

Questions Raised at the Ministry Consultation Day

Regarding the Foundation Course and Access to the MMin

Questions Regarding the Foundation Course

1. Who is the Foundation Course for? Is it just for those applying for ordination or is it open to those who do not want necessarily to be considered for ordination?

The course is potentially available for anyone. But if someone wishes to do it who has not articulated an aspiration to be ordained, then as they will effectively be a private student they will have to pay the full amount. This will clearly be a more attractive option for lay members once the course is fully accredited. The primary focus for the Foundation Course in 2008 is those who are submitting themselves for selection for ordination. The aim is to assist them in discerning their vocation and to ensure they are prepared educationally for the MMin.

2. Will the Foundation Course be accredited?

The combined modules will not be recognized as an accredited entity in the first year. It is our clear intention that future versions of the course will be fully accredited. However the component parts of the course are St. John's modules with a clear credit rating that can be used as a contribution to their awards. We have been using St. John's modules very successfully as part of our existing training system and they are internationally recognized in the distance learning field and they are being tailored to prepare effectively for the Masters.

3. Will the Foundation Course be open to Non-Graduates as well as Graduates?

Future versions of the Foundation Course will be open to all. In the first year as we are focusing on those submitting themselves for selection for ordination and therefore for onward participation in the MMin – candidates will need to have the right qualifications for access to the MMin – see below Questions 8 and 9.

4. Does completion of the Foundation Course gain me access to the MMin?

No. The purpose of the course is to assist in the discernment of vocation, assist in ensuring educational preparedness and understanding the principles underlying the MMin. Candidates who successfully complete the Foundation Course will then be required to attend a selection conference. Being selected at the Selection Conference and qualification under Questions 8 and 9 below are the means of gaining access to the course.

5. What will the cost of the Foundation Course be and who pays what?

This is clear on the brochure. The cost for the individual is €500 – the other two thirds being carried by the central parts of the Church

6. Do you still have to do the Foundation Course if you have done either a Bachelors in Theology or a Masters in Theology?

Some parts of it will have to be done as its educational methodology and pastoral engagement are different from other degrees. Candidates with these degrees can discuss the matter individually with the Director of the Institute, who will advise them accordingly

7. How will assessment of the modules of the Foundation Course be done?

The Assessment will be conducted by teachers accredited by St. John's Nottingham in consultation with the Director of the Institute

Questions regarding Access to the MMin

8. Do you have to be a graduate to get access to the MMin Course?

You need to have NFQ8 (what is NFQ8 – see Appendix 1) or equivalent as assessed by Trinity College, Dublin in association with the Director. In the majority of cases this will manifest itself in a third level qualification of that standard.

9. Can you gain access to the Masters without a third level qualification?

The Access arrangements provide provision for assessment of other types of learning, such as professional qualifications and ministerial experience, in the determination of a candidate's NFQ8 status. These submissions will be taken on a case by case basis and considered by the Admissions Committee.

10. I have read all the material and am interested in doing the course but am not sure if I qualify as NFQ8 or not – what should I do?

Please contact the Project Office at Church of Ireland House (Tel: +353 1 412 5608 - Full details at www.ministry.ie) and the Director of the Institute will offer the appropriate advice.

11. How can one have access to a Masters in Ministry without completing a primary degree?

As there is no B.Min. in TCD the typical route from an undergraduate to a postgraduate degree in the same discipline (e.g. B.Sc. to M.Sc.) does not apply in this case. The M.Min is a professional degree - not an academic degree. There are many potential routes of entry to the M.Min. and the Foundation Course will play an important part in preparing applicants both professionally and academically for the course and ensuring that candidates are educationally prepared

Questions Regarding Selection

12. Is there any change to the Selection Procedure?

Yes. There used to be two Selection Conferences. The first focused on academic and psychological assessment and the second the vocational and interview assessment. The completion of the Foundation Course replaces the academic and educational assessment and the psychological assessment will be conducted during the Foundation Course. There will therefore be only one Selection Conference at the end of the Foundation Course.

13. What is the status of those who have been recommended for training at Selection Conference in either 2006 or 2007 and chosen not yet to commence training?

Their acceptance to train for ordination is honored but they need to comply with the requirements to enter the MMin which includes the completion of the Foundation Access Course (or any concessions agreed with TCD).

a) What steps do they need to take?

- Complete the Foundation Course

b) Do they need to go through Selection conference again?

- No. Candidates who have been already successfully selected for training will not need to go through selection again.

c) Are they guaranteed places in September 2009?

- All those who have been recommended for training from previous selection conferences (but have not yet commenced their training), having been selected and complied with the access requirements and done the Foundation Course will be given a place on the September 2009 MMin course

d) Are we writing to all such candidates explaining these answers?

- Yes, following the issuance of this document the Project Team will do so

14. Will there be a volume threshold on how many people can go through college in 2009 and how will the prioritization be determined?

In light of the fact that there is no residential training intake in 2008, there is likely to be a constraint. The new Director will decide the appropriate level of class numbers for the first year. As in answer to 1c) above the first prioritization will be to those who have been recommended for training from previous selection conferences, but not yet commenced their training – proposals for the subsequent basis for prioritization will be a matter for the Director to recommend to the Institute's Supervisory Body.

Appendix 1.

What is NFQ8?

NFQ8 stands for National Framework of Qualifications Level 8.

The National Framework of Qualifications through its ten levels, provides a means of comparing and contrasting national and international education and training qualifications. It helps learners to plan their education and training and employers to identify the qualifications they require. The framework standards set out a range of knowledge, skill and competences. The NFQ8 level is equivalent to a Higher Diploma and an Honours Bachelor Degree.

Full details can be found on their website www.nfq.ie