

Foundation Degrees for Ministerial Training: Their Potential and Challenges

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This paper sets out to identify some of the potential and challenges in the development of Foundation Degrees for ministerial training. It draws on the experience of developing new Foundation Degree programmes from first principles, and re-configuring an existing certificate and diploma programme into a Foundation Degree. It illustrates how the Foundation Degree Framework [QAA 2004] can be effectively exploited in the development of ministerial training programmes, and identifies some of the challenges faced by ministerial training providers and Higher Education Institutions in the validation of such programmes. It is hoped that this will open up discussion of some of these issues and facilitate sharing of good practice and support for those developing Foundation degrees for ministerial training in the future.

The Church of England's review of ministerial training published in *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* [Church House Publishing 2003], colloquially known as 'the Hind Report', and the subsequent publication of *Shaping the Future: New Patterns of Training for Lay and Ordained* [Church House Publishing 2004], have had a significant impact on ministerial training. In terms of organisation, in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, it has led

to the development of the Regional Training Partnership (RTP) made up of five Dioceses; the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church; a number of training organisations; and two Higher Education Institutions. In terms of curriculum it has challenged all these stakeholders to work together to review their provision and develop a coherent strategy in re-configuring and developing a range of ministerial pathways.

Whilst this initiative has been instigated by the Ministry Division of the Church of England, rarely are such developments solely 'top down', and the new formal requirements for training put into place in the new Regional Training Partnerships are building on long established and effective partnerships developed between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), dioceses and other theological training institutions and organisations who have HE validated Certificate and Diploma courses in Theology and Ministry.

When Foundation Degrees were first mooted in the early years of this decade, colleagues at York St John University (YSJU) identified this as an ideal format for the continuing engagement with long standing diocesan partners in lay ministerial training. Their vision resulted in the first nationally recognised Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry (FDTM), which was validated and launched in 2003.

While there has been some steady growth in Foundation Degrees within theology and ministry in the last five years, it has been somewhat surprising that there have not been more. Of the approximately 2500 validated Foundation degrees listed on the Foundation Degree Forward website (<http://www.fdf.ac.uk/courses>), at the time of writing (Summer 2008) only seven relate to Theology/Evangelism /Pastoral Care/Youth Ministry. However, two significant factors may affect this situation over the coming months. Firstly, as the churches continue to reflect on how training will move forward in the light of the on-going development of RTPs there is scope for the review of existing training provision to be reconfigured within a Foundation Degree framework, which facilitates the integration of ministerial skills formerly deemed inappropriate for inclusion in an academic programme. Secondly, and perhaps more pressingly, the Government's recent consultation on the Withdrawal of Funding for Equivalent or Lower Qualifications (ELQ) [Hefce 2008] has concluded that Foundation Degrees should be exempt from the withdrawal of funding for those who already have a degree or other HE award, and it is therefore in the financial interests of current providers to re-configure their existing certificate and diploma programmes into Foundation Degrees in the near future. This is of particular significance within the realm of ministerial training, when many, although by no means all, ministerial trainees have a degree or HE qualification in their professional field, but need to access theological training at HE levels one and two. National figures show that 28% of all entrants to Foundation Degree programmes in 2005-6 had previous experience of HE [Hefce 2008]: YSJU figures for 2006-7 show that 56% of students had previous experience of HE on entering the Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry programme; significantly higher than the national average for Foundation degrees and a trend that is likely to be repeated in other RTPs.

The Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry at York St John University

The York St John University Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry programme was devised with reference to the Final Draft of the QAA Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark, (QAA 2004). This document prescribes the criteria for Foundation Degrees, which are designed to:

...integrate academic and work based learning through close collaboration between employers and programme providers. They build upon a long history of design and delivery of vocational qualifications in higher education, and are intended to equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to their employment, so sat240 Louise Redshaw?Foundation Degrees for Ministerial Training isfying the needs of employees and employers.... They are designed to appeal to learners wishing to enter a profession as well as those seeking continuing professional development ... [and] can provide pathways for lifelong learning and the opportunity to progress to other qualifications.[QAA:2004:3]

Both the institution and the training partners have found the Foundation Degree Framework a creative and engaging model, which provides extensive scope for the integration of theological education and ministerial training. We do not claim to have all the answers?indeed, having just re-validated the programme under the University's cycle of review we continue to be challenged by the need to exploit the full potential of the framework in the integration of theological and ministerial training. This paper explores some of the exciting potential and some of the challenges, based on extensive experience of validating, reviewing and improving FD programmes in theology and other subject areas.

Foundation Degrees are defined by the terms of the QAA [2004] Foundation Degree Framework, which outlines five distinctive features of a Foundation Degree: employer involvement, accessibility, articulation and progression, flexibility, and partnership. The first task will be to explore some of the potential within these features, drawing on examples from experience. The second task will be to explore some of the current challenges inherent in developing Foundation Degrees for ministerial training.

Exploiting the Features of Foundation Degrees for Ministerial Training

The order of the features in this section reflects the FDTM experience of the relative importance of different aspects of Foundation Degrees for running partnerships in ministerial formation. Central to the process has been the capacity to build on strong relationships with existing partners and the development of new partners; their engagement in every aspect of programme development has been the key to its success. This in turn provides a robust framework within which placement activity can be effective and purposeful for the student. These relationships in turn facilitate an ongoing conversation between partners to identify ways in which the programme can respond to training needs and facilitate the many and varied training routes for students.

Employer Engagement and Partnership

'Employer Engagement' and 'partnership' are so thoroughly integrated within the context of the FDTM that it is almost impossible to separate them out. Within the FDTM programme they are articulated as 'partnership'. Central to the notion of this particular partnership is the engagement of the training partners in the development of the programme and the concept of placement based learning?where the 'employers' in this case are the training partners who provide part of the learning experience. This section explores the notion of partnership within the particular context of the FDTM as it delivers a training routes for a range of lay and ordained ministries in the Yorkshire Regional Training Partnership.

The notion of partnership is fundamental to the nature of a Foundation Degree. In the FDTM this notion of partnership developed naturally because strong links were already well established with three local Anglican dioceses, the Methodist Church and a Roman Catholic diocese. Working in partnership with a range of church traditions from the outset highlighted both the common aims of the partners, as well as their particular needs. In some instances the aims and content of modules could easily be shared by these different partners; New Testament and Old Testament modules were core to all partners. This commonality nonetheless required sensitivity to particular denominational perspectives and sometimes careful use of language so that modules could be used by everyone; for example in the articulation of the learning outcomes in a module on history and doctrine to ensure that these were inclusive. Some aspects of training or theological emphasis were so distinctive that dedicated modules were developed to meet specific training/theological needs; for example a module on Sacraments to meet the needs of the Roman Catholic diocese. The result was a set of core modules that were common to all students on the programme and a range of modules that were available to partners to meet their particular training needs.

The FDTM team has a very 'hands on' approach to partnerships. Engaging partners in this context is not just about engaging them in the development and review of the programme, but is evidenced in their central role in the management and delivery of the programme. Key to this process are mechanisms such as:

- The development of quality documentation which clearly and simply outlines the framework for delivery;

- a programme committee which includes all the training partners and members of the HE and that meets once each term to discuss all aspects of policy, delivery and quality assurance;
- an identified training partner responsible for oversight of all aspects of delivery and student progress at a particular centre;
- shared planning of modules, which draws together all those running a particular module each term to plan a programme, share resources and agree the details of assessment strategies, ensuring equity of provision across the delivery centres; and
- a moderation system for all formats of assessed work which involves both training partners and institution staff.

This framework facilitates an engaged understanding of the programme, which was commended by a recent re-validation panel, and reflects the high level of commitment of the training partners who spend a considerable amount of time facilitating a high quality student experience on the programme.

This engaged notion of partnership has taken us on a long journey in a relatively short space of time, which has seen the programme grow from four partners and five centres to ten partners and fourteen delivery centres in less than five years. This growth has to a great extent been facilitated because the training partners feel that they have ownership of the Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry: they wrote it, it meets their training needs and they are continually engaged in its ongoing development. As a result they were keen advocates for it as the new Regional Training Partnership came into existence, resulting in the adoption of the programme by the remaining dioceses within the RTP. It is evident that in this particular context this notion of partnership extends beyond a set of formal words as we have gone on the potentially difficult journey of engaging with the RTP as it grappled with decisions about how to move training forward in this new context. The outcome is a flexible programme that now meets a wide range of ministerial training needs for Readers, Pastoral Workers, Evangelists and Ordinands through a variety of training routes. As the team continues to explore the Foundation Degree Framework, this notion of engaged partnership continues to be an underlying theme.

Work Based Learning

A second central concept to Foundation Degrees is that of 'work based learning'. In the context of ministerial training, we originally articulated 'work based learning' as 'placement based learning', which more accurately reflected the nature of the relationship between ministerial trainees and their training providers in the early stages of the programme. Students at this stage of their training have no official role to play within their placement based contexts, which are identified in consultation with training partners. However, as the students are authorised to various ministries and take on a specific role within a context their learning becomes more typically 'work based', normally, from mid way through level two of the programme. For example, Readers and lay preachers are normally licensed to preach after three years training, when they are mid-way through level two, and ordinands will normally be ordained as Deacons mid way through level 2 and move into a first post. In both these instances, students will move from 'placement' to 'work' based learning contexts as they complete their programme. The programme retains this flexibility of language in order to accurately reflect the training contexts of the students.

All placement and work based learning is embedded in taught modules. At level one there are two compulsory modules for each training route with 40 hours of placement activity attached. The modules are delivered in a way which supports the student in the integration of and reflection on what is taking place in the classroom and the placement context. This provides a clear and focussed structure to placement work for students and security in the assessment process. As the programme has developed, the programme team has developed in its understanding of how progression can be facilitated within these contexts. At level one, this context is normally the student's own parish or work place. At level two students are required to engage in a different context, which will be identified in

consultation with their training provider. In each context the module learning outcomes and assessment strategies are designed to help the students to utilise the learning within the module and reflect on their placement context in the light of this. At level one they explore the mission and ministry and worship of their own parish. At level two, when they are normally licensed as Readers or ordained, they do an independent study reflecting theologically on their ministerial activity. Although this is an effective model, the challenge is always to provide effective engagement with, and assessment of, ministerial and formational skills. The aspect of ministerial and formational skills development is one of the most significant challenges to the development of Foundation Degrees for ministerial training, and is an issue raised later in this article.

As the programme developed the team were increasingly aware of the many opportunities within non-placement modules where students could integrate their experiences in their churches as a ministerial trainees with their learning in the classroom. In the re-validated programme hours were identified for 'experiential learning' within almost all of the modules. For example, in the New Testament module students reflect on the use of NT texts in contemporary contexts and keep a diary of how texts are used in a range of contexts; sermons, radio 'thought for the day' slots, Bible Studies etc, which can then be utilised in their assessed work.

Accessibility

The nature of theological and ministerial training is such that the student body for Foundation Degrees for ministerial training has a quite different profile from most other Foundation Degree programmes. Whilst national statistics [Hefce 2008] show 91% of part time FD students are over 21, the distribution curve of student numbers from aged 23-60 shows a steady decrease. Within the FDTM, with 99% of students over the age of 21, the distribution curve of students aged 40 -60 shows a steady increase, as many ministerial trainees take on this role as families have grown up, and in a significant number of cases, retirement leaves time to pursue ministerial training. The number of students who have previously engaged in HE considered earlier shows a significant proportion of students in this category on the FDTM.

Alongside these well-qualified students, approximately 24% left school without any formal qualifications. For these students access to degree-level study requires strong support in study skills and this is particularly important during their first module, which they must successfully complete in order to be fully matriculated onto the programme.

This balances the need for open access to those who have little formal education while maintaining the standards of a degree programme. The success of this latter group of students is attributable to the high level of oversight, academic support and pastoral care and the sound educational principles underlying the teaching and learning strategies provided by the training partners who manage the provision at the off-site delivery centres. All Centres provide an induction programme which includes an introductory study skills session, which is followed up in modules by regular input on study skills. Modules are designed to facilitate skills development and tutors are supported through module planning meetings and training sessions on how to plan and deliver interactive learning strategies. A good example of this sort of process comes from a session in the New Testament module, where students are introduced to the skills of exegesis using one synoptic gospel. In taught sessions they engage in a range of group activities and work together to practise and develop the range of skills required. In one such session the tutor asked a group of new and very nervous students to bring their work and share their findings with each other. After a cautious start, they were soon sharing different perspectives and resources and arguing about who wrote the gospel, why and when. These arguments drew on the different sources the students had read: when it became clear that these sources held different opinions, the tutor was asked to adjudicate. The tutor then used these conversations as a teaching tool and helped the students to begin to really understand how to approach the task: how to say that there were two different views; how to reference these views to their sources; how to structure the exegesis and so on. This session helped towards the students' first piece of assessed work on the programme and they were supported and enabled by this process to understand what the nature of the academic task actually is.

Articulation and Progression

The FDTM is based on 240 credits across levels one and two. As a part time programme, this requires students to engage with 12 modules; one module a term for four years. A number of factors have led the institution to develop a range of interim awards. In addition to the standard exit award of Certificate of Higher Education [120 credits at level one], the programme includes a 60 credit University Certificate at level one and a 60 credit University Diploma at level two. These awards have enabled students to engage with the programme at a level appropriate to their ability, experience, training needs, work and domestic circumstances, and ensured that there is flexibility and responsiveness to partner needs. More importantly, it has enabled students for whom academic study had previously been beyond their grasp to take an exit award with a sense of achievement, and avoided any potential notion of 'failure' if they were unable to complete the whole programme.

The level three programme similarly has a 60 credit exit award, including the option of a Graduate Certificate in Ministerial Practice developed in partnership with the RTP, to meet the needs of those newly ordained as part of their Initial Ministerial Education [years 4 ? 7] and develop a coherent approach to ministerial training as lifelong learning as articulated in the Hind Report [op cit].

Accredited Prior [Experiential] Learning has been utilised by training partners both for individual students who have completed courses elsewhere, and for cohorts of students who have completed diocesan or Methodist training programmes which were not validated by an HEI. This has helped training partners manage the sometimes difficult transition from local non-validated training programmes to the FDTM. Increasingly, students who decide to pursue ordination training are using their transcripts of credits gained on the Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry to negotiate an appropriate route which builds on their academic experience at their training institution. The willingness of ordination training providers to accept these credits reflects a status for Foundation Degrees not hitherto evidenced within the certificate and diploma programmes, as well as a greater coherence in the national understanding of accumulation of credits and the 'fit for purpose' nature of the Foundation degrees. There is still room for improvement in institutional confidence in other awards but it is to be hoped, that as the RTPs become more confident in the equivalence of provision nationally, which again, may be helped by the development of Foundation Degrees, students will find moving between training providers a smoother transition than has hitherto been the case.

As a partnership it was decided early on that the programme should remain open access to those who were not engaged in any formal ministerial training. This is not without its problems, particularly when considering the integration of ministerial and formational skills, but has in fact been very fruitful, as a number of students who enrolled as independent students have gone on to explore opportunities to engage in lay training with their dioceses, and indeed some who enrolled for lay training have moved into ordination training. Some of these students have been able to continue their training within the FDTM and others have been able to utilise the credits they have already gained to continue their training elsewhere.

Flexibility

For training partners, flexibility has been a key to the continued success and development of the Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry, and this is evident in a number of different contexts. During the first few years of the programme a range of issues emerged requiring minor amendments to the validated document and module documents. These included such things as:

- the development of new modules to meet emerging training needs: the publication of ***Children and Young People in the Church*** [2005] led to the development of a level 2 module which was included in the Reader training route;
- new pathways to facilitate the training of pastoral workers, parish evangelists and ordinands;
- additional exit awards to facilitate achievement and progression for students with different training and

academic needs.

The institution's willingness to engage in and facilitate these ongoing developments has been central to the success of the partnerships.

Flexibility is also required to cope with the very varied student profiles and expectations. In addition to the standard routes taken by a student on the training programme, students may, in consultation with their training partner and YSJU, develop a training route appropriate to their particular needs. This process is formally agreed and recorded on an Individual Learning Plan, and again provides the flexibility training partners need in order to provide routes tailored to individual learning needs.

With such a wide range of partners, the range of delivery modes available must inevitably be flexible. The programme is currently being delivered at fourteen Centres throughout the region. Initially the most common pattern of delivery was twelve two hour sessions on one night a week each term. However, over the life of the programme, other models have emerged, which include weekend, mid-week blocked delivery or a combination of these. The latest development has been the notion of 'Sunday Schools of Ministry'. In this model, the pattern of one module a term remains, but students from across the diocese meet for one Sunday a month to engage in academic study, and develop a sense of 'community' through the sharing of worship and meals. Whilst there was some initial resistance to the use of Sundays [which were chosen specifically to take the pressure off students and avoid the problem of studying on Saturday and still doing church things on Sunday], students indicate a high level of satisfaction with this model. This is mainly for pragmatic reasons: it saves travelling time, and in the words of one father '...this is easier: it is planned in the family diary, and I'm not rushing in from work and out again and feeling guilty about leaving my wife to deal with the kids'. This development has in turn fed back into the weekly models of delivery, with some centres delivering collaboratively at a central venue on Sundays which include opportunities for worship or the addition of an act of worship and a meal to the final week of the term.

As the RTP Covenant was signed, the institution was commended for its 'can do' attitude, which had contributed significantly to the building up of a broad range of partners who are working effectively together to facilitate a wide range of training routes within the region. This facilitation and high level of support by the HEI is vital to the success of partnerships as envisaged by the training partners as they develop existing and new partnerships with HEIs.

Challenges

The preceding section illustrated how a partnership between HEIs and ministerial training partners can work effectively within a Foundation Degree framework through the centrality of partnerships, the careful management of placements, potential to ensure accessibility and progression, and the necessity for flexibility. This section will consider some of the challenges that can arise in this process, in the hope that this will open up the potential for sharing of good practice, and debate as the potential for new Foundation Degrees for ministerial training are explored.

The original vision for this new type of award was that [in ministerial terms] the academic, ministerial and experiential can be drawn together with 'appropriate academic rigour' [QAA 2000:3]. Experience of Foundation Degree validation panels both within and outside the subject area of theology suggests that this creates challenges at both ends of the academic spectrum. In the FDTM validation event in 2003, it was suggested that the programme was 'too academic' in requiring students to operate at the equivalent level of the undergraduate programme in Theology and Religious Studies. On the other hand a number of Foundation Degree validation panels, both in theology and other subjects, have raised concerns that whilst the skills development was strong, there was a lack of academic engagement: a concern identified by QAA in the conclusions of their *Review of Foundation Degrees* [QAA 2005]. To retain this balance between academic integrity and the development of ministerial and formational skills is one of the most significant challenges for Foundation Degrees for ministerial training, as training partners balance the requirement for validated training provision whilst desiring to maintain ministry as dependent on a God-given vocation rather than

simply the acquisition certain skills or achievement of learning outcomes.

Skills acquisition is central to the FD ethos, and central to training for ministry in churches. In the initial development of the programme, the writing team, made up of YSJU staff and training partners, explored together the notion of skills development, and how some of the ministerial skills could be developed through different forms of assessment. The main skills training partners were initially looking for in their students were related to those associated with lay preaching, for example: the ability to interpret sacred texts, create an act of worship and deliver it convincingly in a manner appropriate to a particular group.

Although the FDTM programme incorporates a number of ministerial skills, it is clear from mapping our programme to the criteria in *Shaping the Future* [op cit], that there are elements of training that are not covered within the programme but which are provided by each individual diocese over and above the Foundation degree. This can be a cause of frustration to students who begin to make artificial distinctions between the academic and the ministerial/formational. Integrating these ministerial formation skills into the remit of academically robust assessment is one of the most challenging and pressing issues to be explored as new foundation degrees are developed. Both the institution and training partners are continuing to explore how the foundation degree framework?which after all is by its very nature a formational and vocational framework?can facilitate the integration of ministerial and formational skills within the programme with academic integrity, and without alienating students who wish to take the course for their own interest. The key to this is in the creative use of module learning outcomes and related assessment strategies. As the 'keeper of quality' perhaps HEIs have not been as creative or flexible as they could be in this respect. On the other hand there are perhaps some elements of formational training which can happily sit within a ministerial training framework, but simply cannot be assessed in an HEI framework?such as 'prayerfulness' or 'spirituality'. This is the sort of discussion in which the FDTM team and partners are beginning to engage.

Identifying the relevant key skills for a particular ministry is only part of the difficulty in this sort of FD programme. A further challenge lies in finding ways of meaningfully incorporating their assessment into a programme that is mainly run off-site and delivered by around sixty YSJU approved Associate Tutors. Teaching and assessing ministerial skills such as the ability to communicate a sermon cannot be done solely through paper-based exercises and must necessarily involve a large number of assessors, which in turn raises issues about quality assurance.

A further challenge is what is colloquially known in HE as 'the key skills agenda'. The *Foundation Degree Framework* [QAA 2004] sets out the need for students to engage in the development of generic key skills, which have become central to education at all levels. At its worst, this can find a validation panel discussing how a Foundation Degree for ministerial training can contribute to numeracy skills (this is a challenge!) At a more critical level, given the relatively high number of non-standard students entering such programmes, programme development teams do need to engage carefully with questions of how literacy, communication and IT skills will be developed within the programme. To a training partner, skill in ICT may be seen as unnecessary for a 60 year old trainee reader, whereas to an HEI validating a foundation degree, ICT skills are perceived as essential whatever the subject area. The expectations and requirements of both partners need to be carefully negotiated and articulated.

As increasing numbers of church-based organisations are looking to deliver Foundation Degrees, an important question that needs to be tackled is whether to adapt existing traditional HE courses or to write a new programme. The FDTM involved both, and experience suggests that converting an existing programme is actually a greater challenge than developing a FD from first principles. One of the questions in helping to make this decision may be to ask who actually wrote the existing programme; was it the HEI who offered it to the training partners or were the training partners fully engaged in the writing process? If the former, then to fully exploit the Foundation Degree framework, gathering partners to identify their training needs will be vital to the programme's success. It is important to include a wide range of existing and potential partners in this process; experience suggests that one of the major weaknesses validation panels have identified in Foundation Degrees has been that the engagement with partners has been limited to asking them to look at the final document and comment on the general usefulness of the programme. This observation is substantiated by the conclusions of the QAA Report of a survey of Foundation Degrees converted

from existing Higher National Diplomas since 2001 [QAA 2008] which identifies one of the main weaknesses of converted programmes as the lack of engagement with partners throughout the whole process of developing a Foundation Degree. The distinctive nature of a Foundation Degree is that partners are engaged in all aspects of programme design, delivery and evaluation as outlined in the first section of this paper. They need to be engaged in the validation process and be able to talk coherently and knowledgeably about how they have and will continue to contribute to the programme.

Careful consideration also needs to be given to the nature of the partnership between the training partners and the HEI. In the current climate where churches have increasingly sought to engage with HEIs, a number of HEIs have closed or down-graded their theology departments. This is an important consideration for training partners seeking HEI validation. Ideally any partnership needs significant input from an experienced member of the HEI who understands the validation requirements and standards expected of such documentation; who has a good understanding of the distinctiveness of the Foundation Degree Framework; and, most importantly, understands the distinctive nature of ministerial training, and has the ability to help training partners to work through these issues to ensure a positive validation experience.

Training partners should be very clear about the nature of their relationship with, and the support that they will receive from, the HEI before making decisions about setting up a relationship with them. Where training partners are working externally to the HEI and seeking validation, they would be well advised to seek such advice at an early point in the process. Similarly as the ELQ framework is established and Foundation Degrees become increasingly financially attractive, HEIs should be wary of stepping outside their expertise. Without theological insight, training providers are in danger of developing programmes which do not meet the increasingly demanding standards required for validation, or produce ministers who can act in ministry but not engage with sufficient academic integrity to be able to reflect theologically.

Church-based training institutions with an existing certificate/ diploma course do need to take account of the fact that the world of HE has moved on significantly in the last ten years in terms of the clarity of expectations with regard to articulation of a programme within a validated document, which are now very demanding. Validation panels will interrogate both the documentation and the proposing team about a wide range of issues such as:

- the clarity and appropriateness of programme and module learning outcomes;
- the evidence that programme outcomes are met through the module learning outcomes and the assessment strategies;
- detailed information on how placement activity will be integrated, managed and quality assured;
- requirements of cross-referencing training requirements to programme outcomes;
- how QAA codes of practice are implemented? particularly regarding placements;
- the range of assessment strategies to ensure a range of skills development;
- the identification and availability of recent resources;
- the quality assurance processes in place.

Careful consideration should also be given to the clarity and purpose of modules, particularly where modules are being merged from, for example, 2 10 credit modules to 1 20 credit module, as this is the point at which concepts, skills and range of assessment strategies can be lost in the aspiration to ensure that subject knowledge is squeezed in. Sometimes, two into one really will not go and a team may have to abandon particular bodies of knowledge in favour of developing concepts and skills so that students are given the skills they need to engage in lifelong learning and have the ability to access the greater breath of knowledge in the future.

Conclusions

This paper set out to identify some of the potential opportunities and the challenges in the development of Foundation Degrees for ministerial training. It has drawn on the experiences of writing a new programme, converting an old programme, the process of revalidation, and experience of FD validations both within and outside of the subject area of theology and ministry. It has illustrated how the five elements of a foundation degree can work effectively in a ministerial context with examples drawn from experience, and identified some of the challenges facing the FDTM and other training partners as they seek to develop or form new relationships with HEIs in order to develop programmes to meet the emerging needs of ministerial training. It is hoped that this will open up discussion of these issues and lead to the facilitation of a forum for discussion, sharing of good practice, and support for those involved in HEIs and training partnerships as new foundation degrees are developed over the coming months.

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