local/regional course. Some training is ‘mixed-mode’ where an ordinand is based mainly in a parish and is then released on several days per week for study at a college. Both non-residential and mixed mode training involve occasional study weekends and Summer/Easter schools. Ordinands remain under the pastoral care of the Portsmouth Vocations Team during their training.

**The Small Print - Important things to note:**

i) Remarriage: If a candidate (or their spouse) has been married previously to a partner still living, a Canon C4 Faculty is required. This is, in effect, special permission from the Archbishops to attend a national assessment event. Work to obtain a Canon C4 faculty begins at an early stage of discernment with the bishop’s authorised officer.

ii) The timescale of the discernment process varies for each candidate but is likely to be in the region of twelve to twenty-four months. There are exceptional circumstances when this period will be shorter, or longer.

iii) Stages One and Two travel towards a recommendation for ordination *training*. Ultimately the decision as to whether a candidate is ordained at the end of training lies with the bishop and will be dependent on their progress at the course/college and reports sent to the diocese at the end of the penultimate and final years of training.

iv) There is no guarantee that a stipendiary curacy in Portsmouth Diocese will be offered at the end of training and stipendiary clergy are expected to be nationally deployable. The diocese likes to keep its ordinands where possible, but there are only a fixed number of stipendiary title curacies on offer each year. If no curacy is available, an ordinand will be released to look for a curacy in another diocese. They will be informed of this as early as possible, usually at the end of their penultimate year of training. Title Curacies are usually served in a *different* church/benefice to the one a candidate worshipped in when entering the discernment process.

**Portsmouth Vocations Team**

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For more information

<https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/vocations>

**Discernment and Selection for Ordained Ministry**

**Diocese of Portsmouth**



**Overview**

In the autumn of 2021, a new national process for the discernment and selection of vocations to ordained ministry (Priest and Distinctive Deacon) came into being. This new process is based on candidates possessing six essential qualities; inhabiting a quality speaks of a life-long process that is ever deepening. There are six qualities: *Love for God, Call to Ministry, Love for People, Wisdom, Fruitfulness* and *Potential*. These qualities are explored in the context of a candidate’s relation to *Jesus Christ, the Church, the World* and *the Self*.

National evaluation will involve two stages of assessment. The Stage One Carousel is a full-day and online, consisting of six short interviews/conversations, after which the diocese receives feedback on each candidate’s discernment progress and suggestions of any further work and preparation. This additional work may include things like placements, counselling, or pre-theological education. All candidates must attend Stage One assessment before proceeding to a Stage Two Panel, which is a two-day, residential, assessment event. Following this the diocese will receive a recommendation regarding a candidate’s capacity to begin training for ordination.

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In Portsmouth, those discerning a call to ordained ministry do so in a small Discernment Group with others at the same stage in the process. There will be two cohorts each year, one starting in early summer and the second starting in the autumn. Being in a small group will help candidates to explore issues together, hear differing views whilst getting used to working with others.

Candidates will also work individually with a member of the Vocations Team, who will accompany them throughout the process. The purpose of these one-to-one meetings is to explore calling more deeply and to gather evidence showing how a candidate inhabits the Six Qualities which will be assessed during the two national stages of the process.

**How does the Discernment Process work?**

**1. Meeting the DDVO (Diocesan Director of Vocations and Ordinands)**. Candidates will usually be referred to the DDVO by their parish clergy or chaplain. It is expected that clergy will already have undertaken some discernment conversations with candidates to explore a sense of calling or vocation. The DDVO will have an initial meeting with the candidate, finding out some basic information about a candidate’s faith, life history, family situation, and sense of calling and will explain the process in more depth. If candidate and DDVO decide to proceed, a simple Registration Form is completed by the candidate and a written initial reference requested from the candidate’s incumbent. If another vocation is discerned, the candidate will explore that with the appropriate people.

**2. Meetings and Groups.** If a call to ordination seems a possibility, candidates are linked with a member of the Vocations Team (the DDVO or one of the Assistant DDOs) for one-to-one interviews. At these, deep issues are explored and between meetings there are books to be read and some written work expected. At the same time, candidates are allocated to the next available Discernment Group; these meet monthly (usually in the evenings and mostly on Zoom). There could be as much as a five-month delay in starting to meet formally with a group, so to ensure that time is used well, candidates begin working with a DDO exploring the six qualities in depth as early as possible. Candidates continue to meet with their group and DDO until the Vocations Team is confident that sufficient progress has been made for the candidate to proceed to a national assessment event.

**3. Placements.** In addition to groups and individual meetings, candidates may be asked to take on visits and placements in other churches to gain further experience and understanding of the breadth of the Church of England.

**4. Safeguarding**. Candidates must complete their C0 and C1 safeguarding training early in the process and all safeguarding training and enhanced DBS clearance must be completed before attending the Stage One Carousel. The discernment process involves a particularly in-depth session exploring candidates’ vulnerabilities and issues around money, sex and power. We call this the “Traffic Lights” session and more information about this is given during the process.

**5. Assessment for Psychological Wellbeing (APW).** From 2024 all candidates will attend an online APW interview and the diocese will receive a report from the psychologist, which may include recommendations for further work to be done.

**6. The Stage One Carousel**. An online booking is made to attend the Carousel, a full-day online occasion, where candidates have six 15-20-minute conversations with a group of national advisers around the Six Qualities. The event involves giving a short presentation and doing some reading in preparation. Our Vocations Team will give guidance regarding the day to ease the nerves. Afterwards, a report is sent to the diocese with advice about any further work required to be ready for the Stage Two Panel.

**7. Meeting the Bishop.** All candidates attending the national assessment events must be sponsored by their bishop, who meets candidates at this stage.

**8. Stage Two Preparation**. After any additional work, a Stage Two Panel is booked, online application is completed, and references taken up. The Vocations Team will hold a Preparation Day to help candidates thoroughly prepare for the event.

**9. Attending a Stage Two Panel.** This is a two-day, one-night residential event where candidates are interviewed by members of the National Ministry Team and take part in various assessment activities. Afterwards, a report is sent to the diocese with a recommendation regarding a candidate’s suitability to begin training. If candidates are recommended for training, where they will train, finances, and any additional recommendations are discussed and agreed.

**10. Training for Ministry.** Training is paid for by the Church of England and takes place either residentially at a theological college or non-residentially on a