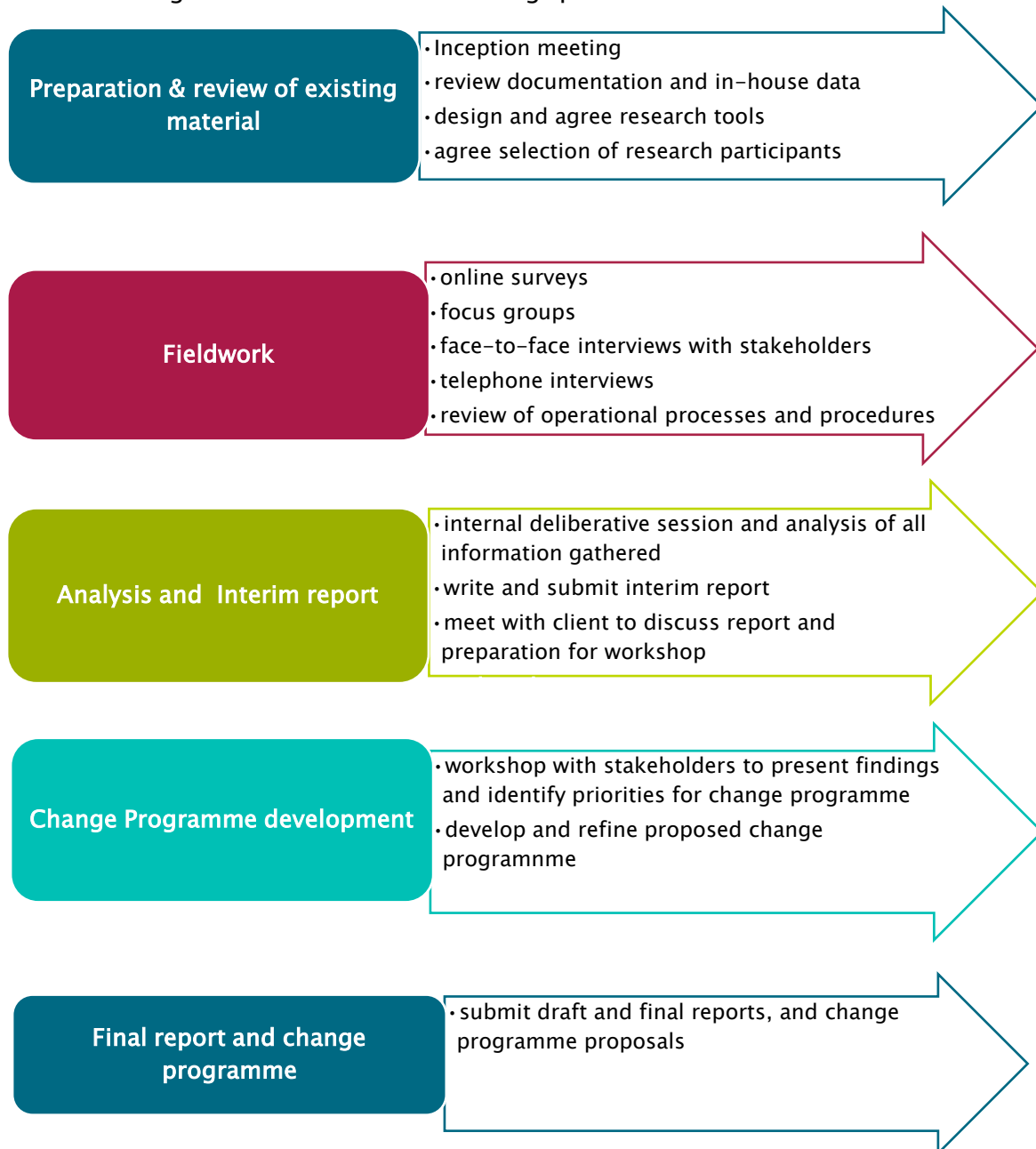
Research objectives and scope

1.10   The primary objectives of this review were to determine more precisely what ministry candidates need to effectively prepare for their duties as ministers, how well the current IME programme meets these needs, and what changes need to be made to better prepare ministry candidates. The review also addressed how well CMD meets the ongoing training needs of ministers once they are ordained.

1.11   To meet these objectives, an assessment of the internal operational systems and structures was conducted, as well as a review and development of options regarding aspects of training including non-theological content, structure, delivery methods and providers.

1.12   Although this research primarily focused on the experiences of ministers of Full Time Word and Sacrament (FTWS), the review also covered the unique experiences and training and support needs of Ordained Local Ministers (OLMs), Readers, and Deacons.

Methodology

1.13 To conduct this review of the Church's training and support, Blake Stevenson used a range of quantitative and qualitative methods, including a mix of online surveys, interviews, and focus groups, as well as a review of operational training processes and procedures.

1.14 The diagram below outlines the five-stage process that was used to undertake the work:

Preparation & review of existing material
- Inception meeting
- review documentation and in-house data
- design and agree research tools
- agree selection of research participants

Fieldwork
- online surveys
- focus groups
- face-to-face interviews with stakeholders
- telephone interviews
- review of operational processes and procedures

Analysis and Interim report
- internal deliberative session and analysis of all information gathered
- write and submit interim report
- meet with client to discuss report and preparation for workshop

Change Programme development
- workshop with stakeholders to present findings and identify priorities for change programme
- develop and refine proposed change programnme

Final report and change programme
- submit draft and final reports, and change programme proposals

1.15 Online surveys were conducted with current ministry candidates, FTWS, OLMs, Deacons and Readers, about their experiences of IME and CMD. Questions also covered perceived levels of competency in key areas of learning. We received a total of 459 responses to the surveys of which:

- 320 were FTWS/OLMs;
- 36 were current ministry candidates and probationers;
- 95 were Readers; and
- 8 were Deacons.

1.16   Appendix 1 provides a complete profile of survey respondents including age, gender, length of time since ordination (where applicable), and current position or academic institution.

1.17   Blake Stevenson also conducted extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders groups including face to face and telephone interviews with:

- 4 Church of Scotland central office staff;
- 6 representatives from academic providers; and
- 9 FTWS (small number of phone consultations for those unable to attend focus groups).

1.18   Seven focus groups were conducted with different stakeholder groups within the Church. These focus groups were held in the following locations:

- **Perth:** probationers.
- **Glasgow:** FTWS ministers, placement supervisors, and Presbytery/Council assessors.
- **Edinburgh:** FTWS ministers and placement supervisors focus groups.
- **Dundee:** FTWS ministers.

1.19   In total, these focus groups were attended by:

- 16 FTWS ministers;
- 14 probationers;
- 12 placement supervisors; and
- 2 Council/Presbytery assessors.

1.20   In addition, Blake Stevenson reviewed key documents relating to the current IME process including handbooks, candidate forms and reporting forms, conference materials, and RIT project reports. We also observed a Church of Scotland Education and Support Committee meeting for further context and insight.

Report Structure

1.21   The rest of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the current academic and church-led training that forms the IME programme, as well as CMD.
- Chapter 3 presents our analysis of the current needs of ministry candidates, FTWS, OLMs, Readers, and Deacons.

- Chapter 4 provides and overview of candidates' and probationers' experiences of education, training and support
- Chapter 5 provides an overview of ordained ministers' experiences of education, training and support
- Chapter 6 provides a set of conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the review.

2. Overview of Current Academic and Church-led Training

Training approach

Principles

2.1 The Church of Scotland applies a number of core principles to its overall approach to training. In particular, the *Ministers of the Gospel – Serving in a Changing Society* report includes a set of considerations for ministering in this context:

- A Changing Scotland;
- The Nostalgia Trap;
- No Single Solution;
- A Pluralist Context;
- A Secular Society;
- Religious Affiliation – what does it mean today?
- An Ageing Population; and
- A Mobile Society.

2.2 The Church of Scotland has developed a ministry model in response to these considerations, including an emphasis on team ministry, which involves ministering cooperatively alongside other ministries such as ordained local ministry, readership and diaconate.

2.3 Based on consultation with both Church members and the community, a number of other aspects of a ministry model for the 21st century were also suggested including:

- group practice;
- people of passion;
- good interpersonal skills;
- working with other churches;
- committed to lifelong learning;
- the Church as a partner; and
- meaningful participation.[1]

2.4 Overall, ministers are expected to carry out their duties in a wide range of settings, which requires a broad skill set and flexibility.

2.5 The Church has also outlined three ministry styles that will support the Church to fulfil its mission in a changing society:

- collaborative approach;
- reflective practice; and
- commitment to formation.

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[1] *Ministers of the Gospel – Serving the Church* report.

Competencies

2.6 To help FTWS, OLM, Reader and Deacon ministry candidates develop the skills needed to successfully minister within this context, a set of competencies has been devised in the following areas:

- worship;
- mission;
- pastoral;
- church management;
- leadership;
- communications;
- discipleship; and
- personal.

2.7 The specific tasks that need to be completed to demonstrate competency in these areas depend on the specific type of ministry, and are assessed during the course of the Initial Ministerial Education programme.

Church training governance

2.8 There are a number of organisations within the Church of Scotland that are responsible for overseeing aspects of Initial Ministerial Education.

Ministries Council

2.9 The Ministries Council was formed in 2005 and has overall responsibility for recruitment and training of full-time ministry candidates. The Ministries Council is responsible for providing the IME conference programme, assessing and providing feedback on certain assignments, arranging ministry placements and supervision, and administering the Annual Review process.

Training Task Group

2.10 The Training Task Group (TTG) sits within Ministries Council and is comprised of 6 Council members with a number of co-opts and ex-officios. The TTG acts as the "face of the Ministries Council" to candidates. It oversees all aspects of Church-led training activities including Candidate Review, conferences, placements, Ministries Training Network, as well as academic requirements.

2.11 The TTG carries out Ministries Council policy including determining placement arrangements, providing annual reports on candidates' progress (through the Annual Review Group), and making decisions relating to progress, as well as discussing goals for the following year. It also supports the training of staff involved in IME, including supervisors, Presbytery assessors, MTN facilitators, and supervision trainers.

2.12 The TTG is also responsible for first five years ministry training, and the CMD programme.

Training Officers

2.13   Training Officers assist in the implementation of Ministries Council policy, although they are not voting members of the Council or its committees and working groups. Training Officers are responsible for initial course meetings and the candidate review process, acting as the primary contact for candidates and probationers, planning conferences in consultation with candidates, liaising with university staff about academic progress, discussing placements with candidates, and liaising with Presbyteries and supervisors about candidate progress.

Presbyteries

2.14   Presbyteries are initially responsible for nominating candidates. Throughout candidature Presbyteries work with Ministries Councils to develop an Annual Review structure for candidates, provide pastoral support to candidates, support spiritual development, and provide facilities for the Annual Review meeting.

Candidate selection process

2.15   The current process for the selection of FTWS ministry candidates is detailed in the Church of Scotland's Selection and Training for Full-time Ministry Act (Act X 2004), which was enacted by the General Assembly.

Figure 2.1 Current candidate selection process
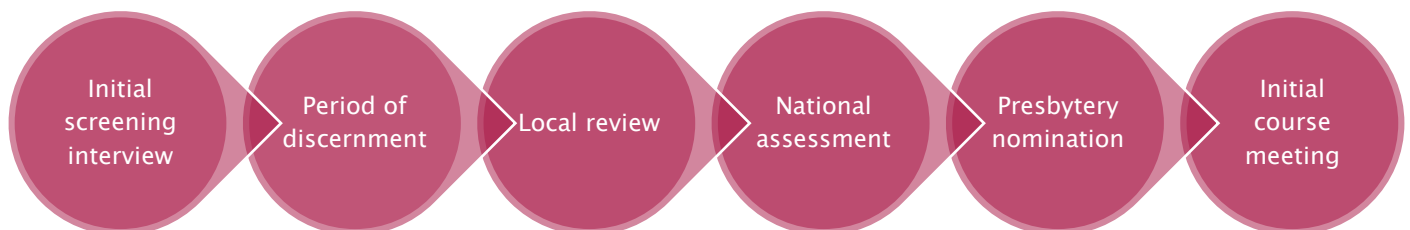
2.16   Individuals wishing to apply for candidature must first attend an initial screening interview arranged by the Ministries Council. Once the interview has been conducted and the individual is believed ready, they may apply to be a ministry candidate. The applicant's Presbytery will then be informed of the application.

2.17   Applicants are required to complete a period of discernment of 3-12 months with a local mentor to better determine their call and gifting. Once this period of discernment is completed, a local review is undertaken to determine whether the application should
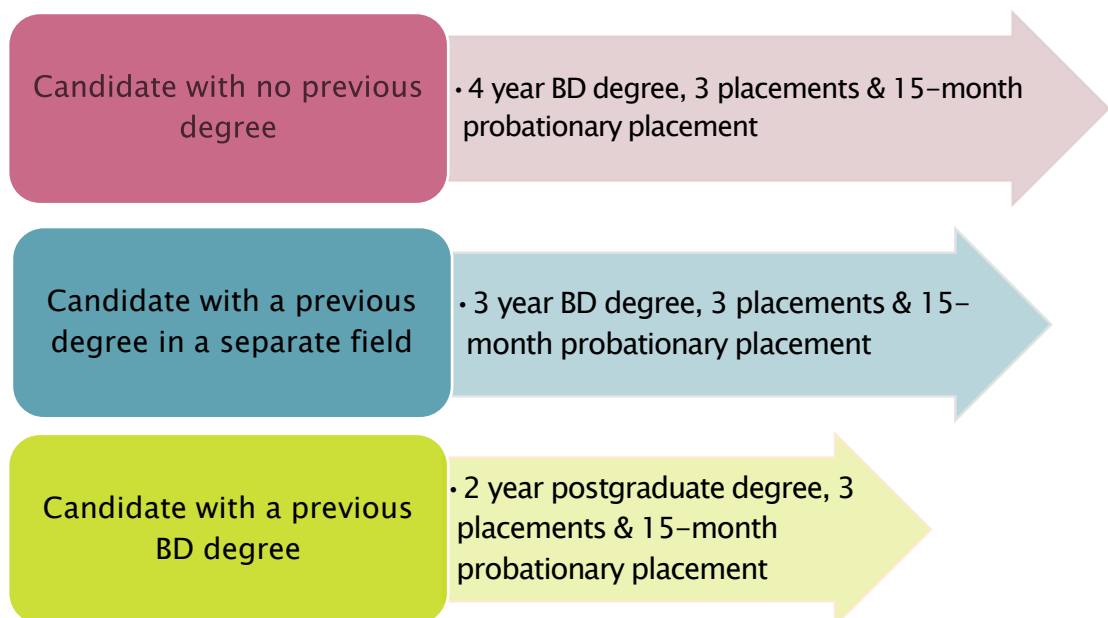
proceed to national assessment, requires a further period of discernment before a decision is made, or should not proceed to national assessment.

2.18   The Ministries Council (on behalf of the Church) assesses applicants' suitability to become a ministry candidate through a national assessment. The assessment conference takes place over a 24-hour period, and includes testing on interpersonal skills, interviews with National Assessors, and a psychological assessment. Once an applicant has been accepted as a prospective ministry candidate, they must apply to their Presbytery to be nominated for candidature.

2.19   After an applicant is successfully nominated by their Presbytery, an initial course meeting will be held to provide feedback from the assessment conference, discuss arrangements for the candidate's academic course, set goals for the first year of study, and confirm expectations and responsibilities.

Initial Ministerial Education

2.20   IME constitutes the package of academic study, Church-led training, and placements that ministry candidates must undertake to be ordained as a minister. There are a number of IME pathways available, depending on relevant previous academic study. The diagram below illustrates the main IME pathways that are available to FTWS ministry candidates:

Figure 2.2 Main IME pathways for FTWS ministry candidates

Candidate with no previous degree
• 4 year BD degree, 3 placements & 15-month probationary placement

Candidate with a previous degree in a separate field
• 3 year BD degree, 3 placements & 15-month probationary placement

Candidate with a previous BD degree
• 2 year postgraduate degree, 3 placements & 15-month probationary placement

Academic study

2.21 Ministry candidates are required to undertake academic study at one of the five academic partners that are associated with the Church of Scotland. These are:

- University of Edinburgh;
- University of St Andrews;
- University of Glasgow;
- University of Aberdeen; and
- Highland Theological College.

2.22 Although the relevant degree programmes at these five institutions differ in terms of structure and content, the Selection and Training for Full-time Ministry Act requires that candidates demonstrate competence in the following areas of academic study:

- Interpretation and use of Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, including an introduction to methods of biblical criticism and analysis;
- History of the Church, including the development of the Church of Scotland;
- Principal doctrines of the Christian faith and their application to preaching and pastoral work;
- Principles of Christian Ethics;
- Church, Ministry, Worship, Preaching and Sacraments; and
- Pastoral Care and Theology.

2.23 The Church of Scotland has no formal role in informing the content of programmes delivered to its candidates at these institutions. However, academics we interviewed spoke of the pragmatic approach taken to consider and address any particular needs of the Church of Scotland, where this is possible. Highland Theological College, for example, designed a specific module on sacraments for Readers who wished to upskill to become OLMs, and Trinity College at the University of Glasgow made revisions to its course to include some modules specifically for Church of Scotland candidates.

2.24 Online distance learning options are available through the University of Aberdeen and Highland Theological College. However, Ministries Council policy views on-campus learning as the preferred option for candidates. Online learning is only available to candidates in the following circumstances:

- **Geography:** travelling more than 1.5 hours each way to university if this is a single criterion, or an hour each way when factoring in other criteria.
- **Personal circumstances:** exceptional circumstances relating to issues such as health or primary carer responsibilities.
- **Entrance requirements:** lack of academic qualifications to begin on-campus study at the candidate's nearest academic partner.
- **Distance learning begun prior to being accepted as a candidate:** already studying online at their own expense.

2.25   Applications for distance learning are assessed by the TTG.

2.26   Part-time learning is available to candidates who are completing a 3 year or 4 year Bachelor of Divinity programme, but this may only be done by undertaking their first year of study over a two-year period. This must be approved in advance by the Ministries Council.

Church-led training

2.27   There are a number of components that form the Church-led training of FTWS, which takes place alongside the academic study component of candidature. These are:

- conferences;

- Ministries Training Network;

- portfolio;

- placements;

- candidate review process; and

- probation.

Conferences

2.28   The Ministries Council administers a conference programme over three years during the candidature period to cover areas of ministry that are not included in academic courses. Conferences are a compulsory part of IME and are held in summer/autumn each year. There are three streams at each conference, depending on which year of study candidates are in:

- **Year A:** Pastoral Care. Plenary sessions include Focus on Ministry: Being Presbyterian, Exploring Interfaith, Working Ecumenically, The Guild, and Mission and Discipleship.

- **Year B:** Worship. Plenary sessions include Focus on Ministry: Being Inclusive (a broad church), Disability Focus, World Mission, Church and Society.

- **Year C:** Mission. Plenary sessions include Focus on Ministry: Power and Privilege and Use of Authority, Race Relations, Gender Issues, Ministries Council, and Cross Reach.

2.29   Conferences also include sessions on Church Law across these three areas. An additional spring conference is held in the form of a 48 hour spiritual retreat in small groups of seven to eight candidates. Candidates only start attending conferences once they have three years of their degree left. As a result, candidates who are studying a four-year degree will start attending conferences in their second year of study.

2.30   During the 15-month probationary period, candidates attend a further four conferences lasting three to four days each.

Ministries Training Network

2.31 MTN is a meeting of candidates for the purposes of worship, peer support and learning, held locally on a monthly basis between October and May each year. Meetings run for two-hours and are usually attended by six to eight local ministry candidates. MTN meetings begin with worship and also include biblical/theological discussion.

2.32 MTN meetings are led by a group facilitator who is selected from the existing cohort of trained supervisors and approved by the TTG. Group facilitators are overseen by a lead facilitator who will liaise with the Training Officer and attend TTG meetings.

2.33 Alongside the monthly meetings, candidates are also required to make journal entries of 200-300 words per fortnight to reflect on placements, worship, and pastoral/academic experiences. Journals are submitted twice during the year, and once at the end of the year, to be assessed by the group facilitator. The third journal entry to be submitted also includes a commentary on personal development and learning needs, which informs the goal-setting component of the Annual Review.

2.34 Candidates are also required to critically reflect on material relating to the practice of ministry. This entails submitting a reflective essay, based on material provided by the facilitator, and a commentary on verbatim/case study presented at an MTN meeting, submitted as an appendix to the essay. These submissions are assessed as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Portfolio

2.35 Candidates are required to develop a portfolio to record and reflect on their learning. The portfolio is divided into a set of skills in the following 'domains':

- worship;
- mission;
- pastoral;
- church management;
- leadership;
- discipleship;
- communication; and
- personal.

2.36 Each of these domains includes a range of tasks that candidates are expected to undertake during the course of their placements. The portfolio includes a column for students to comment on the progress they have made in demonstrating the skills in the above domains.

2.37   The portfolio is used by candidates to self-assess their progress towards acquiring the set of skills required for FTWS ministry. Placement supervisors also regularly review a candidate's portfolio to determine their achievements in previous placements, assess their current skill levels, and identify areas for future development. The portfolio is presented for consideration to assessors prior to a candidate's Annual Review.

Placements

2.38   Placements are an integral component of IME for all candidates. In total, four placements are undertaken over the course of the IME programme:

- two part-time placements of at least 25 weeks each during the academic course;

- one ten-week full time summer placement; and

- the final 15-month full-time probationary placement.

2.39   Placements are arranged based on the candidate's existing experience and learning needs, and where they live, although placements in their home congregation will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Placements are designed to provide candidates with experience across a broad range of Church activities, and may include a variety of geographical locations (urban, rural, etc.), supervisors, and functions (UPA, linkage, chaplaincy etc.). Candidates can also conduct their summer placement abroad in Europe, Africa, India, Jerusalem or the USA.

2.40   At least one of the part-time placements must involve Advent/Christmas, and the other should include Easter. Candidates are expected to preach a maximum of six times during each part-time placement, including three full services. During these part-time placements, candidates are expected to spend no more than 10 hours per week on ministry work to ensure that there is enough time for studying and other personal commitments.

2.41   10-week full-time summer placements comprise 40-hour weeks that include leading worship on Sundays and other pastoral duties. The placement can be split into a 4:6, 5:5 or 6:4 week arrangement with up to two weeks of vacation time in between.

2.42   Placements begin in the second year of a four-year degree programme, or the first year of a two or three-year degree programme. Candidates undertaking a three or four-year degree programme do not undertake a placement in their last year of academic study before probation. In these years, candidates are required to complete an end of year report reflecting on theology and ministry, as well as identifying goals for the following year.

Supervision

2.43   The Ministries Council is responsible for recruiting and training FTWS to be placement supervisors. The Council requires that supervisors must have served in ministry for a minimum of five years, and at least a year in their current charge. Supervisors must

undertake a short training course before beginning to supervise candidates. There are currently around 297 trained supervisors within the Church, with around 115 active any given time across the programme.

2.44   Supervisors are responsible for providing opportunities to candidates to develop their core ministry skills and competencies. To aid this development, supervisors are also encouraged to establish a support group within the parish to provide constructive input and feedback on the candidate's performance.

Candidate review process

2.45   Annual Reviews are held towards the end of each year of candidature to assess a candidate's progress, discuss what has gone well, challenges encountered, to what extent previous goals have been achieved, and set goals for the following year. The review is held in either the candidate's home Presbytery or the Presbytery in which their university is located.

2.46   The review is usually convened by the Presbytery Assessor, and the Review Group may also include another Presbytery representative, as well as up to two Ministries Council Assessors and another Ministries Council representative in an advisory/administrative capacity.

2.47   Prior to the Annual Review, the Review Group will receive, where applicable, reports from the candidate's supervisor on the development of the candidate during the placement, from the university college on academic progress, and from the Ministries Council on overall progression. The candidate's portfolio should also be assessed.

2.48   As part of the Annual Review, the candidate will make a 10–15 minute presentation on their placement (if applicable). The presentation covers the successes and challenges of the placement, areas of ministry covered, learnings from the placement, and learning needs for the next placement.

2.49   As part of the Annual Review, Assessors will consider the candidate's Learning Covenant, provided by their supervisor, to inform discussion around the candidate's annual academic, practical/professional, and personal/spiritual/work–life balance goals.

2.50   Assessors are required to assess candidates based on the Ministries Council Indicators for Assessment, across six areas:

- integration of life and faith;

- interpersonal, leadership and teamwork skills;

- preparation and reflective skills;

- handling change; and

- discernment and affirmation of call.

2.51   However, candidates do not need to meet all indicators. Instead, the indicators are used to identify skills requiring further development.

2.52   The draft report provided by the Ministries Council will be amended and agreed by all attendees at the Annual Review meeting, and will contain a decision by the Ministries Council and Presbytery whether to sustain the candidature. In total, there are four possible decisions that can be made at the Annual Review:

- the candidate continues to the next stage of training or ordination;

- outstanding pieces of work must be completed before the candidate can proceed;

- an extension of training is required to address significant issues; or

- the candidature is terminated.

2.53   In reality though, candidatures are only very rarely not sustained. Exact figures are not currently available but we understand that in the last two years only one or two candidates have been given a Decision 4 (candidature terminated). In these instances the candidate may be given a specific period of time to complete areas of work, be given an extension to their training to address areas of concern, or an agreement is reached to terminate the candidature.

Probation

2.54   The final 15-month probationary placement commences at the start of July, August, September or October, and finishes at the end of the following September, October, November or December. As with previous placements, the probationary placement takes place in a parish, under the supervision of a supervising minister appointed by the Ministries Council.

2.55   The tasks undertaken during the probationary placement are focussed on the goals included in the learning covenant, which must be returned to the TTG within six weeks of the placement commencing.

2.56   Probationers are required to attend a programme of four three-day conferences during their probation. The four conferences cover the following areas:

- Conference 1: Exploring Worship;

- Conference 2: Exploring Missions;

- Conference 3: Exploring Pastoral Care; and

- Conference 4: Moving On.

2.57   During the probationary placement an interim report is submitted by the probationer and their supervisor after five months, and a final appraisal is submitted at 11 months. The supervisor's final appraisal will indicate whether the probationer's progress is satisfactory

or unsatisfactory. The probationer and supervisor should have an opportunity to read each other's appraisals and include comments on a joint response sheet.

2.58   Alongside these reporting arrangements, an informal review will take place after six months, which will be conducted by the Presbytery Assessor and the staff member responsible for overseeing the candidate. During this review, the progress of the placement will be discussed, and any serious concerns will be reported to the TTG.

2.59   After 11 months of the probationary period, a normal Annual Review meeting (known as a Final Review) will be conducted, and a final decision about whether the candidate is ready to enter ministry will be made. If this final decision is positive, the Annual Review report will include confirmation that the candidate will receive an Exit Certificate at the end of the 15– month probationary period.

2.60   After the candidate receives their Exit Certificate they are referred to as a graduate candidate, and will remain a member of the Presbytery in which they have completed their probationary period until they begin their charge.

Initial Ministerial Education for Readers/Deacons/OLMs

Ordained Local Minister

2.61   Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) is a non-stipendiary form of Ministry of Word and Sacrament that supports ministry in a local setting. Their primary role is to support parish ministry, although each Presbytery determines the specific tasks the OLM undertakes.

2.62   The selection process for OLM candidates involves first becoming registered as an enquirer with the Ministries Council before applying to becoming a candidate. A local field assessment is conducted for up to six months, with the applicant supervised by a local assessor and an assessment made by a local review panel at the end of the local placement.

2.63   OLM applicants then attend a national assessment at which an assessment is made by a panel of two Church assessors and one psychological assessor as to whether the applicant should be nominated by the Presbytery for candidature.

2.64   OLM candidates undertake a two year Certificate of Christian Studies on a part-time basis, including periods of residential and day training. This course is usually undertaken through Aberdeen University's Centre for Life Long Learning, Highland Theological College, or Glasgow University, unless the candidate has previously completed the academic requirements through another course.

2.65   OLM candidates also undertake two six-month placements in a parish that is not their home parish, or the one in which they will serve once ordained. OLM candidates undertake a final probationary placement of 12 months, with a final review meeting determining whether an Exit Certificate will be issued for the candidate to enter ministry.

2.66   As with FTWS candidates, OLM candidates must complete a portfolio and attend a conference programme of three annual conferences, and two specific OLM conferences. A further two conferences are attended during the probationary placement. OLM candidates are also subject to the same review process.

Deacons

2.67   Deacons work in teams in parishes, often in specialised pastoral care roles such as chaplaincy, professional counselling, and creative arts; often they are deployed through a Ministries Development Staff (MDS) post.

2.68   The Diaconate candidature application process involves undergoing a period of enquiry before applying for candidature, similar to that undertaken by OLM applicants. This is followed by a field assessment and attendance at a selection conference. A recommendation is made by assessors to Ministries Council as to whether the applicant should continue to candidature.

2.69   Diaconate candidates undertake a minimum two year diploma in theology from Aberdeen, Glasgow, St Andrews or Edinburgh University, or Highland Theological College, as well as a further year studying a relevant discipline such as community work, youth work or counselling; or a third year of theological study. If candidates have already completed a theological degree from one of the partner universities, study will only need to cover any areas of the core curriculum that they have not previously studied.

2.70   Candidates undertake two 25-week placements during their studies, as well as a 10 week summer placement and a full time probationary period of 15 months. Alongside this, Diaconate candidates attend three annual conferences, an annual spring spiritual retreat, and a further four conferences during the probationary period.

2.71   As with FTWS candidates, diaconate candidates must also attend MTN meetings, keep a portfolio and journal, and are subject to the same review process.

Readers

2.72   Readers assist in public worship within parishes through preaching and pastoral work, as well as the traditional role of carrying out pulpit supply when ministers are not present.

2.73   Individuals interested in becoming Readers register their interest with the Ministries Council and complete a questionnaire to identify their strengths and limitations. Prospective applicants then attend a vocations conference at which the different opportunities available within the Church are presented.

2.74   Enquirers submit an application and undergo a screening interview with Healthlink360 to determine the applicant's capability to fulfil the placement requirements and longer term Readership role.

2.75   Applicants who successfully pass this interview undergo a period of discernment of between three and twelve months. Once this has been successfully completed, the applicant attends a local review where a decision is made whether the applicant should begin Readership candidature.

2.76   Readership candidates complete a three year part-time Certificate in Higher Education, through the Aberdeen University Christian Studies programme or Highland Theological College, both by distance learning.

2.77   Candidates also undertake two six-month placements, and attend five residential conferences. Final assessment is conducted through a formal preaching assessment and a report is sent to the Presbytery and Ministries Council with the Presbytery deciding whether to set the Reader apart.

Continuous Ministerial Development

2.78   In recent years, the Church of Scotland has developed a more structured approach to Continuous Ministerial Development (CMD) for ministry staff. CMD is also an important component of the RIT project, with the RIT Phase 1 report recommending a "clear link between IME and CMD – to encourage and enable continuous learning."

Ascend

2.79   Much of the recent development in the Church's CMD programme has been through the introduction of the Ascend website, which launched in May 2017. Ascend provides a range of resources relating to coaching, First Five Years, Ministerial Development Conversations (MDC), pastoral support/supervision, and study leave. The website also allows ministers to book MDC meetings and apply for study leave.

2.80   Although Ascend already provides a range of resources, it is still early in its implementation and may eventually provide an expanded range of services. Once a formal competency framework is in place, there is opportunity to deploy a more coherent continuing ministerial development (CMD) plan.

First Five Years

2.81   In response to the Support and Development for the First Five Years review report, which was released in November 2016, the Ministries Council has expanded the range of support for ministers in their first five years of ministry, although ministers in their first five years are still not able to access study leave. The review found that the model of FFY support provided in the form of an annual conference programme, restricted to their year groups, was not meeting the needs of ministers in their first five years.

2.82   In response to this finding, ministers in their first five years can now attend a combined annual FFY conference with increased opportunities to connect with ministers in other stages of their first five years in ministry. In addition, there is now a FFY retreat series over the course of the year to provide opportunities for learning and reflection.

Ministerial Development Conversation (MDC)

2.83   MDC is a new initiative that has been introduced to support ministers to identify training needs and make decisions about their ministry practice. MDC takes the form of a confidential discussion with a trained facilitator, either in person or using video conferencing.

2.84   MDC is open ordained ministers. MDC discussions take place over two to three hours and it is recommended that ministers take part in an MDC once every two years. Ministers are also encouraged to attend an MDC before applying for study leave. However, MDC is not currently taking place on a systematic basis and is a purely opt-in CMD activity. Feedback from research participants indicated that people who need help the most may not be asking for it, limiting the impact of MDC at this stage.

2.85   Ministers can arrange an MDC by selecting a facilitator from the list of accredited facilitators on the Ascend site. The facilitator will contact the minister directly to arrange an introductory phone call and provide more information on the MDC process.

2.86   MDC discussions are structured around the needs of the minister, and it is their choice how to lead the discussion. However, it is recommended that ministers reflect on nine areas under the three following headings:

- **My role:** my calling, my ability, my motivation.

- **My ministry:** my contribution, my relationships, my potential.

- **My future:** my hopes, my plan, my L&D.

2.87   MDC facilitators are required to undertake MDC–coaching training through Edinburgh Coaching Academy and must pass a set of assessments to become accredited facilitators. Facilitators must also undertake annual re–accreditation to maintain their skills.

Study leave

2.88   Ministers can access paid study leave after they have been ordained for five years. They are entitled to two weeks study leave and £275 each year which can be accrued up to a total of 14 weeks and £1925.

2.89   The study leave scheme is overseen by the Training Task Group (TTG). Presbyteries are required to administer the scheme locally by establishing an appropriate rota, organising adequate cover, and discussing with the TTG the suitability of the proposed study.

2.90   To apply for study leave, ministers must submit an application for an appropriate course to the TTG for approval. For periods of study leave longer than four weeks, applications must be made at least six months in advance. Ministers are also required to submit a written report on their study to the TTG and Presbytery within three months of returning from leave.

2.91   Ministers are now able to submit requests for study leave through a form on the Ascend site, including a study leave proposal, location of study, and expected costs of the course of study (course fees, travel, accommodation, other).

3. Current Capabilities and Training Needs

3.1 In this chapter, we explore the current capabilities and training needs of candidates, probationers and ministers', based on the feedback provided by research participants through surveys and focus groups. In particular, we compare how different respondent groups rate their own levels of competency in relation to key attributes of ministry practice, to determine the impact of training and practice on the development of capabilities. The chapter also addresses the support and training needs identified by research participants for further developing capabilities.

Current capabilities of ministry candidates and probationers

3.2 A total of 36 out of 58 candidates and probationers responded to our survey of ministry candidates and probationers, and 14 probationers participated in the focus group during the probationers' conference in Perth on 1 October 2017.

3.3 Through the survey we sought to determine how highly candidates and probationers rated themselves against a set of key attributes, including self-confidence, managing their own wellbeing, innovation, awareness of equality and diversity, and resilience. The results are illustrated in the table below.

Figure 3.1: How would you rate your own level of competence in the following areas? (n=35) (1=not developed at all, 5=highly developed)2
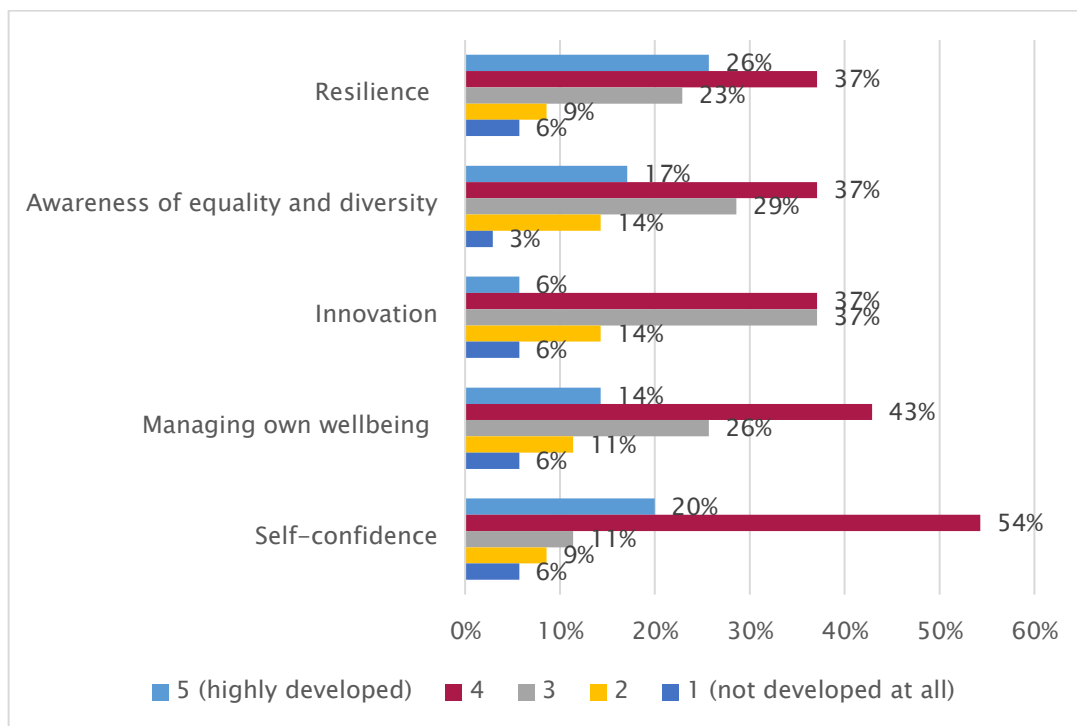
2Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

3.4   A majority of candidates/probationers rated themselves highly (rating themselves at 4 or 5 on our scale above) in relation to self–confidence (26, 74%), resilience (22, 63% rated themselves as 4 or 5), managing their own wellbeing (20, 57%), and awareness of equality and diversity (19, 54%).

3.5   However, this still means that some 30% feel that they are lacking in self–confidence, almost 40% do not feel they are very resilient, and over 40% do not rate themselves very highly in relation to managing their own wellbeing and their awareness of equality and diversity. Of most concern in a context of a rapidly changing contextual environment, is that less than 50% of respondents rated themselves highly in relation to innovation, even though this is an important attribute in supporting change in ministry practice.

Current capabilities of ordained ministers

3.6   We also explored with ordained ministers the extent to which they considered themselves to be competent in relation to the same attributes, through both the survey and focus groups. A total of 320 ministers responded to the survey (out of 755 ordained ministers across Scotland), and 30 attended the focus groups with ministers, placement supervisors and Presbytery/Council assessors. This is a high response rate, which has given us a strong sense of the issues arising. Below we describe our findings in relation to ministers, and also compare their responses to those of the candidates and probationers to try to establish whether there are changes of significance once ministers are ordained and in post.

3.7   In drawing comparisons, we recognise that we are not comparing like with like, since many of the ordained ministers were trained under a different system, but as an indicator of need, the information is valuable.

Competencies

3.8   As can be seen in the next graph, a high proportion of ministers rated themselves highly in relation to awareness of equality and diversity (264 or 83% rated themselves as 4 or 5) and resilience (254, 79%), both of which are substantially higher than the ratings indicated by probationers and candidates. This suggests that these attributes have been developed through gaining experience and fulfilling the requirements of the job.

Figure 3.2: How would you rate your own level of competence in the following areas? (n=320) (1=not developed at all, 5=highly developed)3
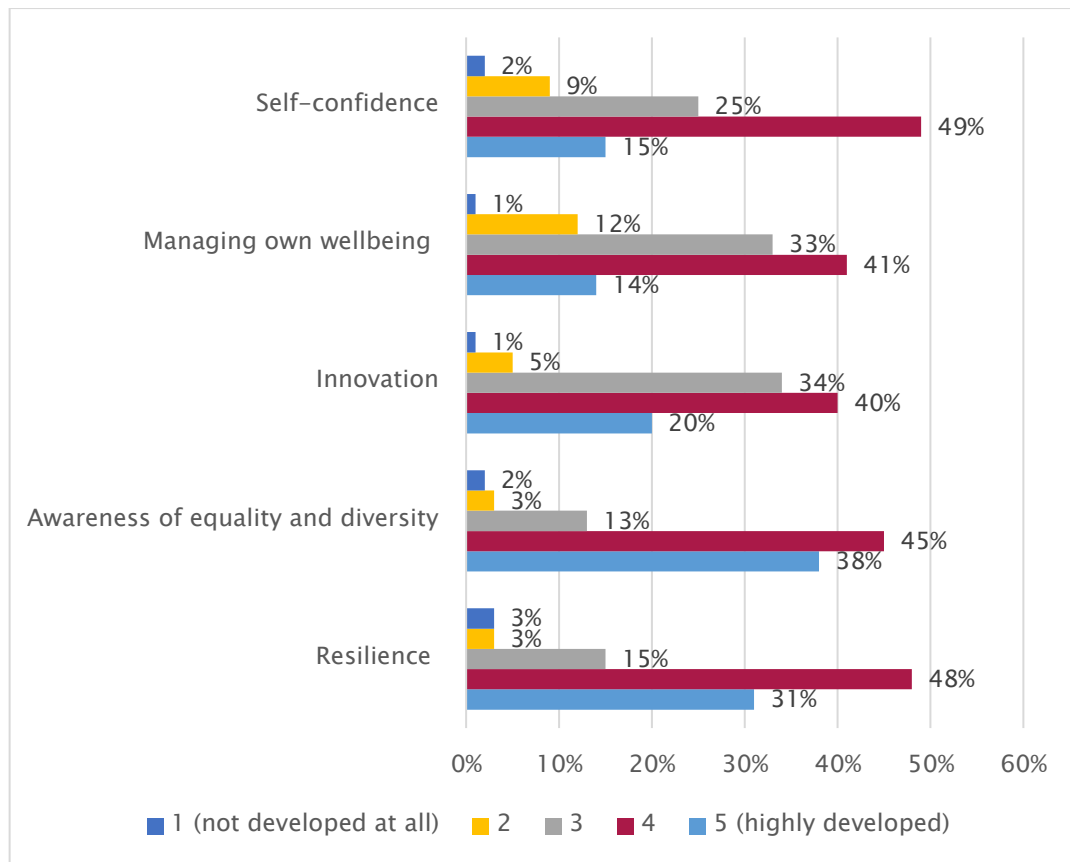
3.9   Only 60% of ordained ministers rated themselves highly in relation to competence in innovation, which is also higher than candidates and probationers rated themselves, again suggesting that experience has led to this improving, although clearly there is a need for this to be further developed to meet the needs of a rapidly changing church.

3.10   Interestingly, however, ordained ministers rate themselves lower than probationers and candidates with regards to self-confidence, with only 64% rating themselves highly against this attribute, which is concerning. It would be usual for self-confidence to grow with experience in a post, but the converse seems to be the case with ministers, and this is something which needs careful monitoring and addressing.

3.11   In terms of managing their own wellbeing, ordained ministers rated themselves similarly to candidates/probationers with slightly fewer (55%) rating themselves highly in relation to this attribute. Again, this suggests a need for more support to improve competency or confidence amongst ministers in managing their wellbeing.

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3 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Current capabilities of Readers and Deacons

3.13   A total of 95 out of 276 Readers responded to our survey. A complete breakdown of the survey results is provided in Appendix 2. A reasonably high number of respondents rated themselves highly competent in relation to resilience (66% rated themselves as 4 or 5), awareness of equality and diversity (63, 66%), managing their own wellbeing (60, 63%), and self-confidence (71, 75%). However, only 45% of respondent rated their competency in innovation as highly developed, suggesting that for this group too this is an area where further development is needed.

3.14   A small number of Deacons (8) responded to our survey. A complete breakdown of the survey results is provided in Appendix 2. Respondents indicated a reasonable degree of confidence in all competency areas. All respondents rated themselves highly competent (either 4 or 5) in relation to resilience and awareness of equality and diversity. A high number also rated themselves highly competent in managing their own wellbeing (6, 73%), innovation (6, 73%), and self-confidence (6, 73%), suggesting that Deacons generally have a good level of confidence in their key areas of competence.

Support needs

3.15   Ministers consulted provided various suggestions for support they would like to receive in future. Most commonly, respondents described a need for more staff or volunteers to help with administrative tasks:

"Administrative support would be helpful."

"More help with church administration. Much of my time is taken up finding folk to fulfil certain administrative roles within the congregation."

3.16   Some also noted a need for support when the minister cannot lead a service or requires time off: *"finding cover is very difficult"*.

3.17   A few said they would benefit from the support of a Youth Worker to help them engage with young people in their parish.

3.18   Many ministers identified a wide range of specific skills that they would like training or support with. The skills identified reflect the broad nature of a minister's role and includes:

- IT;
- social media;
- change management;
- leadership;
- project management;
- property issues;

- financial management;
- conflict management;
- funding applications; and
- issues related to mission in contemporary society.

3.19   During focus groups, ministers also indicated a number of needs that were not currently being met. In particular, ministers felt that there was a need for greater training on change management, especially to deal with the complexities of managing a parish and implementing changes. This also related to the broader context of change within the Church in terms of expectations, culture, and responsibilities to help the Church to become sustainable.

3.20   These findings align with the lower rating given by ministers to their competency in the area of innovation (40% of survey respondents rated their competency in the area of innovation a 3 or lower), which is an important attribute for implementing and managing change. This suggests that, a significant proportion of ministers may not currently feel equipped to effectively manage and respond to the changes that are occurring in the Church. This gap in change management skills or ability to innovate could pose a challenge to the Church's ability to adapt longer term.

3.21   Some ministers also felt that more training in conflict resolution was needed and, more generally, that not enough was being done to develop 'soft skills' such as communication and resilience, which were seen as crucial for working with parish members.

3.22   Another common suggestion made by research participants was for ministers to receive more regular support and supervision from peers and more experienced colleagues. Respondents felt this could be delivered through formal means such as mentoring programmes or more informal routes:

"Someone to say you're doing ok".

"I would value an independent pastoral figure like the retired GP who visited me in my last presbytery".

"Mentoring would be good".

"Good, honest peer to peer mentoring".

"General encouragement and appraisal so that I know what I am doing well and where I might need to take steps to improve… we all need to be encouraged and where necessary corrected".

3.23   Readers who responded to our survey indicated a number of support needs. Although they were largely positive about the support they receive, some research participants said that they needed more local support from their Presbytery so that it could be *"personal and tailored to suit."* In particular, several research participants believed that mentoring

4. Candidates and Probationers' Experiences of Education, Training and Support

4.1 In this chapter, we explore current candidates and probationers' experiences of academic study and the church-led training delivered alongside it. We consider this in relation to the levels of capability identified in the previous chapter, and the implications of this for future development of training and support.

4.2 We explored with people the extent to which training prepared them well for their duties as a minister, and for the changing status of the church and Christianity in society; whether it has met their needs more generally, whether the format of learning suited their personal learning style, and whether there were any gaps in the training offered. We also examined the extent of support received by candidates and probationers to achieve competency in key areas of ministry practice.

4.3 The information provided in this chapter has been informed by our surveys of candidates and probationers, and by our focus group with current probationers.

Views from current candidates and probationers on their academic education

4.4 The table below shows that 69% (24) of current candidates who responded to our survey agreed or strongly agreed that the course had helped them feel prepared for becoming a Minister, while 32% (11) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 4.1: Extent to which respondents agree/disagree that aspects of the academic course have been effective (n=35)4

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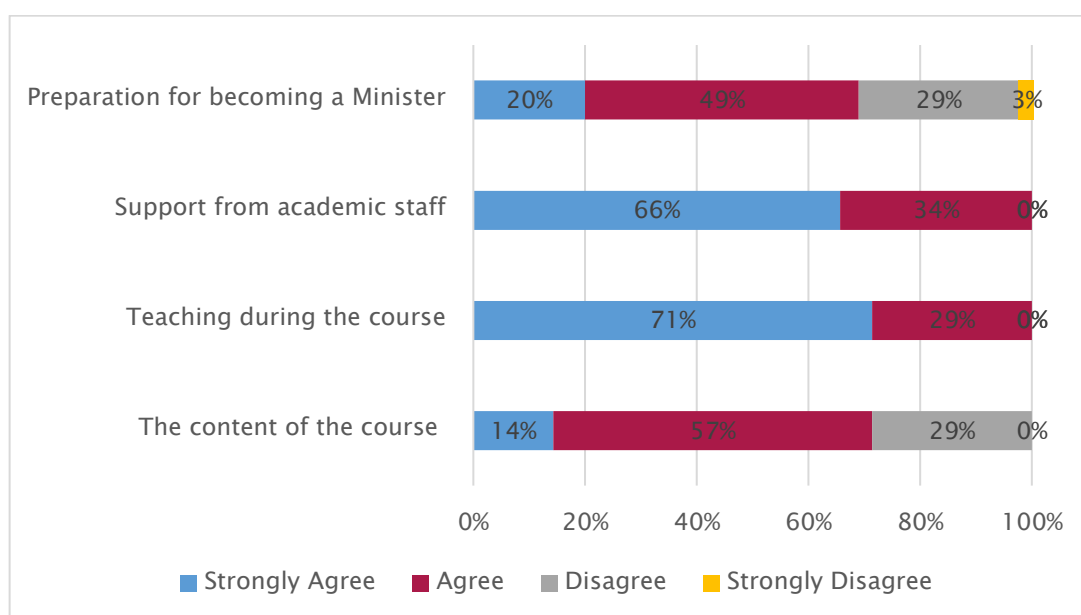
4 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

4.5   The relatively high percentage of people disagreeing that their academic course prepared them well for ministry raises questions about the direct applicability of academic course content to the reality of working as a minister. Whilst we recognise that the Church of Scotland's own training is designed to enhance what is offered through the universities, there is a lack of cohesion between the two, which needs to be addressed.

4.6   Similarly, 71% (25) of current candidates agreed or strongly agreed that the content of the course helped them understand their future duties as a Minister, while 29% (10) disagreed.

4.7   More positively, 100% (35) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there has been a high standard of teaching, and that they felt supported by academic staff, which is encouraging.

4.8   Respondents indicated that aspects of the course that they particularly valued were:

- Theological breadth and depth of modules

  "Breadth and Depth of learning." (University of Edinburgh)
  "Study and understanding of various subjects in detail." (Highland Theological College)
  "learning to think critically about theology, the Bible etc." (University of Edinburgh)

- Flexibility of the course through distance learning (where this is applicable).

  "With a young family it's been vital that I've had the flexibility to study from home." (Highland Theological College)
  "The distance learning has made me more confident in my own abilities." (University of Aberdeen)
  "Studying by distance learning – saved me 8 hours per week, which helped with balance of family life and studies and placement." (Highland Theological College)

- Quality of teaching and support from academic staff

  "The quality of the teaching is excellent." (University of St Andrews)
  "Helpful, approachable and knowledgeable staff gave me confidence in my academic abilities." (University of Glasgow)
  "The Standard of Teaching – This area is very strong" (Highland Theological College)

- Studying in a secular setting and mixing with people with different denominational and non-Christian backgrounds

  "studying on campus in a secular University." (University of Edinburgh)
  "Having to mix with a wide cohort of students studying for different degrees, many of whom are not from a faith background and who are curious and enquiringly challenging about training for ministry and the Church." (University of Edinburgh)

"The opportunity to discuss beliefs and traditions with a wide range of denominations and those of no faith." (University of St Andrews)

- Socialising/being supported by other candidates

"Being part of an on campus group of candidates giving supportive and understanding forum to each other." (University of Edinburgh)
"The opportunity to study alongside other candidates." (University of St Andrews)
"Trinity College functions as a cohesive unit within the wider TRS department. Good communication between staff and candidates, helped by sharing weekly worship and lunch afterwards." (University of Glasgow)

4.9   Respondents indicated that the weaker aspects of the course were:

- Lack of co-ordination and connection between universities, placements and Church of Scotland training

"disconnect between the practical placements and the academic work. Often dealing with polar opposite agendas." (University of Glasgow)
"lack of coordination between university, placements and MTN etc." (University of Edinburgh)
"The connection with the Church of Scotland is not very strong." (University of St Andrews)

- Perceived irrelevance of some subjects, and the lack of practical courses

"There is an overemphasis on Systematic theology/biblical studies and not enough on practical theology." (Highland Theological College)
"No practical theology or focus on pastoral care – no practical training for ministry" (University of Edinburgh)
"Lack of practical application modules." (University of St Andrews)

- Quality of some training conference sessions

"Sometimes the training conferences contained sessions which seemed less than a good use of time, but I am aware that these are always being reviewed." (University of Edinburgh)

4.10   Some respondents made suggestions for improvements to course content and structure, including:

- More opportunities to study practical theology, rather than theoretical work

"More Practical Theology and less theoretical work as this will allow us to have a better handle on how we live out our theology." (University of Edinburgh)
"Courses which have a more direct practical application to ministry in practice e.g. liturgy, sermon writing, service building, etc.." (University of St Andrews)

"More Bible based study options – relevant to practical ministerial practice."
(University of Glasgow)

- Offering a course in church management and leadership

"I would like to see a course in church management and leadership offered in the same way as the community workers courses." (University of Glasgow)
"The introduction of a leadership module would be of benefit for people going into a parish ministry situation" (Highland Theological College)

- Better balance of workload

"At times the work-load demands are unnecessarily heavy for students facing exams and university deliverables." (University of Edinburgh)

- Ensure deadlines do not clash between academic course and Ministry Council requirements

"Ensure that deadlines from Ministries Council do not clash with academic requirements such as essays and exams, which can be stressful enough without having other work to complete" (University of Edinburgh)

Views on training and support from the Church of Scotland

4.11 We also explored with candidates and probationers their views on the various components of their IME training, which were provided by the Church of Scotland, including the Ministries Training Network, conferences, placements, the training portfolio, probation, and supervision. Our findings are outlined below.

Ministries Training Network

4.12 Overall, the MTN was seen as a valuable component of Church-led training and support. A majority (30, 86%) of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that attending MTN meetings contributed to their ministerial development, with only five respondents (14%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This suggests that MTN meetings have a positive impact on candidates' development, even though they only take place on a monthly basis.

4.13 However, a minority of respondents indicated that they did not think MTN was a worthwhile activity. One respondent described MTN as a *"pointless"* exercise while another said that it was *"mostly redundant since everything is covered in some form elsewhere in training."* Other respondents complimented the discussion-based aspect of MTN meetings but were critical of the extra workload MTN assignments added. For instance, one respondent viewed the additional assignments as a *"bit of a burden,"* while another felt that MTN assignments *"didn't supplement the academic training."*

Figure 4.2: Extent to which respondents agree/disagree that attending Ministries Training Network meetings contributed to their ministerial development (n=35)
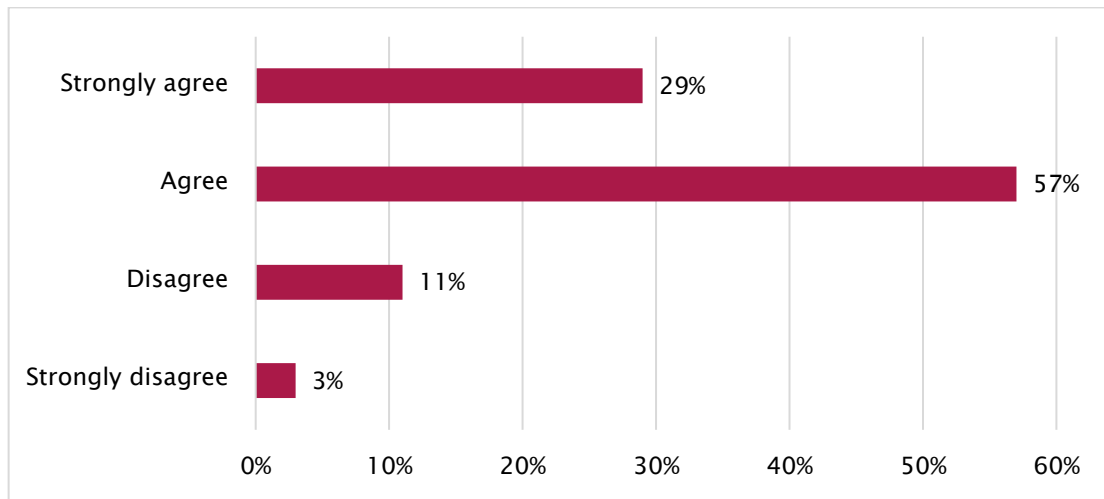

4.14   Clearly, while candidates value the opportunity that MTN provides to meet with others and discuss their learning, the assignments place additional pressure on candidates and do not necessarily link with the academic course they are undertaking. This was echoed in the feedback we received from academics who noted the large additional workload that Church of Scotland candidates had compared to other students. It would be beneficial for the assessment component of MTN to be reviewed to ensure that the assignments candidates are required to submit are not causing unnecessary stress and duplicating learning that is undertaken through other components of the IME programme.

Conferences

4.15   The conference programme was viewed positively by candidates and probationers. Almost all (32, 92%) respondents to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that the annual candidate conferences had supplemented their learning effectively and deepened their understanding of ministry.

Figure 4.3: Extent to which respondents agree/disagree that the annual candidate conferences have supplemented their learning and deepened their understanding of ministry (n=35)5


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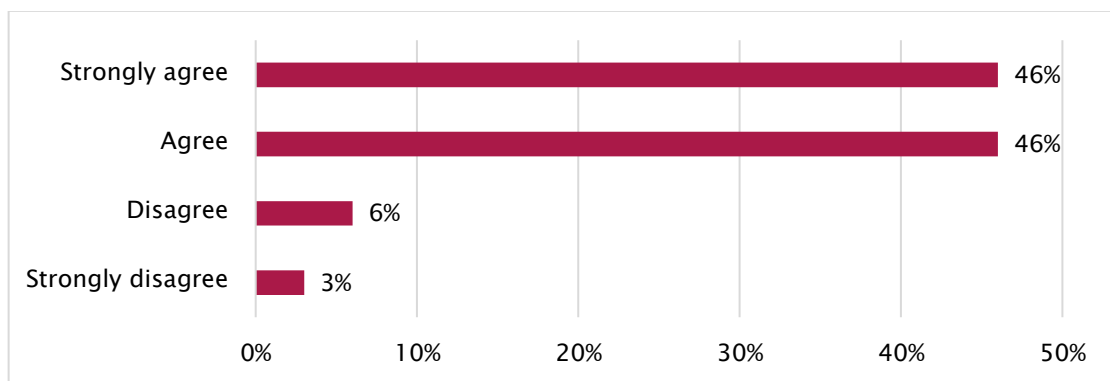
5 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

4.16 Comments from respondents were also largely positive, with some highlighting the benefit of meeting other candidates *"at different stages of their journey."* The social aspect of conferences was also noted to be particularly valuable given the small numbers of candidates at most partner universities, as it provides an opportunity for candidates to meet and discuss their learning together. Future conference programmes should therefore ensure that these opportunities continue to exist.

4.17 Some research participants felt that whilst there had been improvements to conference content in recent years, this could be further improved in future. Suggestions from respondents for changes to conferences included:

- more communication and conflict management training;
- smaller interactive workshops;
- continuing the conference cycle beyond first five years of ministry;
- shortening days and reducing the number of topics.

Placements

4.18 Feedback from current candidates on placements was very positive. They found them a valuable means of developing their practical skills with 91% of current candidates who responded to our survey agreeing/strongly agreeing that placements had helped them to practically apply the knowledge they have acquired.

Figure 4.4: Extent to which respondents agreed/disagreed that placements had helped them practically apply knowledge (n=35)
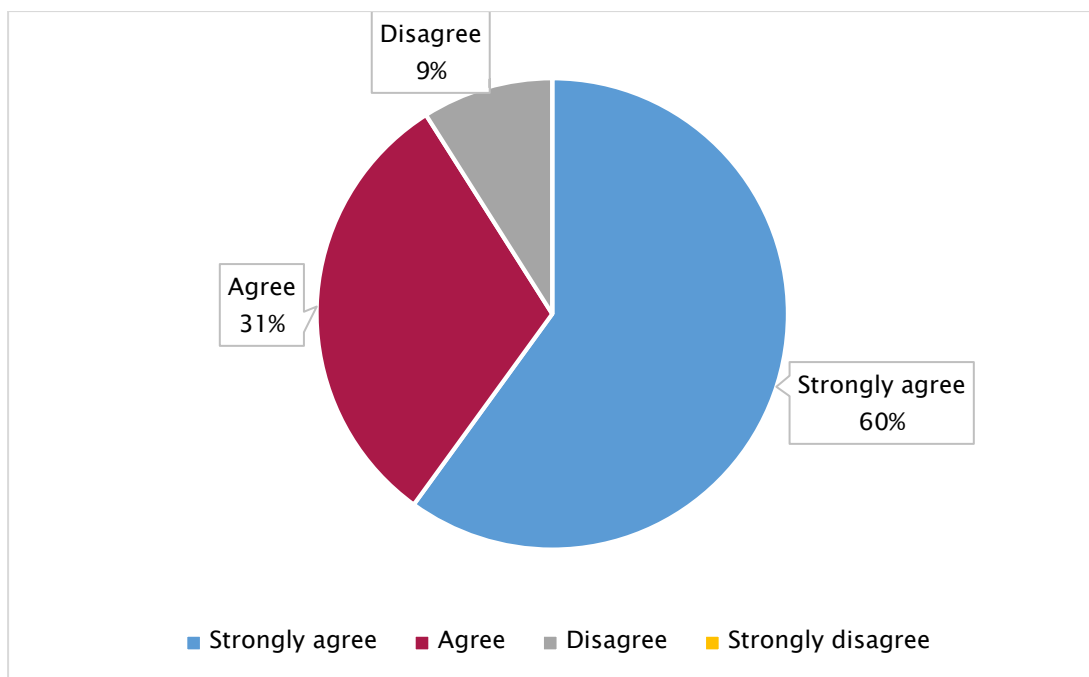

4.19 As can be seen below, 74% of candidates/probationers said that they were frequently involved in activities of the Parish that were appropriate to developing their

knowledge/experience, however 23% said this was only occasionally the case and 3% said that they were rarely involved. More discussion with candidates prior to placements about the types of opportunities that would be most beneficial to their development may help to tailor placement activities to the appropriate level of the candidate. Greater monitoring of candidates/probationers while they are on placement would also help to ensure that they are getting the most out of placements.

4.20   86% of respondents said that they were frequently involved in activities that prepared them for their duties as a minister, and 94% said that they frequently felt supported by their placement supervisors, indicating that placements are largely fulfilling their purpose of preparing candidates for ministry.

Figure 4.5: Respondents' views on frequency of involvement and support during placements (n=35)
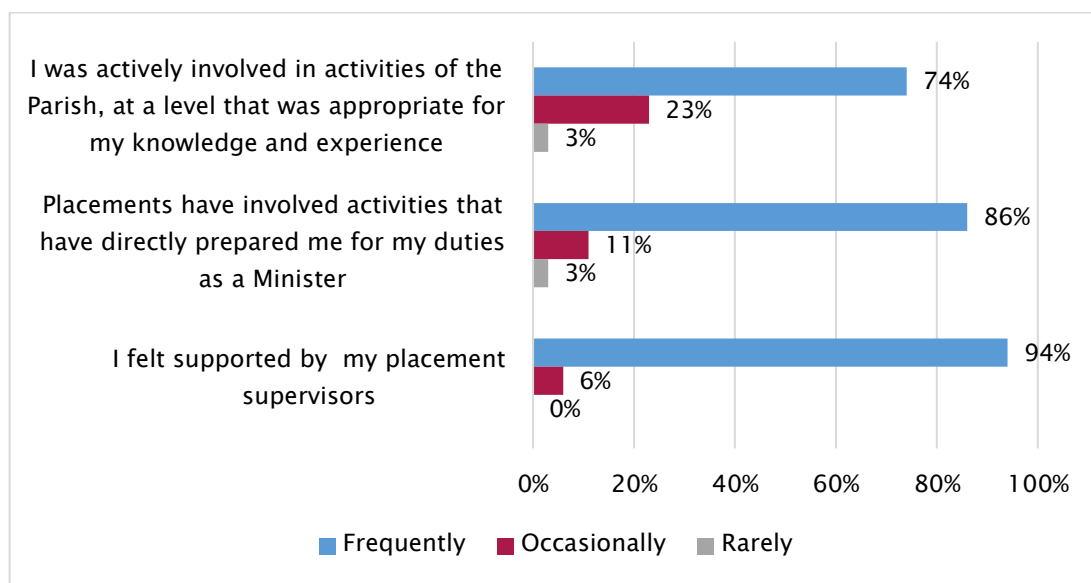
4.21   Candidates noted in particular the value of gaining insight into a variety of church settings; practising skills and applying knowledge learnt through study; and learning from supervisors' approaches to ministry. They observed that:

"I have gained insight into a variety of different church settings."

"Seeing a variety of ministry styles and church traditions and how they share the gospel, and put the following of Jesus into practice on a daily basis within the congregation."

*"Practical chances to try out skills and lead worship."*

"Being able to practically do things, and experiment, for myself"

"The most useful aspect of the placements was the diversity in my supervisors approaches to ministry and their primary gifting."

"An open and generous supervisor who has allowed me to lead worship and given good, robust feedback on that."

4.22   A large majority (34, 97%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they had felt supported by placement supervisors during their candidature.

Figure 4.6: Extent to which respondents agreed/disagreed that they felt supported by placement supervisors (n=35)
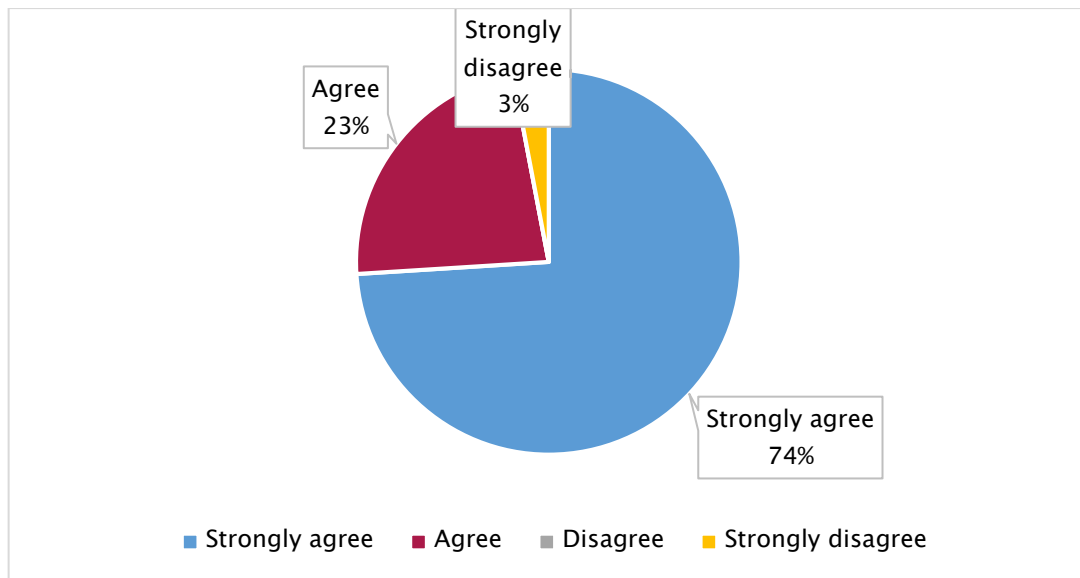
4.23   The experiences of ordained ministers were more varied – both in relation to their own experiences of placements, or from their experience as a supervisor more recently to candidates – with the value of placements depending very much on where the candidate was placed and what they were allowed to be involved in during placement. A significant number of participants in our focus groups noted concern that this variation was not ensuring equality of opportunity, or equipping all candidates with the necessary range of experience. They emphasised the need for more consistency of opportunity.

4.24   Research participants also had some suggestions for enhancing placements, including:

- better training and preparation of supervisors;
- extending the length of summer placements;
- more honesty/transparency between supervisors and students;
- financial support for OLMs to travel to placements; and
- more integration between placements and academic study.

Training Portfolio

4.25   As outlined in Chapter 2, the Training Portfolio is a key component of the IME programme. Feedback indicates that many people do not find the Training Portfolio to be a useful tool. Of the current candidates who responded to our survey, 57% (20) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the training portfolio had been a useful tool for their educational development. A slightly lower number (18, 52%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Training Portfolio was useful for assessing educational development.

Figure 4.7: Extent to which respondents agreed/disagreed that the Training Portfolio was a useful tool (n=35)[6]
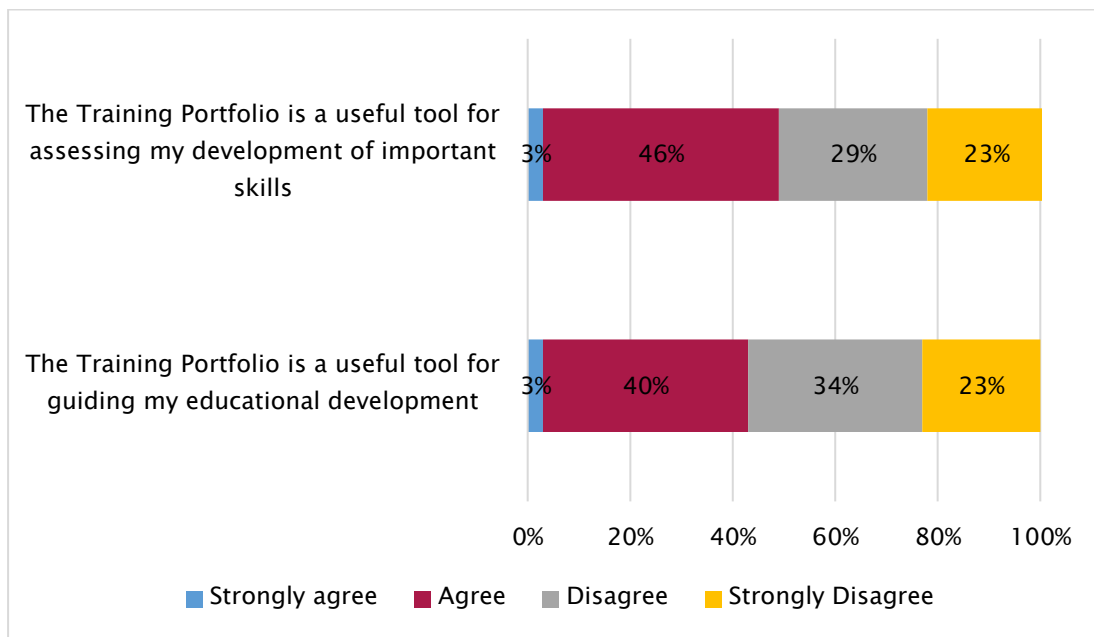
4.26   This feedback was also reflected in our discussions during the probationers' focus group. Probationers were critical of the fact that the portfolio is paper-based rather than online, there are limited guidelines on what should be included, and there is little standardisation. While some felt that the portfolio helped to organise their thoughts, others indicated that they only completed it for the sake of process. There was also a perception that the portfolio did not effectively inform reviews, even though it is submitted as part of the review process (but often at short notice), and it was unclear to participants how the portfolio linked with candidate supervision. As a result, greater training of supervisors in the effective use of the portfolio is needed.

4.27   Current candidates also noted that they found journaling and completing the Training Portfolio less useful, and that they had found it challenging to balance home, study and placement responsibilities. As with MTN assignments, it may be necessary to review the

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[6] Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

purpose and application of the Training Portfolio and determine whether it is meeting the training needs of candidates.

Probation

4.28   People generally felt that probation was highly valuable in giving them practical experience of the work undertaken by ordained ministers.

4.29   All current candidates who were already in the probationary stage of their studies agreed or strongly agreed that they had been adequately supported by their supervisor, had covered all required placement activities, received useful feedback, and that the probationary conferences had supplemented their learning effectively. Comments about the most useful aspects of the probationary period included:

"Working with my supervisor, who has been excellent."

"Exposure to the practice of full time ministry, planning and preparation, prioritisation of work and involvement in church management."

"The freedom and trust the supervisor has given me."

4.30   There were only a few comments about less useful aspects of the probationary period:

"Lack of Wedding prep."

"Not living in the parish has proved difficult."

"There are certain aspects of church life that are too slow or too long-term to be fully addressed in the context of a 15-month placement."

4.31   This feedback from current candidates is positive, and to be welcomed. However, feedback from ordained ministers indicates that individual experiences of probation can vary significantly depending on where a candidate undertakes their probation and the nature and size of the presbytery. In particular, ministers noted that the success of the probationary placement was highly dependent on the skill level of the supervisor, suggesting that the training of supervisors should aim to standardise the quality of supervision as much as feasibly possible.

4.32   Survey respondents made a number of suggestions for making the probationary period more effective including:

*   Give responsibility for a project/preaching series;
*   Conference sessions on what to expect in interviews and how to create a Minister's CV; and
*   Tailor the probationary placement to better fit the individual probationer.

Support from Presbytery, Central Office, and Ministries Council

4.33   According to feedback from the survey, candidates and probationers have received varying levels of support from Presbytery, Central Office and Ministries Council. 57% (20) of respondents said they had received pastoral care and financial support from their Presbytery, with the remaining 43% (15) having not received any pastoral or financial support from their Presbytery. This is concerning given the important pastoral care role Presbyteries are intended to have in the development of ministry candidates and probationers.

Figure 4.8: I have received financial support from my Presbytery during my candidature. (n=35)
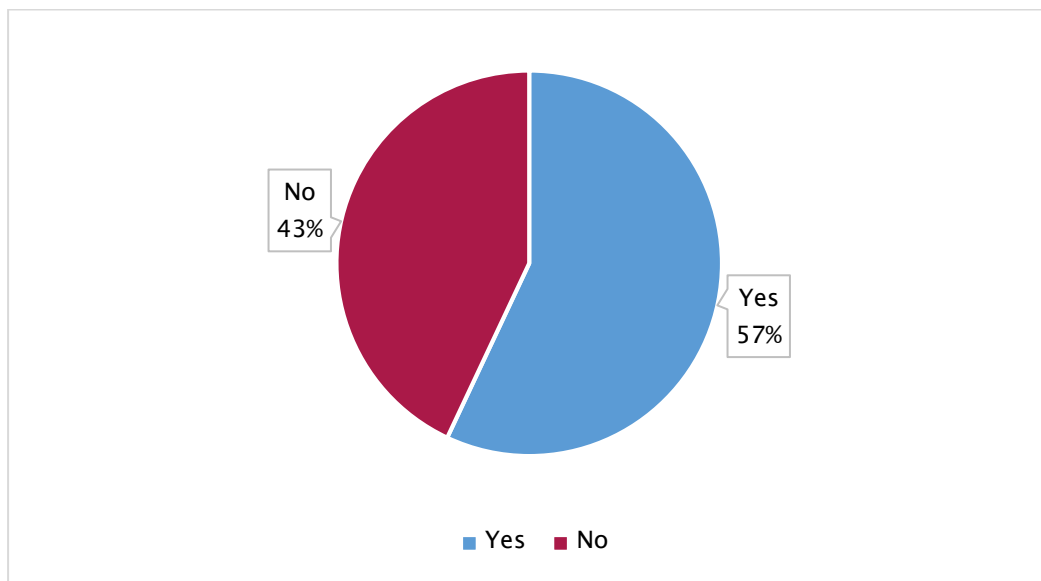
4.34   Many respondents felt that more pastoral care support was also needed from Central Office and Ministries Council. Comments included:

"I think some kind of pastoral supervision would be useful."

"pastoral support seems lacking at times."

"pastoral support given automatically where a candidate is having personal, spiritual or placement issues during this formative and intense period of training could more quickly alleviate potential issues."

4.35   These comments suggest that there are gaps in pastoral care across the board that need to be addressed to ensure that candidates and probationers are actively receiving the support they need, rather than pastoral care being provided on a reactive basis. The need for an expanded pastoral care provision is also reinforced by the significant number of candidates and probationers who gave low scores to their competence in self-confidence, resilience, and managing their own wellbeing, as described in the previous chapter.

4.36   Respondents indicated that they had received support from the Central Office and Ministries Council largely in the form of administrative support, financial support and training support. However, some said that they had not received any support and others also felt that more clarity was needed around Ministries Training roles in Central Office:

"It would be useful to have clarity on who does what with regards to Ministries Training within the central office. We still haven't officially been informed of changes that happened late last year!"

"Clearer idea of who is the correct person to contact in particular circumstances."

4.37   Evidently, clearer communication is needed from Central Office and Ministries Council about the specific Ministries Training roles, and the support that is available for candidates and probationers from these bodies.

Review process

4.38   Candidates and probationers were generally supportive of the current annual review process. A majority of respondents to the survey (30, 85%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the annual review meeting had been helpful in understanding their progress and identifying areas for improvement. During the probationers' focus group, participants also commented positively on the annual review as an "affirming experience" that enables reflection on the past year of training.

Figure 4.9: Extent to which respondents agree/disagree that the annual review meeting has been helpful in understanding their progress and identifying areas for improvement (n=35)[7]

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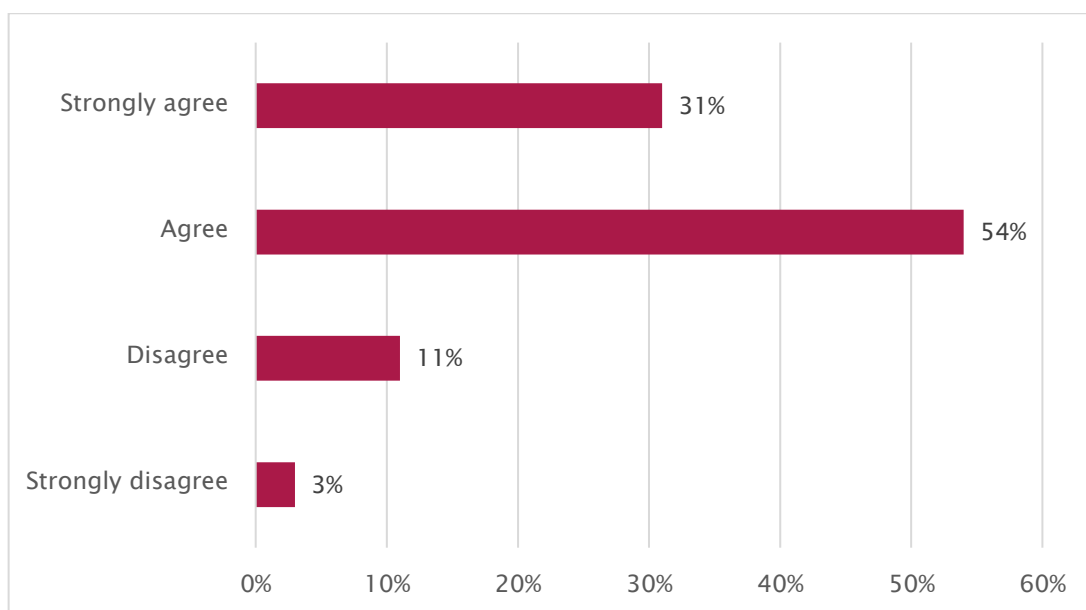
[7] Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

4.39 Although research participants were largely positive about the role of the annual review process in supporting their progress, they raised a number of issues with the way the process currently works. In particular, during the probationers' focus group some participants noted that they felt that placements supervisors should be present at the annual review meeting due to their insight into the candidate's progress.

4.40 However, others felt that it would be inappropriate for the supervisor to be present in case the candidate had any complaints or concerns to raise about their supervisor. Consideration needs to be given to how supervisors can best provide input to the review process in future, and whether this is being adequately addressed during annual reviews.

4.41 Participants at the probationers' focus group also felt that the annual review process was inconsistent and that the amount of time allowed for the meeting was not sufficient to accurately assess the progress of candidates and probationers. This was supported by candidate/probationer survey comments with one respondent indicating that they felt the annual review *"seems very brief – I understand why but it does feel quite surface level."* There may be some need to consider extending the length of annual review meetings to ensure candidates and probationers are receiving the most benefit they can from the process.

Support to achieve competency

4.42 Through the survey we also asked candidates and probationers to indicate to us how well they felt supported to achieve competency across a range of areas that are integral to ministry practice, the results of which are shown in the table below:

Figure 4.10: How well supported do you feel in achieving competency in the following areas? (n=35) (1=not supported at all, 5=highly supported)8

Worship
- 57%
- 34%
- 0%
- 0%
- 9%

Mission
- 20%
- 31%
- 29%
- 14%
- 6%

Pastoral care
- 34%
- 37%
- 14%
- 6%
- 9%

Church management
- 26%
- 14%
- 54%
- 3%
- 3%

Leadership
- 26%
- 37%
- 23%
- 6%
- 9%

Discipleship
- 31%
- 23%
- 20%
- 20%
- 6%

Communication
- 34%
- 34%
- 14%
- 14%
- 3%

Personal (e.g. time management strategies, personal development, life balance, personal spirituality)
- 26%
- 31%
- 26%
- 11%
- 6%

Dealing with conflict
- 26%
- 14%
- 46%
- 9%
- 6%

Business skills, (e.g. chairing and running meetings)
- 9%
- 23%
- 34%
- 23%
- 23%

Church law and procedure
- 14%
- 9%
- 34%
- 40%
- 3%

Legend: ■ 5 (highly supported) ■ 4 ■ 3 ■ 2 ■ 1 (not supported at all)

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8 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

4.43 A very high number (91%) felt well supported to develop their competence in worship, which is positive. Some 70% of respondents rated the support they received in relation to pastoral care, leadership, and communication highly (although it should be noted that conversely some 17% rated the support in relation to communication as a 1 or 2 on our scale, indicating a need for more to be done in this area).

4.44 Around half of respondents rated support highly for developing competence in mission, church management, discipleship, personal development, and dealing with conflict. However, respondents did not rate support to develop business skills or knowledge of church law and procedure very highly at all – with only 32% and 23% respectively rating this highly, and more significantly some 43% rating church law and procedure as a rating of 2 or below, and 46% rating support for developing business skills as a rating of 3 or below. This suggests an urgent need to develop support in these areas in particular as a priority through the Church–led training component of IME.

4.45 During the focus group with probationers, participants expressed concern that the Church's perceived preference for on–campus learning was not supporting personal development because of the large time commitment, required travel and financial cost this academic model incurred. Therefore, to improve personal development amongst candidates and probationers, more flexible models of learning may need to be considered.

Challenges

4.46 We explored with probationers and candidates some of the challenges they have faced during their period of training and there was a high degree of consistency in what they told us. The key challenges cited included:

- Financial burden of leaving career/returning to study and caring for family

  "the giant financial burden that comes with leaving a career to return to study."
  "The main challenges for me during candidature were in terms of finance, having a young family and mortgage and giving up a full time job."

- Maintaining work/life balance

  "Some of the challenges as a candidate have involved time management and balance."
  "Balancing time demands, with personal study and class times, university deadlines and placement activities while still trying to maintain a life which allows time for family and self."

- Lack of objective criteria for developing skills

  "The training focuses far too strongly on the subjective experience of the candidate and is weak on developing skills against any kind of objective criteria."

- Lack of contact with other candidates, especially for those who are studying in more remote locations

    "The lack of contact with other candidates is also something I have found to be surprising and very challenging."

4.47   Candidates and probationers indicated that the biggest challenges they thought they would face as an ordained minister were:

- Managing time to fulfil all of their duties

    "I think the challenge will be how you find the time to do everything."
    "prioritising what is the greatest need at the time."

- Managing people

    "Managing people and their expectations."

- Pace of change/secularisation of society

    "The pace of change in society and the need to respond to that and ever growing secularisation."

- Declining and ageing congregations

    "Shrinking and ageing congregations."

4.48   It is critical that these challenges, combined with the needs outlined in the previous chapter, are the focus of future priorities for training and support.

5. Ordained Ministers' Experience of Education, Training and Support

5.1 In this chapter we examine current ordained ministers' experiences of IME, as well as the training and support they have received since ordination. We consider these experiences in relation to the levels of capability identified in Chapter 3, how this compares to candidates' and probationers' experiences and the implications of this for future development of CMD training and support.

5.2 As with candidates and probationers, we explored with ordained ministers their experience of both initial academic and Church–led training, and how well it prepared them for ministry. We also analysed ministers' views on CMD training and support they have received, and the levels of support received to achieve competency in key areas of ministry practice, since ordination.

5.3 The information provided in this chapter has been informed by our survey of ordained ministers and OLMs, and by our focus groups with ministers, placement supervisors, and Presbytery/Council assessors.

Ministers' views on academic education

5.4 The table below shows the extent to which survey respondents felt that their academic education equipped them well for duties they perform as an ordained minister. The table also provides analysis by length of time in the post, to give a sense of how long ago ministers completed their academic training.

Figure 5.1: The education I received from the academic institution I attended prepared me well for my duties as a Minister (n=320)9

	Total	When were you ordained?		
		Within last 5 years	5–10 years ago	More than 10 years ago
Base	*320*	*60*	*38*	*222*
Strongly agree	65 20%	11 18%	5 13%	49 22%
Agree	158 49%	35 58%	23 61%	100 45%
Disagree	86 27%	12 20%	9 24%	65 29%
Strongly disagree	11 3%	2 3%	1 3%	8 4%
% Strongly disagree/disagree	**30%**	**23%**	**26%**	**33%**

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9 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

5.5   The table shows that over two-thirds (223, 69%) of Ministers responding to our survey either agreed or strongly agreed that their education did prepare them well for being a Minister.

5.6   Comments from respondents who felt well-prepared by their studies included the following:

> *"The curriculum covered all the key aspects and was sufficiently broad to cater for personal interests. The classes were made up of people from a whole range of backgrounds and perspectives, making discussions both interesting and challenging."*

> *"I was privileged to get a rounded education together with a theological education that encouraged me to think things through and apply them in changing circumstances."*

> *"My training was good and it provided the framework necessary for my ministry."*

> *"Academic theological study was essential to preparing me for ministry of word and sacrament. The prescribed course set out by the church was well balanced and beneficial."*

5.7   However, 30% (97) of respondents disagreed, and the level of disagreement does not vary significantly between those who were ordained more than ten years ago, and those who were ordained within the past five years. This level of disagreement is concerning, and indicates that for a significant minority the academic education they are receiving, or received historically, did not prepare them sufficiently well for their current role.

5.8   Many of the research participants felt that their academic training had given them a good grounding in theology, but felt that there was too little focus on the practical application of this in their subsequent role as ordained ministers:

> *"It prepared me well for the academic side but nothing for the practical side."*

> *"Most of the lecturers had no experience of the parish ministry to which I was proceeding."*

> *"It was very academic and did not address many of the issues I faced in my 27 years of ministry."*

> *"Gaining a theological degree was a means to an end rather than preparation for ministry itself."*

5.9   Others felt that their education did not prepare them adequately for issues and challenges caused by the changing status of the church and Christianity in society:

> *"The main gaps were those not filled by the church more generally – particularly thinking through the relation of faith to social context and the likely future position of the church."*

> *"There was no consideration given to how to go about ministry in post Christendom culture."*

"Not wide enough in terms of roles and expectations of minister and though useful there was a wide gulf between learning and on the ground… Where the church and people were at…"

5.10   We also explored with ordained ministers the types of challenges they most frequently commonly experience. Those cited included time pressures; congregational issues; church reform; pastoral care; financial management; and the changing status of the church and Christianity in society.

5.11   As the pie chart below shows, over three-quarters (78%) did not feel that their training and education had prepared them sufficiently well to deal with these challenges.

Figure 5.2: Did your education and training as a Minister adequately equip you for these challenges? (n=320)10
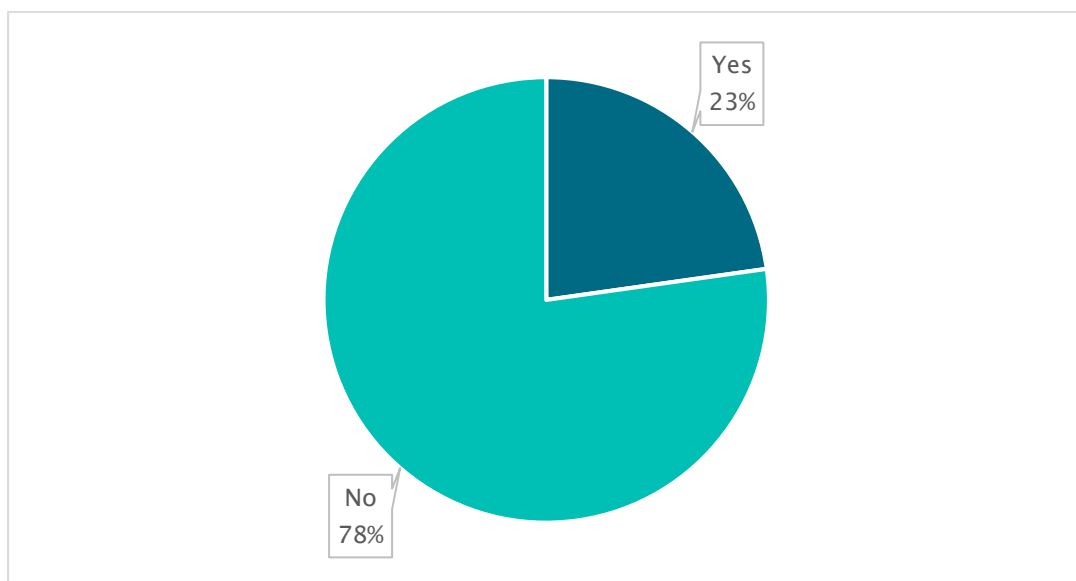
5.12   Those who felt that it did explained that their initial academic education provided a foundation of knowledge and intellectual skills to allow them to pursue a career as a Minister, with on-going training, lessons learned from experience, reading, and advice from colleagues being important in maintaining and updating skills and knowledge.

5.13   Those who said it did not provided various explanations. Most commonly, respondents said that their training took place a long time ago, and the challenges that face the church now could not have been predicted then: *"the Kirk has changed beyond recognition since I was ordained 40 years ago… change has been far more rapid than first envisaged".*

5.14   Some, however, feel that there was an *"unjustifiable"* perception that the church would continue as it had been and noted that their training failed to foresee the growing secularisation of society and the need for church to place more focus on attracting new members: *"the education I received was blind to the depth of the cultural rejection of*

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10 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Christian faith, and so didn't realise the need to transition of Christendom modes of being towards mission".

5.15   Even some ministers trained more recently (five to ten years ago) felt that their training did not reflect the reality of the church's position in society:

"We were not exposed to the reality of the crumbling church".

"It provided an education for the Minister we wanted to be, not the Minister we needed to be".

Ministers' views on training and support from the Church of Scotland prior to ordination

5.16   As illustrated in Figure 5.3 below, just over three-quarters of ordained ministers who responded to our survey (249, 78%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the training and support received from the Church of Scotland before ordination prepared them well for being a Minister, but again a significant minority of 22% (71) disagreed.

Figure 5.3: The training and support I received from the Church of Scotland prepared me well for my duties as a Minister (n=320)[11]
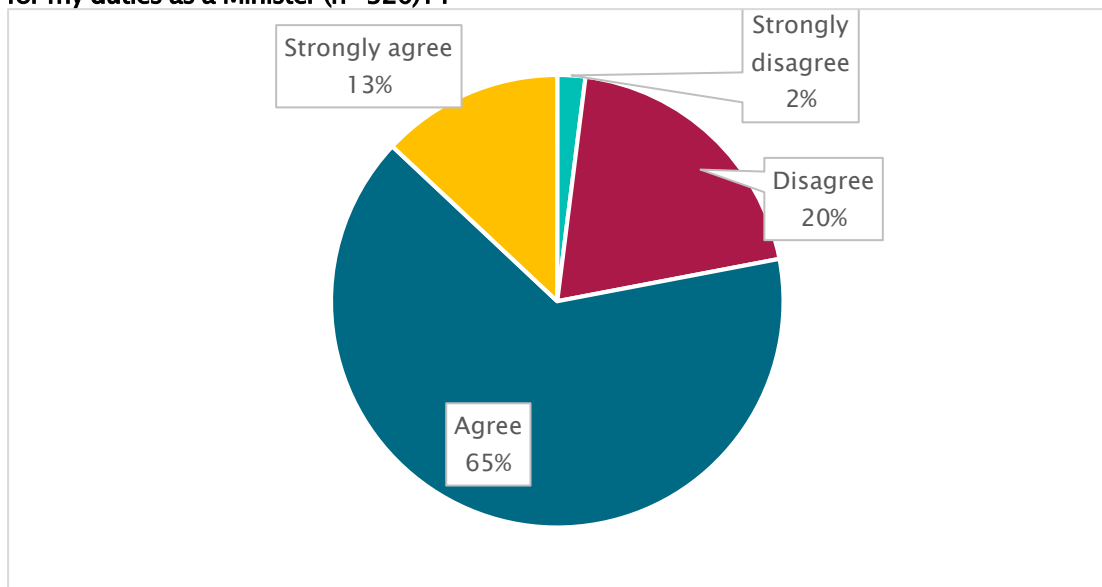
5.17   Positively, respondents commented on the value of the support received through placements, conferences and more experienced colleagues, for example:

"I had good supervision along the way and a variety of placements that prepared me well."

"Placements were good training grounds."

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[11] Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

"Placements and conferences gave a good insight into life in ministry; my mentors in the various placements gave me wide and varied experiences and role models – to follow, or not."

"I was privileged to work with a variety of very able ministers in a variety of supportive congregations. People gave generously of their time, talent, patience and experience to assist me on the way."

"I found placements especially helpful."

5.18   On the other hand, while there was acknowledgement among some respondents that, "it is difficult to prepare someone completely for ministry because so much can depend on the circumstances we find ourselves in", many Ministers were critical of the training and support provided by the Church. A significant number (222, 69%) were ordained more than ten years ago, and therefore their experience of candidate education and training may not represent the reality of the current programme, however more than 30% of more recently ordained ministers were also critical of the Church of Scotland's training and support offer.

5.19   A common view among respondents to the survey and focus group participants was that there is a lack of organised, ongoing support available after ordination:

"The year's assistantship was invaluable, but after that I was left to sink or swim."

"Teamwork and shared leadership was not understood – I was trained to exercise a single, solitary form of ministry."

"I found that the support was quickly withdrawn as soon as I was ordained."

"Ongoing regular personal support is lacking especially after ordination."

5.20   Some made comments about the financial challenges involved, especially for Ministers with families to support while training:

"I had real difficulties with finances and childcare."

"The process does ask a lot from a person's own resources i.e. finances, time and family commitment."

5.21   A handful of respondents felt that their conference lecturers and supervisors lacked training and knowledge:

"Lecturers at conferences and especially supervisors were not trained to the standard I had expected."

"Sometimes it was clear that the people being trained actually knew more about the subject(s) being presented that the chosen trainer."

5.22 Finally, a small number of Ministers felt they were used *"as an extra pair of hands"* with limited guidance:

"The principle form of training was practice-based, or 'thrown in at the deep end,' with an emphasis on being the supervisor's spare pair of hands."

"My 'bishop' saw me, I think, as an extra pair of hands to do those aspects of ministry that didn't appeal to him."

Views on training and support since ordination

5.23 Training and support accessed by ministers since ordination was viewed less positively than initial academic and Church-led training. Figure 5.4 shows that nearly 60% of ministers who responded to our survey (181, 57%) felt that training and support since ordination has **not** been sufficient to develop their competency as a minister.

Figure 5.4: Would you say that this ongoing training and support has been sufficient to develop your competency (n=320)
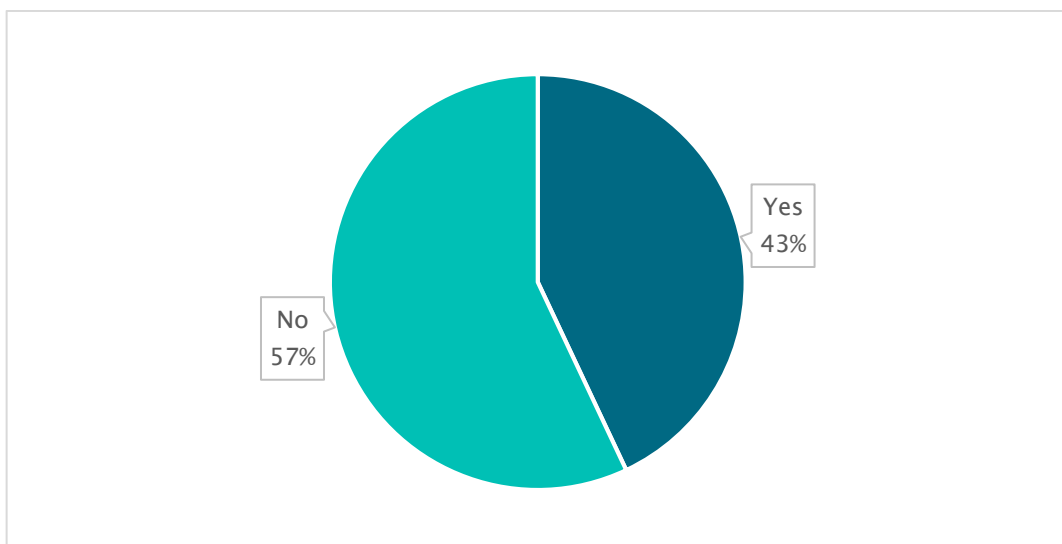
5.24 In addition, some ministers reported receiving little or no formal support from the Church of Scotland since ordination or shortly thereafter. There was a feeling among many respondents that, after ordination, they are *"on their own"* and that, if they require any further support, they are expected to source this themselves, by identifying training opportunities and/or by seeking informal support and advice from colleagues:

"I feel that since entering the Church of Scotland I have been left very largely to find my own way in nearly every area".

"Most of my development has been on the job and from sources other than the Church of Scotland".

Many respondents talked about the importance of learning on the job and learning gained from previous careers and general life experience, rather than formal training:
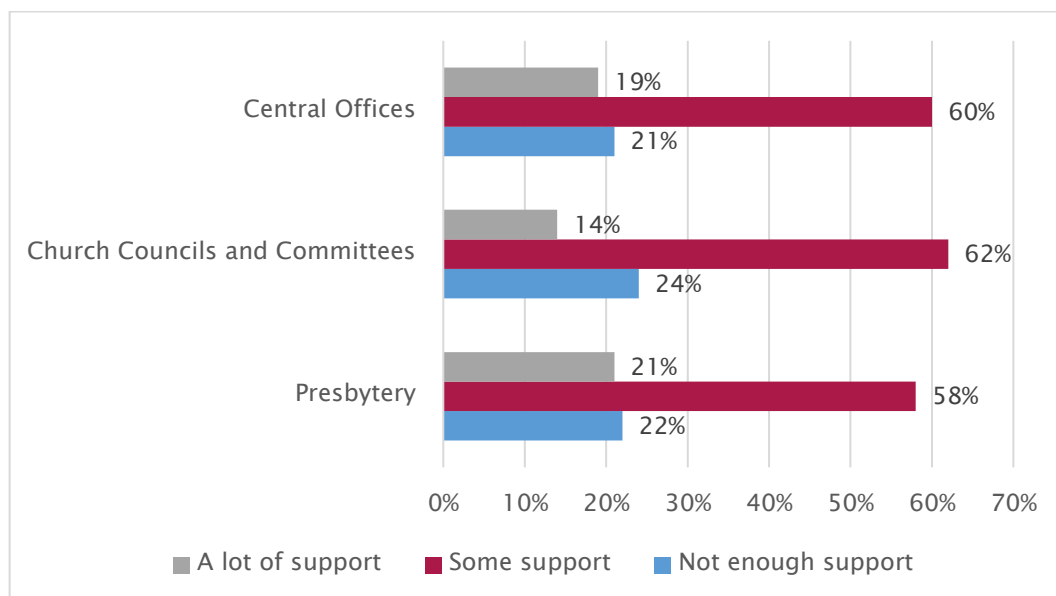
"Often it's learn as you go".

"You find that experience goes a long way".

5.25   Others participating in the research observed that there had been recent improvements to the training and support offered, and that they knew of further developments currently in motion, but still indicated that there was a long way to go to improve the training and support to the extent they would wish.

5.26   The conferences were a valued component of training and support, but many of those participating in the focus groups described these as *"still attempting too much, despite improvements"*, and *"it's too much to take in at once".* Another person described his experience of attending conferences as "I go in with high expectations, but there is a danger that you are present and just ticking boxes".

5.27   Some people raised concerns about the content of conferences, although a number did acknowledge some improvement to content more recently. Others emphasised the value of conferences for networking with colleagues.

5.28   Some respondents had positive feedback about the support offered by the Church of Scotland, for example: *"HR support for staff management and redundancy procedures from 121 has been first class".*

Support from Church Councils and Committees, Central Offices and Presbytery

Figure 5.5: Do you receive sufficient support from the following bodies to carry out your responsibilities? (n=320)[12]

Central Offices — A lot of support: 19%, Some support: 60%, Not enough support: 21%
Church Councils and Committees — A lot of support: 14%, Some support: 62%, Not enough support: 24%
Presbytery — A lot of support: 21%, Some support: 58%, Not enough support: 22%

Legend: ■ A lot of support   ■ Some support   ■ Not enough support

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[12] Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

5.29 There were mixed views among respondents about the support received by Central Offices, Church Councils and Committees, and Presbytery. Around 60% of respondents (Figure 5.5) reported that each of these bodies provide some support (60% (193), 62% (198) and 58% (184) respectively). Some felt that they provide a lot of support (19% (61), 14% (45) and 21% (66) respectively). Comments from respondents included the following:

"I feel there is adequate support and I know who to speak to if I need assistance."

"I have never felt that there wasn't someone whom I could contact if I needed help and when I did I was never let down."

5.30 However, some felt that these bodies do not give sufficient support. Just over a fifth (66, 21%) reported that Central Offices do not provide enough support, and this figure was 24% (77) for Church Councils and Committees, and 22% (70) for Presbytery.

5.31 There was a general view among respondents that if people required support, they needed to initiate contact, rather than the Church bodies contacting them.

"It is expected that if I need help, I will seek it."

"So long as you know who to contact (and know that there is someone to contact), these various bodies can be useful."

5.32 Some made comments specifically about a perceived lack of support from Presbytery:

"Presbytery was really non-existent."

"Presbytery was not at all supportive."

"The Presbytery system is unfit for purpose when it comes to support for Minister."

5.33 A few respondents observed that Councils and Committees only get involved if there is a crisis, if they need information, or if they have an instruction to deliver:

"Church offices and councils only seem to help in crisis but could do a lot more to be proactive and avoid crisis."

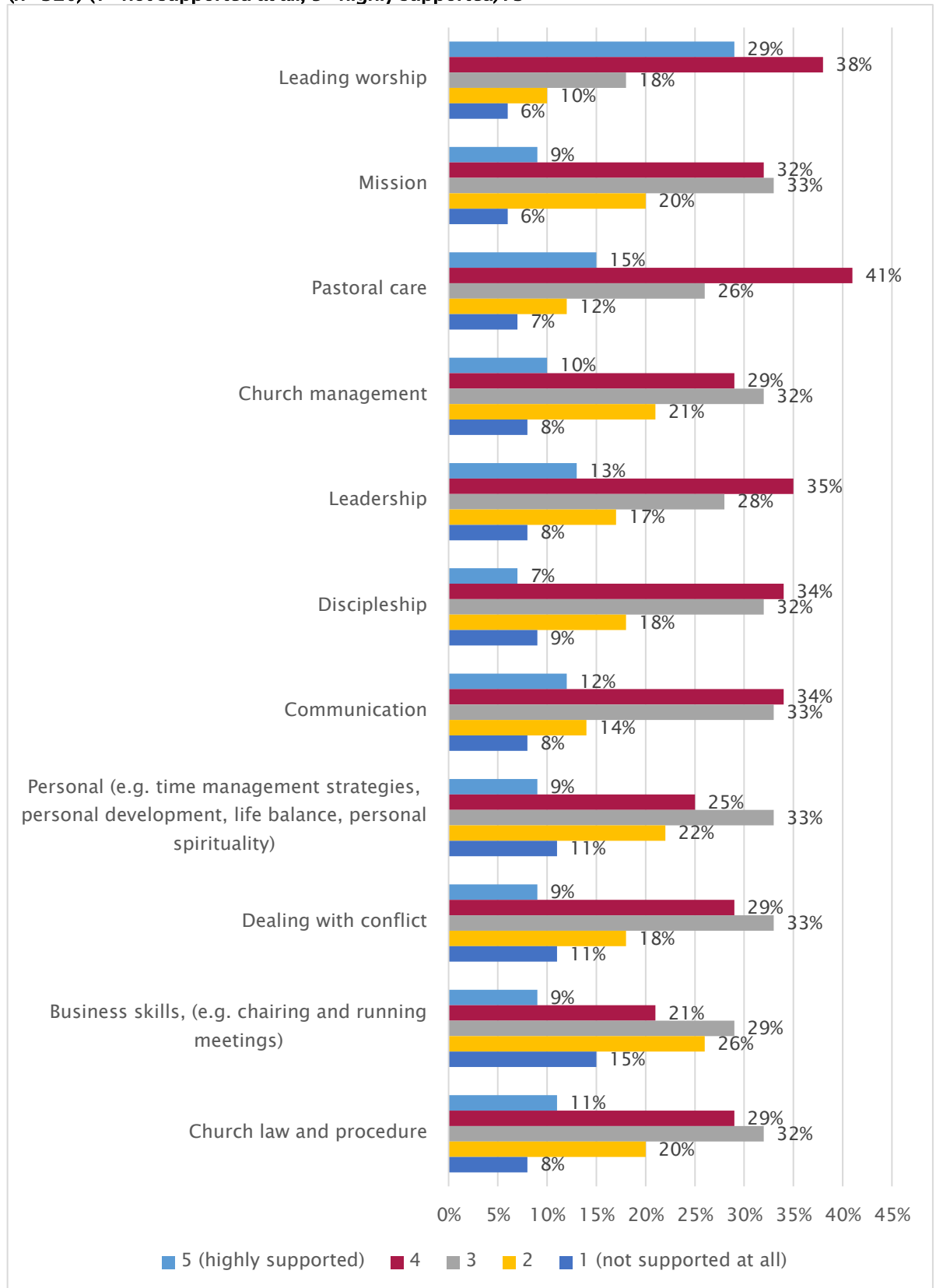*"Councils only get in touch to instruct you to do something or when they need information."*

"The church councils act more like trade unions on an inter-union demarcation dispute than facilitators of service."

5.34 A handful of respondents said that communication from these organisations was ineffective: *"so much of the communications received from central bodies are irrelevant".*

Support with achieving competency

5.35   When we look in greater detail at the level of support received by ministers to achieve competency in key areas relating to ministry practice, feedback from the survey indicates that ministers felt most supported to achieve competency in the areas of leading worship (67% rated a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not supported at all and 5 is highly supported), and pastoral care (56% rated a 4 or 5).

5.36   However, ministers felt that there was a lack of support in achieving competency in church management (125 or 39% rated the support they received as 4 or 5), dealing with conflict (123, 38%), personal skills (110, 34%), and business skills (97, 30%). This finding indicates that there is a particular gap in support for developing the practical skills needed to facilitate the smooth operation of the parish.

5.37   Of greatest concern is the fact that aside from church law and procedure, ministers feel less supported than candidates and probationers in all other competency areas. In particular, ministers felt substantially less supported to achieve competency in the areas of personal skills (only 34% of ministers rated the support they received a 5 or 4, compared to 57% of candidates and probationers), communication (46% compared to 68%), leadership (48% compared to 63%), and worship (67% compared to 91%).

5.38   Although these findings do not show how competent ministers feel in these areas, they do indicate an overall trend of ministers receiving less support than the needs of the job require after ordination, even though there is likely to be a need for further development in these competencies throughout their time as a minister. CMD opportunities should therefore specifically address these competencies and provide support that builds the capabilities of ministers in these areas.

5.39   Interview and focus group participants also expressed concern about the lack of support with achieving competency in a number of ministry practice areas. In particular, some research participants felt that they had not received sufficient support with developing conflict management skills. One interviewee believed that conflict management training was a *"token effort"* that did not prepare them for the realities of dealing with conflict in parish life. This reflects the finding that only 38% of survey respondents currently feel highly supported (rating a 4 or 5) to achieve competency in the area of dealing with conflict. As such, a greater emphasis on conflict management may be needed in the Church's CMD offer.

Figure 5.6: How well supported do you feel in achieving competency in the following areas? (n=320) (1=not supported at all, 5=highly supported)[13]

Area	5 (highly supported)	4	3	2	1 (not supported at all)
Leading worship	29%	38%	18%	10%	6%
Mission	9%	32%	33%	20%	6%
Pastoral care	15%	41%	26%	12%	7%
Church management	10%	29%	32%	21%	8%
Leadership	13%	35%	28%	17%	8%
Discipleship	7%	34%	32%	18%	9%
Communication	12%	34%	33%	14%	8%
Personal (e.g. time management strategies, personal development, life balance, personal spirituality)	9%	25%	33%	22%	11%
Dealing with conflict	9%	29%	33%	18%	11%
Business skills, (e.g. chairing and running meetings)	9%	21%	29%	26%	15%
Church law and procedure	11%	29%	32%	20%	8%

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[13] Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Current challenges for ordained ministers

5.40   Through our survey and in discussions in focus groups and interviews, Ministers reported a wide range of challenges in performing their role. The most commonly cited related to:

- time pressures;
- unrealistic expectations;
- the changing status of the church and Christianity in society;
- church reform;
- skills;
- pastoral care; and
- finance.

5.41   In the sections below, we explore each of these challenges in further depth.

Time pressures

5.42   The most commonly reported challenge related to time pressures caused by the wide range of responsibilities associated with the role. These included increasing involvement in administrative matters and some examples of Ministers taking on responsibility for neighbouring parishes as interim moderator, leading to difficulties in fulfilling all aspects of the job:

> "I have little time for my own spiritual growth. I have little time to plan properly. I have little time just to be with my people in their homes etc. Without each of these things ministry suffers badly".

> "The list of requirements and new legislation seems to grow continually and the administrative burden does not ease".

> "I am at present overworked as minister and interim moderator covering six rural churches. The sheer volume of work is at times too heavy".

> "Keeping the plates spinning is more and more difficult".

5.43   Some noted that, given these time pressures, it is difficult to undertake personal development activities or to find ideas to freshen their approach to worship: "[it is difficult to find time for] continuous refreshment of my soul and intellect, so I can refresh others".

5.44   Many also noted challenges in achieving a suitable work-life balance due to the demands of the role: "achieving a life-work balance without the feelings of guilt at taking my days off [is a challenge]".

Unrealistic expectations

5.45   Focus group attendees described how ministry is multi-faceted, which results in different needs and expectations being placed on them. Some ministers believed that there was no

pattern to roles, or parity between parishes. People also feel insecure in their communities, and need ministers "to be competent and a magician". This results in huge pressure for ministers just starting out, or those who are experienced but moving between parishes. As a result, some research participants indicated that ministers need to be supported to be honest about who they are and what they can do instead of "expecting people to do impossible jobs".

5.46 There were also a small number of research participants who felt that some members of their congregation had unrealistic and outdated expectations of what they could achieve as a minister: *"some members have expectations of ministry which belong to another time, e.g. visiting every member"*. In addition, some respondents identified *"handling congregational conflicts"* as a challenge.

The changing status of the church and Christianity in society

5.47 A key challenge identified by a significant number of survey respondents is the declining relevance and influence of the church in an increasingly secular society:

> *"The advancement of the mission of the church in a society that does not appear to want to hear the message of the gospel [is a challenge]."*

> *"Ministering in an ever more secular society [is a challenge]."*

5.48 Many ministers observed that, as a result of this, their congregations are declining and ageing, and this makes it difficult to recruit volunteers from the congregation to help with running the church:

> *"Having too few trained people to help such as treasurer."*

> *"Difficulties in getting people to volunteer for essential roles."*

5.49 Related to this, some respondents reported challenges in attracting new people to attend church, especially young people: *"lack of young people [is a challenge]"*.

5.50 Similarly, a few respondents described difficulties in balancing the need to encourage new people to church while retaining an approach to worship that the existing congregation is satisfied with: *"coming up with worship strategies that are attractive to non-church-goers and not off-putting to existing church people [is a challenge]"*.

5.51 However, at the same time, some focus group attendees observed that the Presbyterian structure takes a long time to change, and it can take two years to get a decision, by which time it might already be out of date. This suggests that current Church structures and processes are not equipped to deal with the changes that are occurring.

Church reform

5.52 Many ministers identified managing change and church reform as a significant challenge, especially national and local divisions over contentious issues like same-sex marriage:

"Dealing with the consequences of General Assembly decisions, as they impact on a congregation."

"The damage to the public profile of the church done by extreme conservative views which are assumed to be the only Christian point of view [is a challenge]."

Skills

5.53 Many respondents identified challenges in acquiring the wide range of skills and knowledge required to meet the broadening role of the minister, including chairing meetings, financial management, social media, IT and charity law.

Pastoral care

5.54 Some respondents described challenges associated with delivering pastoral care, particularly the time it takes to deliver it sensitively and properly and the strain that it places on the minister's own wellbeing: *"dealing with death and illness within the parish on a constant basis is draining"*.

Finance

5.55 Financial pressures, often linked to maintaining the fabric of church buildings, were identified as a challenge by a few respondents.

Readers' experience of education, training and support

5.56 Readers who responded to our survey identified a number of gaps in the training and support they received including:

- Not enough of a focus on funeral preparation
  "I would have preferred more focus on preparation for funerals."
  "Should be given the chance to conduct a funeral under supervision."

- Limited pulpit time
  "Pulpit time throughout training is very limited."

- Lack of emphasis on preaching skills and communication
  "I don't think there was any preparation for giving wholly evangelical talks to a predominantly non-Christian audience."
  "I would have like more emphasis on preaching."
  "I am not sure if I was given enough information on how to communicate, e.g. voice projection."

5.57 Overall, respondents felt highly supported to achieve competency in leading worship (68, 72%), but less supported to achieve competency (rating themselves only a 1 or 2) in relation to dealing with conflict (50, 53%), business skills (52, 55%), and church law and procedure (62, 66%).

5.58   Many respondents also indicated that they had developed competency through their previous work experience. Other respondents indicated that they had not received any or very little training to develop competency.

5.59   Readers identified a number of challenges that related specifically to their role. In particular, the lack of structure and direction of the role, and acceptance by the Parish and Presbytery were commonly cited challenges with which they may need support in future.

Deacons' experience of education, training and support

5.60   Overall, respondents were very positive about the training and support they received as Deacons. All respondents either agreed (5, 63%) or strongly agreed (3, 38%) that the training and support they received prepared them for their duties as a Deacon. Respondents did, however, identify several gaps in their education:

"Some training in conducting a pre-funeral visit would have been helpful as would a little more training than we had in relation to the conduct of various types of funerals."

"St Colm's, being residential at the time I trained, took away the challenge of fending for yourself, looking after your own home with working fulltime."

5.61   Respondents felt highly supported to achieve competency in leading worship (68, 72%), but less supported to achieve competency (rating themselves only a 1 or 2) in relation to dealing with conflict (50, 53%), business skills (52, 55%), and church law and procedure (62, 66%), which is consistent with the findings from candidates/probationers and ministers.

5.62   Respondents listed a number of challenges they have experienced as a Deacon specifically relating to awareness of their role amongst other members of the Church:

"Lack of recognition of the post within many areas of the church."

"Trying to play a meaningful part in Presbytery when my existence seems to so easily get forgotten."

5.63   These comments indicate the need to examine the role of Deacons within the Church and clearly articulate the purpose and responsibilities of the role to Church members.

6.   Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

6.1   Training and support for ministers has never been more important, with the changing status of the church and Christianity in society, declining congregations, and competing priorities making ministers' roles and responsibilities ever more demanding.

6.2   A lot is expected and required of ministers – with many of those we consulted citing common challenges – including time pressures and a lack of work/life balance; need for increasing skills sets including getting to grips with social media and IT, and the need for strong financial management skills, combined with the rapid pace of change in the Church.

6.3   Ministry is unlike many other professions. Minister have been called to their post, and there is a sense from them that they feel many of the challenges they face must be endured. This is both a significant strength but in some cases also a weakness (ministers may put up with significantly more challenges than a person in a different profession), and it means that ensuring ministers receive the training and, equally significantly, the support they need is crucial.

6.4   The Church of Scotland is a charity, with all of the legal responsibilities that entails, but with the unique dynamic that ministers are not treated as employees. Ministers are office-bearers who receive a stipend from the Church of Scotland. This creates a more challenging environment in which to consider aspects of training and support such as review and appraisal.

6.5   In addition, the rate of attrition post-discernment and prior to ordination is extremely low – with almost all candidates proceeding to ordination. Likewise, anecdotal evidence suggests that ordained ministers only ever leave a post as a result of a decision taken themselves. There are few, if any, examples of ministers being asked to leave their post due to under-performance, which again sets the Church of Scotland apart from other charitable organisations, and emphasises the need for the right range of support and training to be in place.

6.6   Our analysis of training and support needs has taken careful account of the contextual issues outlined above, and the range of different needs articulated to us throughout this research.

Training and support needs

6.7   There are clearly identified gaps in the current training and support needs with particular need to develop both candidates' and ordained ministers' confidence and competence across a range of areas.

6.8   For candidates and probationers, there is a particular need for support to develop innovation; but also a need to further develop candidates' sense of resilience and ability

to manage their own wellbeing. For ordained ministers, there is also a need to further support ministers to have confidence in their ability to innovate; and a clear need to promote development of self-confidence and ability to manage their own wellbeing.

6.9 Ordained ministers also cited a need for support to develop a range of other skills including things like knowledge of social media, leadership development, financial and conflict management, and issues related to church law and property. Concerningly, ordained ministers rated themselves lower in relation to a number of key attributes than candidates and this suggests that the balance of support is not currently addressing need.

6.10 Challenges cited by ministers in their day-to-day work mirror these skills gaps.

Training and support prior to ordination

6.11 Participants in the research were largely positive about their experiences of academic training, and most felt that it had been high quality. However, they also noted the lack of tie-across to practical application post-ordination, and a lack of cohesion between training received through the universities, and the training and support provided by Church of Scotland centrally.

6.12 In addition, the content and experiences varied across the institutions and there was a lack of consistency in what had been taught. There was a strong message, particularly from academia, that the Church of Scotland should be more directive with regards to the content of academic courses, to ensure that initial training better meets the needs of ministers once ordained.

6.13 The importance of networking opportunities during study, to ensure that strong networks were in place once they were ordained was highlighted to us by many of the research participants. Whilst there are opportunities for some networking to take place (primarily through the support provided through Church of Scotland functions such as the Ministries Training Network and conferences), research participants did note that fragmenting the student body across five institutions hinders this.

6.14 Academics we consulted also highlighted the inefficiencies in having such small numbers of students in each institution, and noted some of the benefits of concentrating provision in a smaller number of institutions, whilst noting some of the constitutional and structural challenges to doing so.

6.15 Support provided by the Church of Scotland alongside academic training was largely felt by those we consulted to be inadequate currently, but with recognition that it has improved recently. Research participants spoke with optimism about planned future developments.

6.16 Placements are generally felt to be an important part of pre-ordination training but experiences of these vary, depending on where people are placed. Good experiences involved a candidate undertaking placements in a range of geographical locations (mix of

urban and rural), and having exposure to a wide range of different tasks. Others, however, spoke of placements offering them a limited range of experience and were felt to be inadequate. More consistency of experience for candidates is important going forward.

6.17   People's experiences of supervision depended very much on who their supervisor was and there was generally felt to be a lack of consistency of approach by supervisors. A significant number of people felt that the pool of supervisors was too small, meaning that some individuals were being called on too frequently to give their time, and good matching of candidates with supervisors was challenging. In addition people highlighted inadequacies in the supervisor training, particularly in relation to follow-up after the initial training sessions.

6.18   The Ministries Training Network was valued as a networking function, but the journaling and other tasks which sit alongside it were less highly valued, and seen as an unhelpful additional burden combined with what is expected of students by their individual academic institutions. This feedback applied equally to the Training Portfolio which many research participants felt lacked value and was too unstructured.

6.19   The current review process was generally felt to be an important part of the process which people valued, however many felt that it was not sufficiently in-depth and that there was too much variation in how review processes were approached by key individuals involved. Some people highlighted how complicated the current list of competencies is and were keen for a robust progress measurement tool to be developed. A robust competency framework which is applied from recruitment through to ordination is essential as a starting point for any improvements to training and support.

Training and support post-ordination

6.20   Our research indicates an improving picture in relation to the quality of support being provided to ordained ministers by the Church of Scotland, but a system which is not yet meeting the needs of all ministers. There is recognition that more support is now being provided to ministers within the first five years post-ordination than previously, but beyond that the level of support being offered is currently inadequate. There is clearly a pressing need to extend the nature and extent of support on offer to ministers, and create a stronger relationship between the centre and individual ministers in Presbyteries.

6.21   Whilst still in its early stages, the Ascend website has been welcomed as a useful tool to give transparency about the options available to ordained ministers. However, while many said to us that they would know who to contact if they needed help, there was little sense that this was being pro-actively offered, and a real concern by some that those most in need of support were the least likely to ask and could therefore reach crisis-point before the support they needed was provided. A lack of any form of systematic, regular (annual) review process with ordained ministers is a key gap and means that any need for support must currently be identified by ministers themselves, which in a pressurised working environment may be neglected. A robust means of monitoring ministers' progress in

their role to ensure that the right type of support can be made available when needed, is crucial moving forward.

Recommendations

6.22   Below we provide a set of recommendations to support implementing change to address the key issues highlighted by the research. Once agreed, these will be supplemented by a detailed action plan to take these forward.

Academic study

1. Work with academic institutions to explore opportunities to reduce the number of providers and ensure that the Church of Scotland has more extensive input to course content.

2. Take steps to integrate the Church of Scotland training support more seamlessly with university provision – options for further integration include facilitation of functions such as Ministries Training Network or similar through the university providers; a shared post to offer pastoral support to students; and more regular engagement between the Church of Scotland and university representatives.

3. Consider introducing more digital and blended learning opportunities for initial ministerial training to ensure that there are more flexible entry routes in to the Church.

Church of Scotland support pre-ordination

4. Review of functions and associated requirements of Ministries Training Network and the Training Portfolio to ensure that the work involved in these is merited and valuable.

5. Closer monitoring of candidates and probationers' experiences of placements to ensure that these are valuable and offering the necessary range of experiences to equip people for ministry.

6. More pastoral support for candidates, including development work with Presbyteries to develop their role in pastoral support for candidates/probationers, and more extensive pastoral support from central office/Ministries Council.

7. More extensive training for supervisors to ensure consistency of approach, clear understanding of any revised processes following this review, and regular updating of training.

8. Development of a comprehensive competency framework to inform the selection process for candidates, and progress whilst undertaking their pre-ordination training. This competency framework would also create a direct link between IME and CMD and ensure continuity of learning beyond ordination.

9. Ensure the candidature recruitment process is based around any new competency framework developed, while also supporting candidates to follow their calling by using a values-based approach to recruitment.

10. Consider candidate representation on the Training Task Group or Education and Support Group (or other group as appropriate).

11. Simplification and improved presentation of paperwork associated with training and support.

12. Overhaul of the candidate review process to ensure transparency, an effective mechanism for reviewing progress and consistent application by all those involved. An important consideration within this is how best to have supervisor input to the review process, without compromising the candidate's ability to speak candidly (a two-part process, with the supervisor only attending the first part of the review process may be a simple step to address this current gap).

13. Maintain clear, transparent and coherent communications between recruitment and training bodies within the Church to ensure recruitment and training processes are more closely linked and consistent.

Training and support post-ordination

14. Introduction of a robust regular process of review, informed by the development of a comprehensive competency framework to inform monitoring of ministers' progress throughout their career and provision of necessary training and support. Example competency frameworks are included in Appendices 3 and 4.

15. Improve training and support in relation to gaps identified in this review including church law and procedure, business skills, self-confidence etc.

16. Consider introduction of a more extensive package of pastoral support, and consider the introduction or development of mentoring schemes.

17. Review the provision to support innovation and other more recent demands related to church management, including the use of social media, to ensure that ministers are equipped to manage change within their Presbyteries.

APPENDIX 1 – PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Candidates and probationers

A total of 36 candidates and probationers responded to the survey. Candidates and probationers who responded came from a variety of backgrounds:

- 40% (14) were aged between 45 and 54, with a further 31% between 25–34 years and 26% between 35–44 years of age.
- 60% (21) were male.
- 80% (28) hold professional qualifications separate to the ones obtained as part of their training to be a Minister.
- 86% (30) had a different career prior to becoming a Minister.
- 34% (12) study/studied at the University of Edinburgh, 31% (11) at Highland Theological College, 17% (6) at the University of Glasgow, 11% (4) at St Andrews, 3% (1) at the University of Aberdeen and 3% (1) from another university in the US.
- 29% (10) of respondents were in their final probationary placement, 23% (8) were in their third year of study, 20% (7) were in their second year, 20% (7) were in their first year and 9% (3) were in their fourth year.
- 97% (34) had completed a period of discernment, of which 85% (29) felt that it was helpful to deciding to apply for candidature.

Ministers (including OLMs)

A total of 320 Ministers responded to the survey. Ministers who responded came from a variety of backgrounds:

- Almost half (143, 45%) were aged between 55 and 64.
- 67% (214) were male.
- 89% (284) were Ministers, 9% (28) were OLMs and 2% (7) were Auxiliaries.
- 58% (184) hold professional qualifications separate to the ones obtained as part of their training to be a Minister.
- 69% (220) had a different career prior to becoming a Minister.
- 69% (222) were ordained more than 10 years ago, 12% (38) between five and ten years ago, and 19% (60) within the past five years.

Readers

A total of 95 Readers responded to the survey. Readers who responded came from a variety of backgrounds:

- Almost half (44, 46%) were aged 65–74 while a further 40% (38) were aged 55–64.
- 57% (54) were male.
- 81% (77) hold some form of professional qualification.
- 51% (48) hold another job/position in addition to their role as Reader.
- Of the 47 who don't hold another job/position, 98% (46) are retired.

Deacons

A total of eight Deacons responded to the survey. Deacons who responded came from a variety of backgrounds:

- Over half (5, 63%) were aged between 55–64 while a further 25% (2) were aged 45–54, and the remaining respondent was aged 65–74.
- 75% (6) were female with only two male respondents.
- 88% (7) hold some form of professional qualification.
- 50% (4) of respondents were employed as Ministries Development Staff, and 50% (4) were employed by another agency. Of those employed by another agency, two were employed by the NHS, one was employed by Crossreach and the other was employed by an external charity.

## APPENDIX 2 – RESULTS OF READERS AND DEACONS SURVEYS

Readers

Views on education and support

Figure 1: Extent to which respondents agreed/disagreed that the support they received prepared them well for their duties as a Reader (n=95)
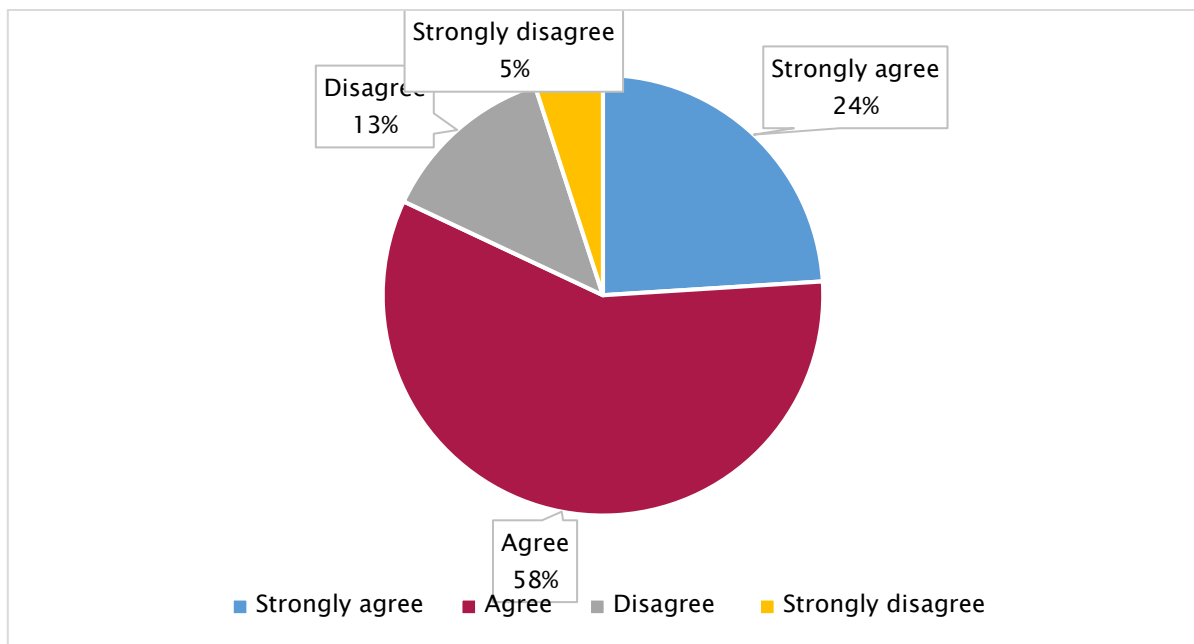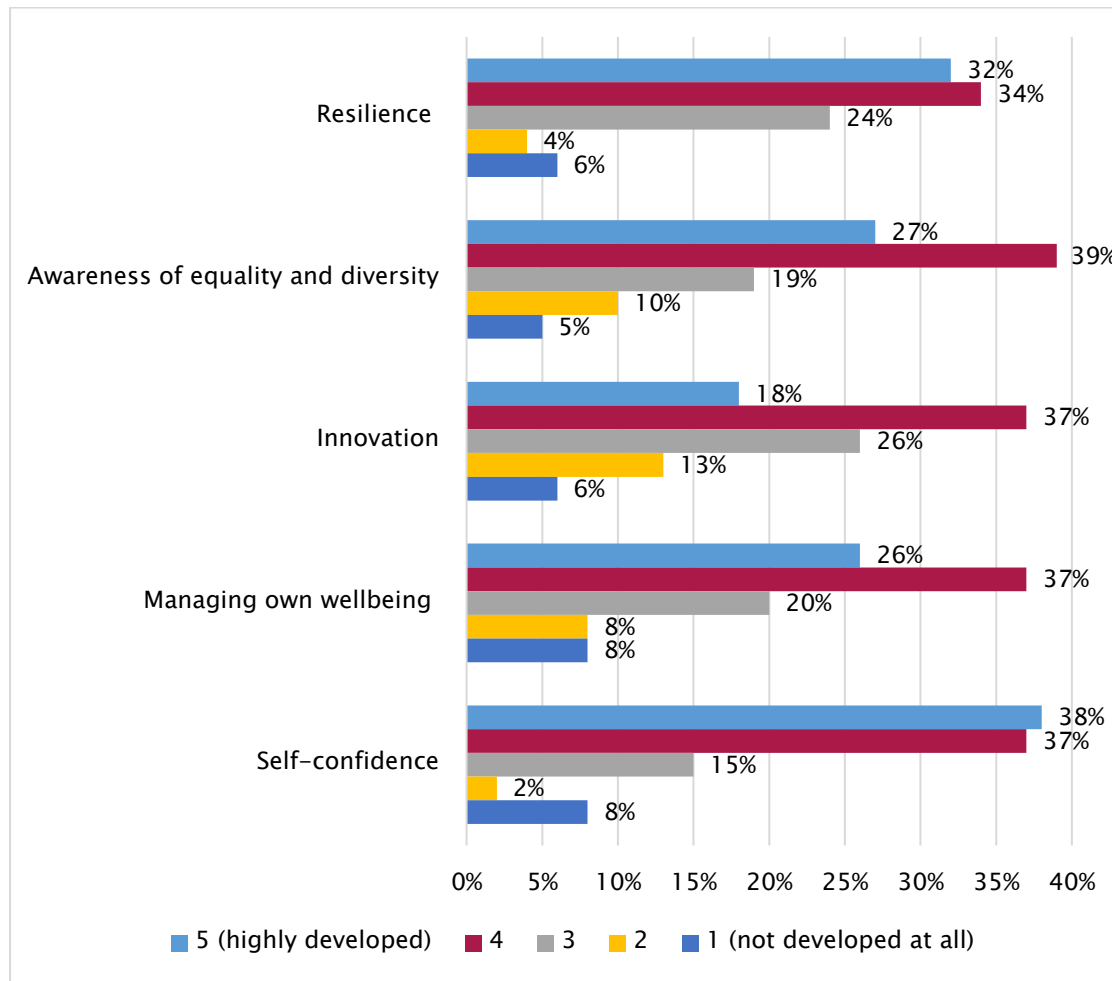

Support from Central Offices, Church Councils and Committees, and Presbytery

Figure 2: Do you receive sufficient support from the following bodies to carry out your responsibilities? (n=95)
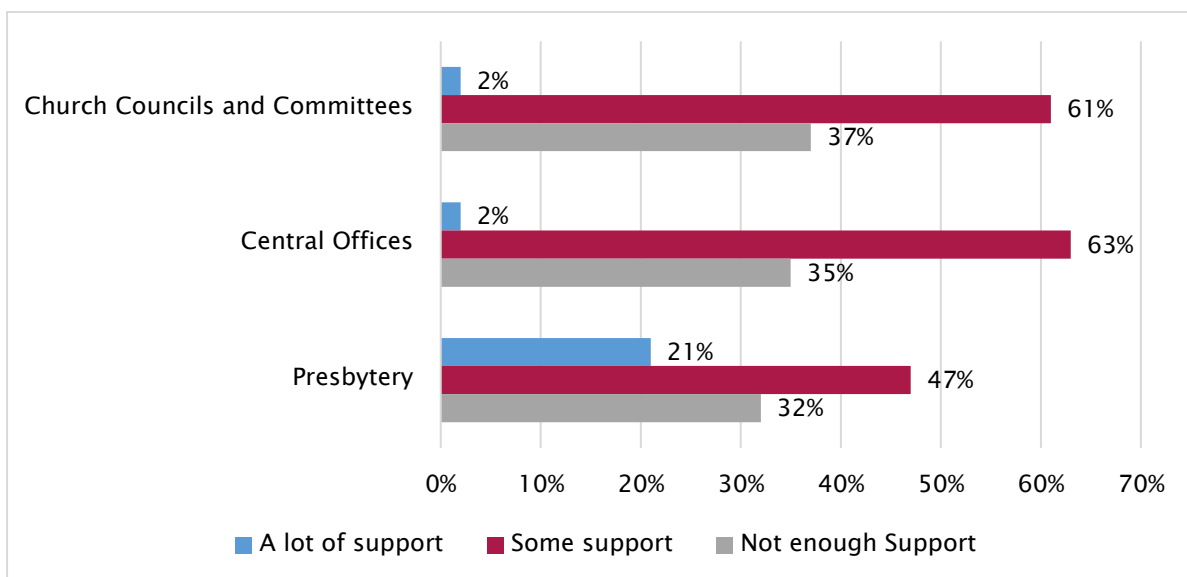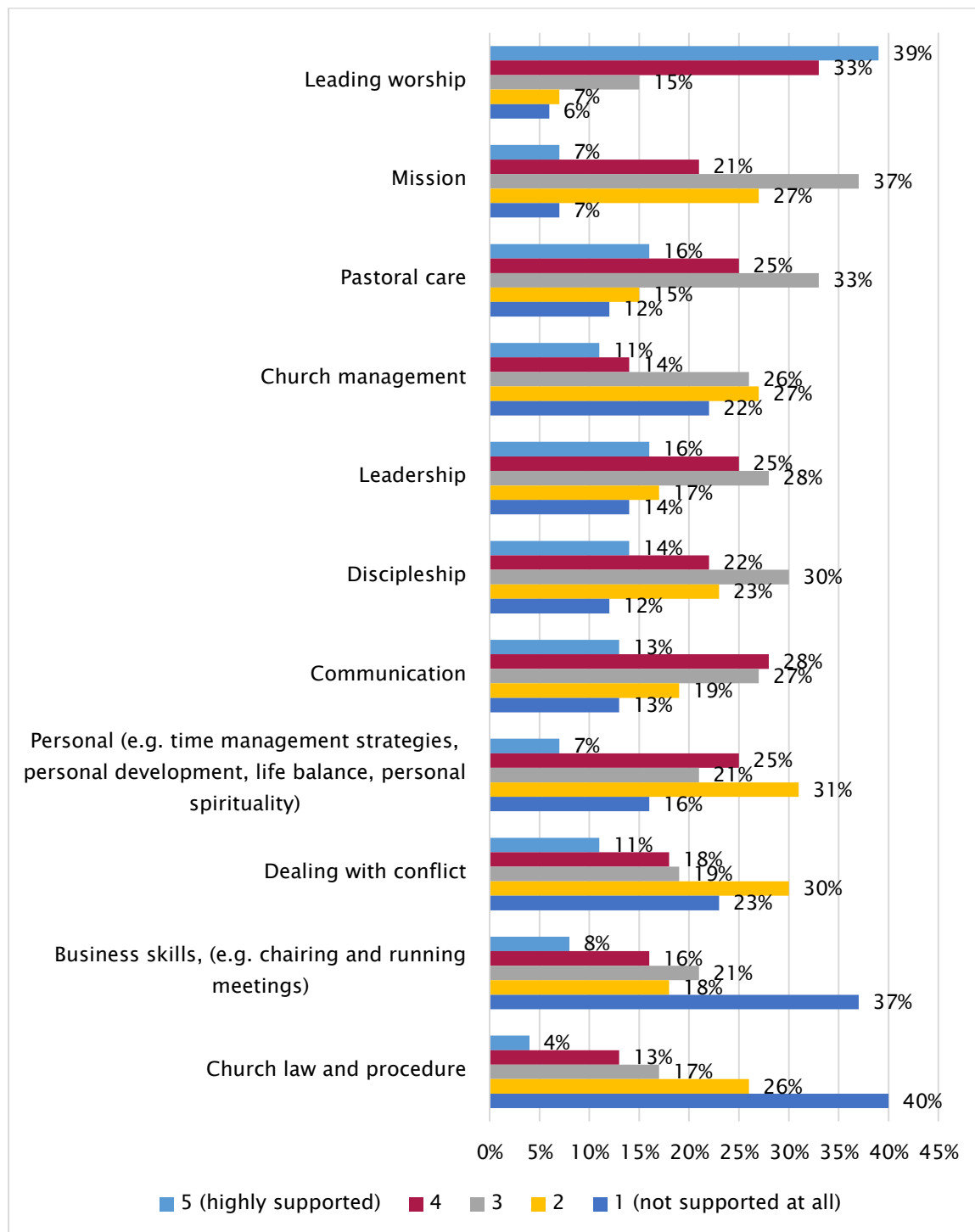
Views on competencies

Figure 3: How would you rate your own level of competence in the following areas? (n=95) (1=not developed at all, 5=highly developed)14

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14 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 4: How well supported do you feel in achieving competency in the following areas? (n=35) (1=not supported at all, 5=highly supported)15

Leading worship — 5: 39%, 4: 33%, 3: 15%, 2: 7%, 1: 6%

Mission — 5: 7%, 4: 21%, 3: 37%, 2: 27%, 1: 7%

Pastoral care — 5: 16%, 4: 25%, 3: 33%, 2: 15%, 1: 12%

Church management — 5: 11%, 4: 14%, 3: 26%, 2: 27%, 1: 22%

Leadership — 5: 16%, 4: 25%, 3: 28%, 2: 17%, 1: 14%

Discipleship — 5: 14%, 4: 22%, 3: 30%, 2: 23%, 1: 12%

Communication — 5: 13%, 4: 28%, 3: 27%, 2: 19%, 1: 13%

Personal (e.g. time management strategies, personal development, life balance, personal spirituality) — 5: 7%, 4: 25%, 3: 21%, 2: 31%, 1: 16%

Dealing with conflict — 5: 11%, 4: 18%, 3: 19%, 2: 30%, 1: 23%

Business skills, (e.g. chairing and running meetings) — 5: 8%, 4: 16%, 3: 21%, 2: 18%, 1: 37%

Church law and procedure — 5: 4%, 4: 13%, 3: 17%, 2: 26%, 1: 40%

Legend: 5 (highly supported), 4, 3, 2, 1 (not supported at all)

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15 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

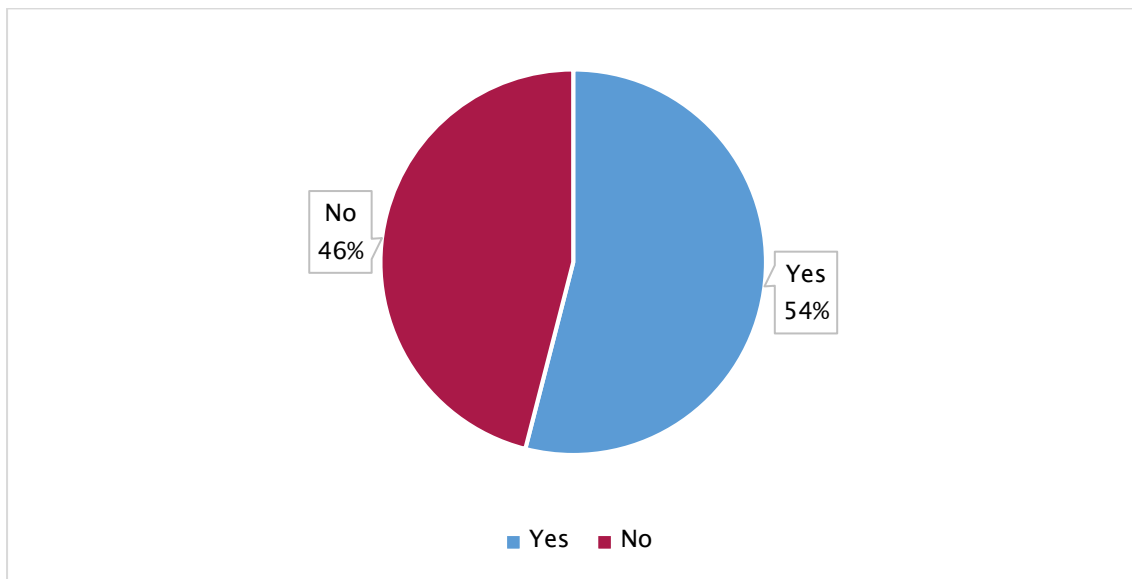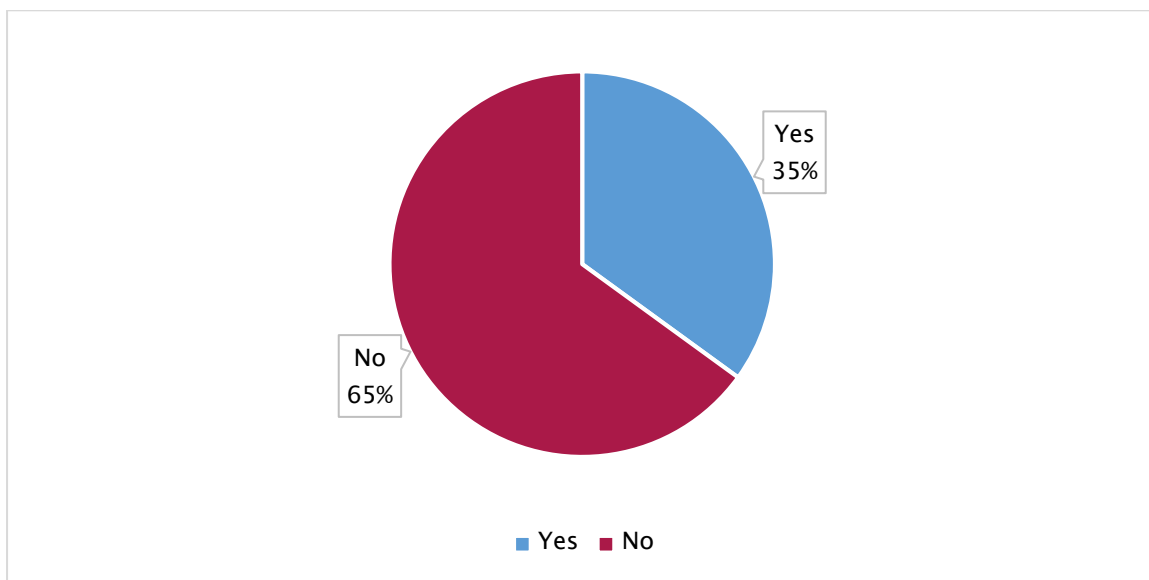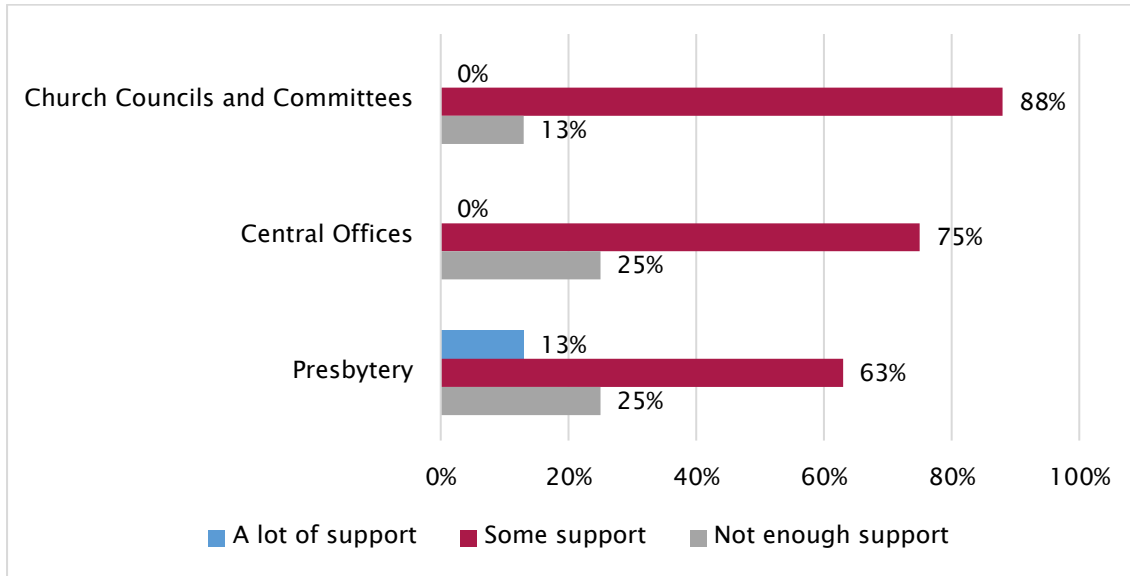**Figure 5: Has this training and support been sufficient to develop your competency? (n=95)**

Figure 6: Did your education and training as a Reader adequately equip you for these challenges? (n=95)
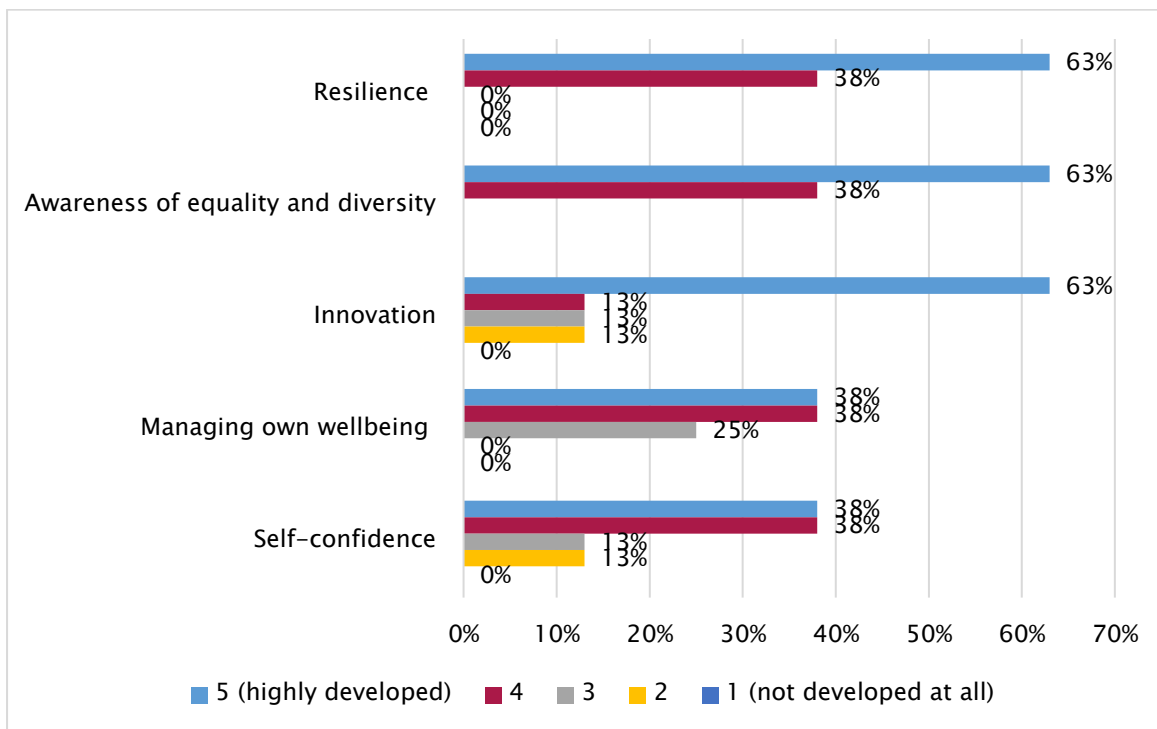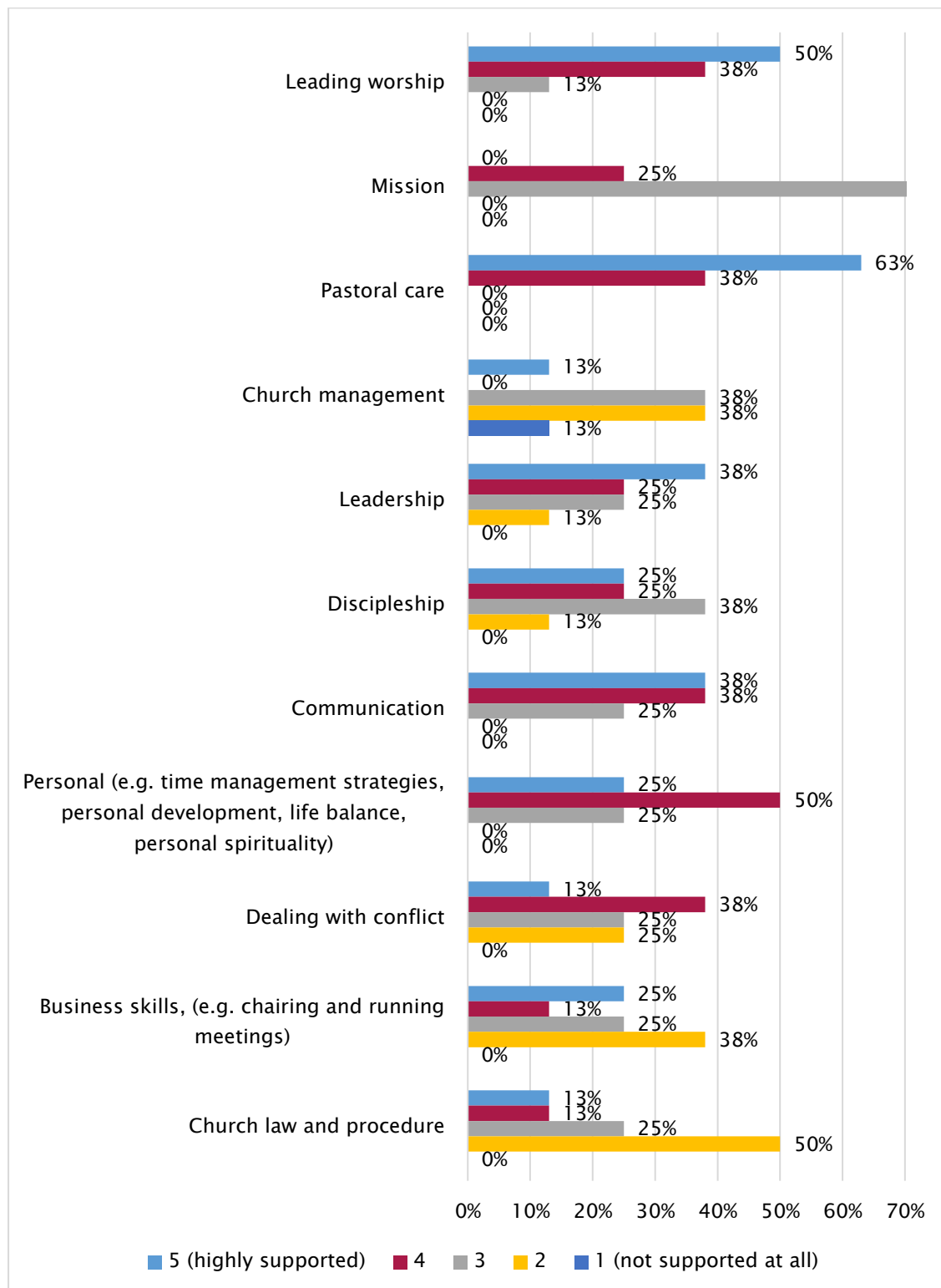
Deacons

Views on education and support

Figure 7: Level of support provided by Church bodies (n=8)16

Views on competencies

Figure 8: How would you rate your own level of competence in the following areas? (n=8) (1=not developed at all, 5=highly developed)17

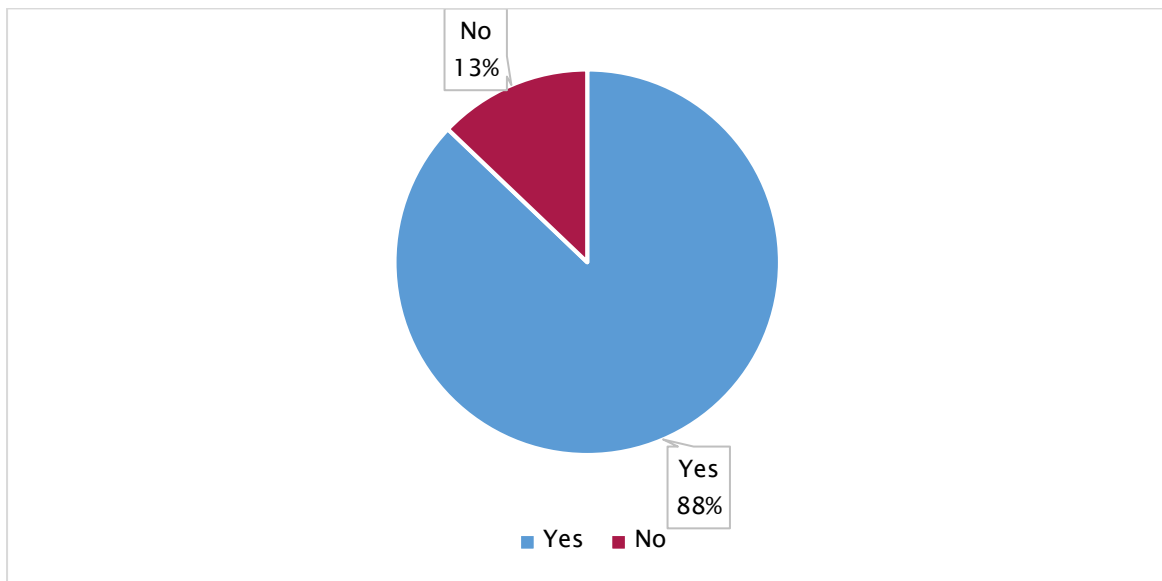16 Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

17 As above.

Figure 9: How well supported do you feel in achieving competency in the following areas? (n=8) (1=not supported at all, 5=highly supported)18
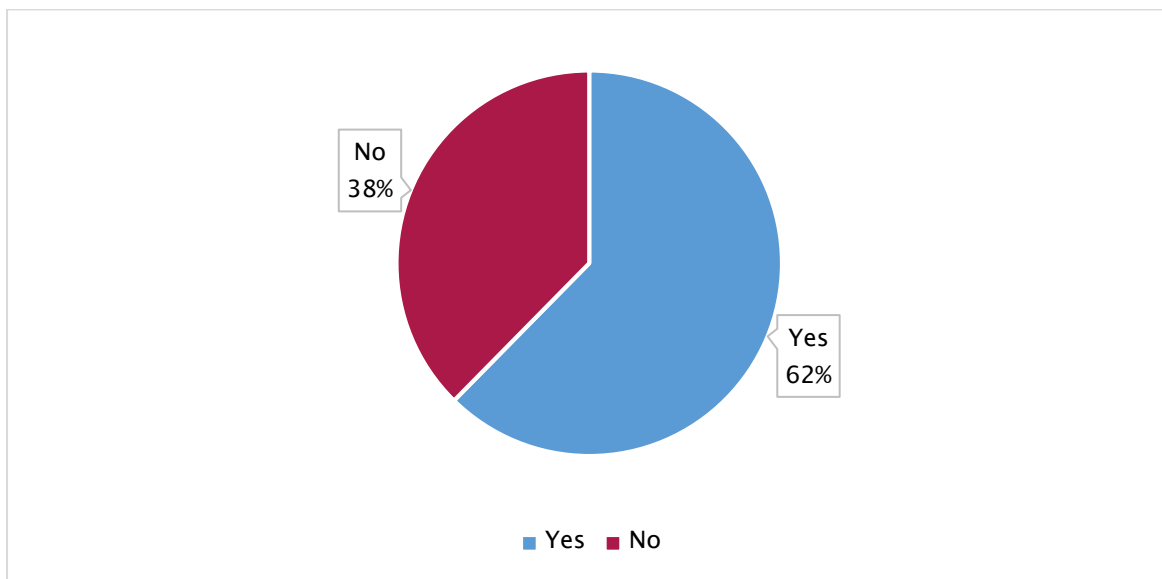
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18 As above.

Figure 10: Has this training and support been sufficient to develop your competency? (n=8)

No
13%

Yes
88%

■ Yes ■ No

Challenges

Figure 11: Did your education and training as a Deacon adequately equip you for these challenges? (n=8)

No
38%

Yes
62%

■ Yes ■ No

APPENDIX 3 – COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK EXAMPLES

Competency Framework: Example 1

Name	
Current Post	
Date	
Assessor/Supervisor	

Competency 1	Can undertake effective communication with congregation and parish	Performs exceptionally at this level	Can perform at this level confidently	Some development needed	Significant development needed	Comments
1.a	*Can draft suitable materials for weekly order of service and for parish magazines*			√		Mentor support could be offered to help develop written materials.
1.b	*Has an understanding of the range of social media available to support communication*			√		Need for additional training on common social media packages such as Facebook and Twitter
1.c	*Can effectively use common forms of social media to communicate with congregation and parish (including Church's own website, Facebook, and Twitter)*			√		Support minister to connect with other ministers who demonstrate particularly good practice using social media for support

Competency Framework: Example 2

Key Competency 1: Communications

Can undertake effective communication with congregation and parish					
Indicators	1	2	3	**4**	**5**
1.a: Can draft suitable materials for weekly order of service and for parish magazines	Materials drafted are not of a sufficiently high standard	Materials drafted are reasonable on occasion but not of a consistently high standard	Materials drafted are reasonable but further improvements are still required	Materials are well drafted, interesting and well received by congregations/ parishioners	Materials are of an exceptionally high standard, engaging and well-received.
1.b: Has an understanding of the range of social media available to support communication	Has little or no knowledge of the range of social media available to support communication.	Has some understanding of the range of social media available but insufficient to select and utilise effectively	Has an understanding of the range of social media opportunities available but these are used infrequently or not as effectively as they could be.	Has a good understanding of the ways in which social media can be used to engage congregations and the local community.	Knowledge of the opportunities offered through social media is exceptional.
1.c: Can effectively use common forms of social media to communicate with congregation and parish (including Church's own website, Facebook, and Twitter)	Has little or no knowledge of how to use common forms of social media to communicate	Has some limited social media skills but these are rarely used	Common forms of social media are sometimes used but not consistently or regularly	Common forms of social media are used regularly to effectively communicate with congregation and parish	Common forms of social media are frequently used in interesting and innovative ways to engage congregation and parish regularly and interactively
Comments					
Mentor support could be offered to help develop written materials.					
Need for additional training on common social media packages such as Facebook and Twitter.					
Support minister to connect with other ministers who demonstrate particularly good practice using social media for support.					