

Stage 2 Discernment Panel - Information for Candidates

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Introduction

We are delighted that you are prayerfully considering God's call and the possibility of ordained ministry. Welcome to Stage 2 of the Shared Discernment Process. You will already have attended a Stage 1 Carousel Conversations day and received some feedback from it.

Following some further work, your (A)DDO and Sponsoring Bishop will have decided with you that the time is right for you to attend the next stage of Discernment – a national Stage 2 Discernment Panel.

A Stage 2 Discernment Panel will look at how you have developed and grown since your Stage 1 Carousel Conversations. It will explore the remainder of the Qualities for Discernment which have been agreed by the House of Bishops to enable Candidates to test their vocation to begin training for ordination in the Church of England.

What happens at a Stage 2 Discernment Panel?

A Stage 2 Discernment Panel takes place at a residential centre over two days. Most Candidates will be residential, though it is possible for Candidates to attend non-residentially if they prefer and if this is practical.

A Stage 2 Discernment Panel continues the work of exploring the shape of God's call on your life and testing your potential call to train for ordained ministry. There will be two main ways of doing this.

- **A Group Exercise:** As a Candidate you will work alongside the other Candidates in your group (up to the maximum seven Candidates) exploring together a typical scenario in the life of a parish, where proposals are needed on the way forward. Afterwards you will be asked to write a brief reflection on your participation in the Group Exercise. *There are further details below.*
- **Two Interviews:** You will have two Interviews, each with a pair of Bishops' Advisers. Each Interview will last about 75 minutes. *There are further details below.*

All the assessment will be related to the Qualities for Discernment which your (A)DDO will have been exploring with you.

This is all set within the context of prayer and worship. The Candidates, Bishops' Advisers, and the Panel Secretary meet together for meals, times of worship, and other informal engagement, but they work in two distinct groups for the activities to do with discernment and assessment.

The Qualities for Discernment

Summary

In the Shared Discernment Process Candidates are assessed in relation to how they inhabit six Qualities for Discernment that the Church of England understands underpin all Christian Ministry. To help make this assessment each Quality is approached across four Domains or contexts.

The Six Qualities are:

- Love for God
- Call to Ministry
- Love for People
- Wisdom
- Fruitfulness
- Potential

The Four Domains are:

- Christ
- Church
- World
- Self

These are presented as a grid for the purposes of the discernment process:

The Six Qualities		The Four Domains			
		Christ	Church	World	Self
	Love for God				
	Call to Ministry				
	Love for People				
	Wisdom				
	Fruitfulness				
	Potential				

The Stage 2 Discernment Panel assesses all the Qualities, but do not reassess the aspects of the Qualities which were explored in the Stage 1 Carousel Conversations.

In general terms, the aspects of the Qualities which are assessed at a Stage 2 Discernment Panel can be described as those related to 'being and growing', whereas in the Stage 1 Carousel Conversations, the focus could be described as being more on 'knowing and doing'.

The following two high-level grids show in more detail what is being explored for each of the Six Qualities across the Four Domains. The grey-highlighted text correspond to areas relating to safeguarding.

Priest & Distinctive Deacon Qualities Grids

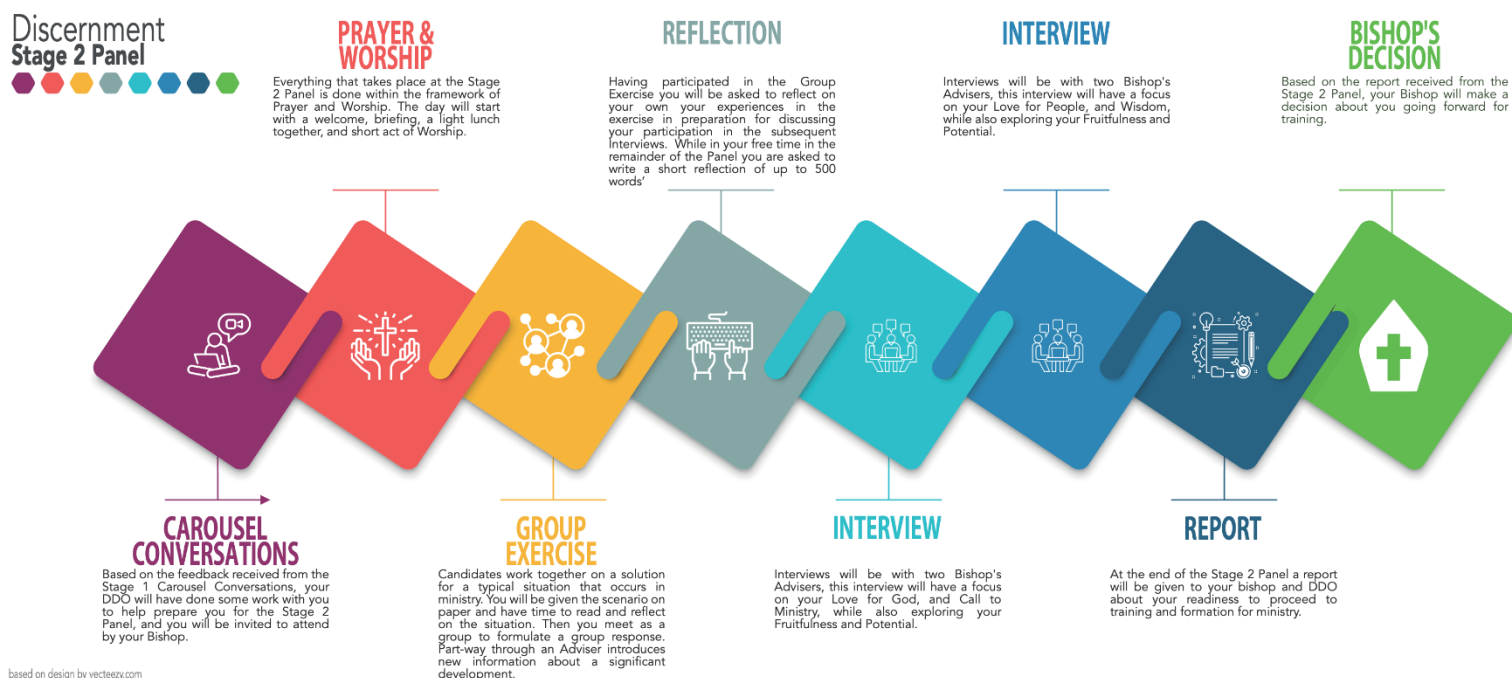
The *Qualities for Discernment Priest and Distinctive Deacon (including Safeguarding and Discernment)* were adopted by the House of Bishops. It is in the light of these Qualities that the Panel Secretary and Advisers give advice to the Bishop. Your DDO will already have worked with you in exploring these Qualities.

Priest	Christ	Church	World	Self
Love for God <i>The candidate...</i>	Is reliant on God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and lives out an infectious, life-transforming faith	Is rooted in Scripture, the worship of the Church and the living traditions of faith	Whole-heartedly, generously and attractively engages with God's world	Is prayerful and studies the Bible
Call to Ministry <i>The candidate...</i>	Responds to the call of Christ to be a disciple	Understands the distinctive nature of ordained priestly ministry	Is committed to being a public and representative person	Articulates an inner sense of call grounded in priestly service
Love for People <i>The candidate...</i>	Welcomes Christ in others, listens, values and respects; cares for those in poverty and the marginalised	Builds relationships which are collaborative and enabling Keeps pastoral and professional boundaries	Shows God's compassion for the world	Has empathy and is aware of how others receive them Keeps personal boundaries
Wisdom <i>The candidate...</i>	Is inquisitive, curious and open to new learning Can learn and reflect	Shows leadership that enables thriving and healthy churches, handles conflict, and can lead in mission Understands safeguarding / safety in church communities	Is robust and courageous and prepared to take risks Recognises the need to assess risk	Is a mature and integrated person of stability and integrity Is personally self-aware
Fruitfulness <i>The candidate...</i>	Embraces the different and enables others to be witnesses and servants	Shows the capacity to exercise sacramental, liturgical and an effective and enabling teaching ministry	Shares faith in Christ and can accompany others in their faith	Has resilience and stamina
Potential <i>The candidate has potential to...</i>	Grow in faith and be open to navigating the future in the company of Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit	Manage change, and see the big picture	See where God is working in the world and respond with missionary imagination	Be adaptable and agile

Distinctive Deacon	Christ	Church	World	Self
Love for God <i>The candidate...</i>	Is reliant on God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and lives out an infectious, life-transforming world-focussed faith	Is rooted in scripture, the worship of the Church and the living traditions of faith	Whole heartedly, generously and attractively engages with God's world	Is prayerful and studies the Bible
Call to Ministry <i>The candidate...</i>	Responds to the call of Christ to be a disciple	Understands the distinctive nature of ordained diaconal ministry	Is committed to being a public and representative person of the Church in the forgotten corners of the world	Articulates an inner sense of call grounded in diaconal service
Love for People <i>The candidate...</i>	Welcomes Christ in others, listens, values and respects and has a special care for those in poverty and the marginalised	Builds relationships which are collaborative and enabling Keeps pastoral and professional boundaries	Shows God's compassion and care in the world in multifaceted contexts and with social agencies	Has empathy and is aware of how others receive them Keeps personal boundaries
Wisdom <i>The candidate...</i>	Is inquisitive, curious and open to new learning that connects church and world Can learn and reflect	Shows instinctively collaborative leadership that enables healthy churches to be bridge-builders in their communities Understands safeguarding / safety in church communities	Is robust and courageous in reflecting the world to the Church and the Church to the world Recognises the need to assess risk	Is a mature and integrated person of stability and integrity Is personally self-aware
Fruitfulness <i>The candidate...</i>	Embraces the different and animates others to be witnesses and servants	Shows the capacity to exercise diaconal sacramental and liturgical ministry and effective and enabling teaching ministry	Is a storyteller of God's love and agent of God's kingdom of justice	Has resilience and stamina
Potential <i>The candidate has potential to...</i>	Grow in faith and to be open to navigating the future in the company of Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit	See the big picture in their context and, within it, enable a Christian community to serve	See where God is working in the world and to read the signs of the times	Be adaptable and agile

Stage 2 Discernment Panel overview.

The following diagram provides a summary overview of the Stage 2 Discernment Panel (*an enlarged version can be found in the Appendix*)



Who will be at a Stage 2 Discernment Panel?

You will be in a group of up to seven candidates who are assessed by four Bishops' Advisers who work in pairs in Interviews. Normally two groups of candidates, with their four Bishops' Advisers are assessed concurrently at one venue with a Panel Secretary.

Who is the Panel Secretary?

You will be cared for by a Panel Secretary who is normally a specially trained staff member in the National Ministry Development Team. The Panel Secretary's role is to oversee and co-ordinate the whole Panel, to provide care and support for the Candidates and to mentor the Bishops' Advisers in their tasks as well as exercising a moderating role with them. Panel Secretaries are also able to work as Advisers.

Who are the Bishops' Advisers?

The Bishops' Advisers are ordinary members of the Church of England, ordained and lay, men and women, appointed by the Bishops to undertake this task. They represent all kinds of backgrounds, experience and ages, and are trained by the National Discernment Team for this role. Before your Stage 2 Discernment Panel, you will be sent brief introductory information about the Bishops' Advisers and the Panel Secretary so that you know a little about them.

How will the Panel Secretary and Advisers get to know about me?

Before your Stage 2 Discernment Panel, the Bishops' Advisers and the Panel Secretary will read the paperwork that has been submitted about you carefully. This will give them a great deal of information about you, your experience to date, your understanding of God's call on your life related to the Qualities for Discernment and the formational work undertaken since your Stage 1 Carousel Conversations day.

Safeguarding

All Candidates must be completely committed to excellent safeguarding practice, personally and across the Church, and this needs to be evident in practice, attitudes, and ongoing learning. Safeguarding underpins the whole discernment process and must be clearly visible as a vital building block of the excellent safeguarding culture we are striving to promote.

Safeguarding Training for all Candidates, as specified by the National Safeguarding Team is a prerequisite for discernment work. For all Candidates, potential safeguarding 'Roadblocks' (Enhanced DBS with barring information; overseas safeguarding checks where needed; engagement with *Promoting a Safer Church* and completion of Basic and Foundation safeguarding training) must be addressed and completed before attending a Stage 1 Carousel Conversations (with confirmation from DDOs in the Stage 1 paperwork). These need to be up-to-date when you come to a Stage 2 Discernment Panel and your (A)DDO will have checked this with you.

During a Stage 2 Discernment Panel, your safeguarding understanding, attitudes, learning and practice will be assessed in Interview in the **Love or People** and **Wisdom Qualities**.

The Indicative Stage 2 Discernment Panel Timetable

Day 1	Candidates
11.00-11.45	Arrival time
12.00	Welcome, followed by the Advisers and Candidates introducing themselves in their Group (Group A or Group B). Opening Prayers and Grace led by Panel Secretary
12.15	Sandwich lunch You will eat together with the other Candidates in your Group before your Panel Secretary introduces aspects of the Panel (Advisers have their own working lunch)
12.50	The Panel Secretary introduces the Group Exercise. You then have 20-30 minutes to prepare individually before coming together in your Group.
13.30-15.15	The Group Exercise (In your Group with your 4 Advisers) (Timings: 45 minutes for discussion; 1 hour for you to reflect on the Group Exercise before the Interviews begin)
15.00 onwards	Tea served
15.15-16.30	Interview Slot 1
16.45-18.00	Interview Slot 2
18.15-18.45	Worship
18.45-19.45	Dinner (if you are non-residential, you may leave after dinner)
19.45-21.00	Interview Slot 3
21.15	Worship
21.30	Free time

Day 2	Candidates
07.30	Worship
08.00	Breakfast (if you are non-residential, please return by coffee at the latest, unless you have an earlier Interview)
08.45-11.00	Group A Candidates
	8.45 – 10.00 Interview Slot 4
	10.00 – 11.00 Free time
	Group B Candidates
	8.45 – 9.45 Free time
	9.45 – 11.00 Interview Slot 4
11.00	Coffee served
11.30-12.45	Interview Slot 5
13.00-13.45	Lunch
14.00-15.15	Interview Slot 6
15.15 onwards	Tea available
15.30–16.45	Interview Slot 7
17.00-17.30	Final meeting and Closing Worship before you depart

The Group Exercise

There are four related stages to the Group Exercise:

- **Stage One - Individual reflection (20 - 30 minutes)**

You are given the scenario for the group exercise in the meeting before the Group Exercise takes place, and you have 20-30 minutes to read and reflect on the situation individually, before the Group Exercise starts. You might want to use this time to:

- Identify the relevant issues and dynamics involved.
- Think about how you might approach dealing with the situation.

You can make notes if you wish, though these would not be handed in to the Advisers.

- **Stage Two - The Group Exercise itself (45 minutes in total)**

The Group Exercise starts

Your group of up to seven Candidates meets as a group, sitting in a circle. You stay in the same seat throughout to discuss the scenario and formulate your responses to the situation. A Chair is not appointed. You need to make sure that you participate so your understanding and views come across during the group discussion. The Advisers will sit outside of the circle of Candidates.

New Information is added by an Adviser

Part-way through the group discussion there will be some **new information** introduced about the situation by an Adviser. This will require the group to re-think aspects of the approach to resolving the situation. As a group you then have the remainder of the 45 minutes to reach a range of possible proposals relating to the situation. At the end you should have recorded your main proposals on a flip chart pad. There is no need for a formal oral presentation of these proposals.

- **Stage Three - Reflecting individually on the experience**

After the Group Exercise has finished, you have up to an hour to reflect on the experience. This reflection will be of value in Interview (especially the Interview with the Personal Formation Advisers), where you are likely to be invited briefly to reflect on the Group Exercise. This period of reflection may also be of value as preparation for Stage 4 (see below). You may choose to jot down notes, but these would not be handed in to Advisers nor used as a 'script' for any conversation in Interview.

- **Stage Four - Writing a Reflection on your Experience of the Group Exercise**

In the free time you have in the remainder of the Panel, you are asked to write your own reflection of **up to 500 words** on your participation in the Group Exercise. In this you are invited to gather your thoughts, using the following points to help you:

- Reflections on the role you think you played in the Group Exercise.
- Reflections on what you felt you were able to contribute positively to reaching the agreed proposals.
- Reflections on any difficulties you encountered if there were any.
- Reflections on anything, with hindsight, you might have done differently.
- Note any ways your outlook on the issues at stake in the exercise has changed.
- Reflect upon what you have learnt through your participation in the process.

Guidance on writing your Written Reflection

- Your reflection can be handwritten or typed on your laptop or tablet (and saved as a Word document).
- The Advisers' Assessment of the Group Exercise will include both your participation in the Group Exercise itself and your subsequent reflections on it.
- In writing your Group Exercise Reflection, there is no need to narrate in detail what happened in the Group Exercise – remember that the Advisers were there too. Instead focus your attention on being more analytical as the questions for reflection above suggest, only referring to things that happened when necessary to illustrate your points.
- When reflecting on what you contributed positively to the discussion, if a key contribution you wish you had made comes to you, feel free to include it in your reflection.
- If there were any conflicts in the Group Exercise, you are, of course, free to reflect on these in what you write, if you wish.
- You will need to submit this in the afternoon of Day 2 of the Panel. Your Panel Secretary will explain how to do this.

Interviews

You will have two Interviews, each with a pair of Bishops' Advisers. Each Interview will last about 75 minutes, and you will receive an Interview timetable upon arrival. The grid below shows which pair of interviewing Advisers will be covering which Qualities.

Priest	Christ	Church	World	Self
Love for God <i>The candidate...</i>	Is reliant on God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and lives out an infectious, life-transforming faith	Is rooted in Scripture, the worship of the Church and the living traditions of faith	Whole-heartedly, generously and attractively engages with God's world	Is prayerful and studies the Bible
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Wisdom <i>The candidate...</i>	Is inquisitive, curious and open to new learning Can learn and reflect	Shows leadership that enables thriving and healthy churches, handles conflict, and can lead in mission Understands safeguarding / safety in church communities	Is robust and courageous and prepared to take risks Recognises the need to assess risk	Is a mature and integrated person of stability and integrity Is personally self-aware
Fruitfulness <i>The candidate...</i>	Embraces the different and enables others to be witnesses and servants	Shows the capacity to exercise sacramental, liturgical and an effective and enabling teaching ministry	Shares faith in Christ and can accompany others in their faith	Has resilience and stamina
Potential <i>The candidate has potential to...</i>	Grow in faith and be open to navigating the future in the company of Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit	Manage change, and see the big picture	See where God is working in the world and respond with missionary imagination	Be adaptable and agile

Yellow – Ministerial Formation Advisers

Turquoise – Personal Formation Advisers

- One Interview will be with the two **Ministerial Formation Advisers** (working together as a pair) and will focus on the following Qualities:
 - Love for God (all 4 areas - Christ, Church, World, Self)
 - Call to Ministry (all 4 areas - Christ, Church, World, Self)
 - Fruitfulness (2 areas – Christ and Church)
 - Potential (2 areas – Christ and Church)

These areas are shaded in **Yellow** on the grids above

The Interview with the **Ministerial Formation Advisers** will also explore your development and growth since your Stage 1 Carousel Conversations.

- One Interview will be with the two **Personal Formation Advisers** (working together as a pair) and will focus on the following Qualities:
 - Love for People (all 4 areas - Christ, Church, World, Self)
 - Wisdom (all 4 areas - Christ, Church, World, Self)
 - Fruitfulness (2 areas – World and Self)
 - Potential (2 areas – World and Self)

These areas are shaded in **Turquoise** on the grids above

The Interview with the **Personal Formation Advisers** will also explore the **Group Exercise** and some of the **Safeguarding** areas.

Prepared Interview Questions

In advance of your Interviews, we are giving you **one question** that will be asked at some point in **each** Interview. This is to give you the chance to think a little about how you might want to respond to each of these two questions.

Please note:

- For either or both questions please feel free to bring to the Interview an image, symbol, or object of your choosing, to show the advisers and to refer to briefly if you would like to, and if it would help you in responding, but this is not a requirement.
- In thinking about your responses to each question, bear in mind that you need to respond in no more than 2 – 3 sentences, as in any other Interview question.
- You need to respond to this question naturally just as you would with the other Interview questions. The Bishops' Advisers will expect you to respond without relying on notes, as that is how you will communicate most effectively with them.

Prepared Question for the Interview with the Ministerial Formation Advisers

During the Interview, when exploring the Call to Ministry Quality, if you are sponsored for ministry as a priest you will be invited to respond to the following question:

How has your sense of call to ordained ministry as a Priest in God's Church grown and developed in recent months?

Or, if you are sponsored for the Distinctive Diaconate:

How has your sense of call to ordained ministry as a Distinctive Deacon in God's Church grown and developed in recent months?

Prepared Question for the Interview with the Personal Formation Advisers

During the Interview, when exploring the Wisdom Quality, you will be invited to respond to the following question:

Please share two key ways in which your learning about safeguarding has impacted on your understanding or your attitudes about what makes a Christian community a safe place for all.

How is the assessment made?

After the Interviews, the Panel Secretary and four Advisers will reflect prayerfully before writing their draft reports. They will then jointly agree their assessments and write a report to give advice to your Sponsoring Bishop. The Panel Secretary will ensure that everything has been undertaken equitably and that the Qualities have been properly assessed. The role of the Panel Secretary and Advisers is to advise the Sponsoring Bishop.

Outcomes from a Stage 2 Discernment Panel

Your Advisers will offer their advice to your Sponsoring Bishop following a Stage 2 Panel: it is the decision of your Sponsoring Bishop whether you should enter ordination training, below are the 5 different categories of advice, one of which will be clearly noted on your report:

- **Recommended:** your Sponsoring Bishop is advised that you are ready to begin training and formation for ordained ministry.
- **Recommended with suggested preparation:** your Sponsoring Bishop is advised that you are ready to begin training and formation for ordained ministry, but that you will benefit from particular reflection, learning or experience to help you flourish in your training.
- **Conditional Recommendation:** your Sponsoring Bishop is advised that you may enter training for ordained ministry, but that this will be *conditional upon* engaging with a particular aspect of learning before your training begins. Your DDO will discuss with you what this looks like in practice, and will be able to give you guidelines for engaging with this learning, and how it will be assessed.
- **Not yet ready to proceed:** your Sponsoring Bishop is advised that you are not yet ready to enter training for ordained ministry, but that with further work and experience you may be ready to return to another Stage 2 Discernment Panel in the future.

- **Advice not to proceed:** your Sponsoring Bishop is advised that you are not ready to enter training for ordained ministry. Significant work is needed. It might be that God's calling on your life is leading you in a different direction from ordained ministry.

When will you hear the outcome?

The Panel Secretary will convey the Advisers' advice to your Sponsoring Bishop in the form of a report. This report is sent out five working days after the end of the Panel. Whilst your Bishop will give it the highest priority, they may not be able to respond to you immediately. In normal circumstances, you should hear within a fortnight.

From Whom will you hear?

Normally we would expect you to hear from the Bishop. The Panels are Bishops' Advisory Panels, and the Advisers are Bishops' Advisers, so it is the Bishop who has the final authority in matters of selection for training.

It is possible that you will be asked to see your Bishop following your receiving the final report. You will certainly be asked to see your Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

Starting training

All recommendations are for training, and not for ordination. Details of your training should be discussed with your DDO.

You must begin your training within three years of your Panel (2 academic years), otherwise the recommendation lapses and you will need to be re-assessed either at a Candidates Panel or a new Stage 2 Discernment Panel.

If you are recommended, conditionally or otherwise, you should receive from your Bishop a booklet entitled *Financial Information for Recommended Candidates*. Please read this carefully as it contains information about finance, training, and other matters. If you do not receive this booklet, please contact your Panel Secretary at the Ministry Division.

If your circumstances change – in any way – e.g. marriage, change of proposed training institution – make sure that you consult with your (A)DDO at the earliest stage possible. Your DDO will advise you on any action that may need to be taken and inform the Ministry Development Team as appropriate.

Further Questions

Please be in touch with your DDO about any questions arising from the Panel, and for all matters to do with your ongoing discernment. If your (A)DDO cannot help, you are welcome to be in touch with the Panel Secretary. However, you should not try to contact your Bishops' Advisers at all after the Discernment Panel, on any matter related to the Panel, as their work is completed.

Any concerns at your Panel

The Panel Secretary is there to ensure that your Stage 2 Discernment Panel runs smoothly. Your Panel Secretary also has an important role in caring for you as a Candidate during the Panel. As well as meeting with you as a group, they will answer your questions individually, and support you through the process.

What to do if you think you missed something important in an Interview

The Panel Secretary will tell you on Day 1 that if you feel you have misunderstood a question in Interview, or not responded as you wanted to, that you can go and see them. They will listen to you and agree a way forward. Sometimes the Panel Secretary can address your question. But there is normally the chance to go back to speak to your advisers, to have a couple of minutes to add something if necessary. You need to arrange this through the Panel Secretary, not directly with the Bishops' Advisers. Please don't hesitate to speak to the Panel Secretary. We want to give you every opportunity to give of your best at your Panel.

Other concerns at your Panel.

On Day 1, your Panel Secretary will say that if you have any concerns at all during your Panel, you should let the Panel Secretary know as soon as possible. This could be concerns about something happening personally for you, that isn't in your paperwork; or concerns about something that happens in Interview, or in any other aspect of the Panel. Please feel free to speak to the Panel Secretary. We want to encourage you to share any concerns and they can often be addressed easily if they are shared promptly. Please don't think that you are being a nuisance or that you will be disturbing the Panel Secretary – they are there to support you.

What will the Panel Secretary do?

The Panel Secretary will do all they can to work with you to resolve the situation. This is likely to include:

- Making a written note of your concern especially if the matter is complex, so it is recorded accurately.
- Doing all they can to ensure that you are able to give of your best in the remainder of the Panel, so that you are not unduly affected by the concern you have expressed.
- Checking out with you how you are, after addressing a problem.

The Panel Secretary cannot, of course, guarantee to solve everything, but if they know of your concerns, they can try to work with you to address them.

Concerns after your Panel

The best place to address concerns is at the Stage 2 Discernment Panel itself, as indicated above. However, sometimes you only come to the point of articulating a concern when you get home. As you are sponsored by your Bishop to attend the Panel you should express any concerns as soon as possible after the Panel to your DDO, who is the Bishop's officer. You need to do this before the report is sent so that we can hear the concern you want to express separately from the Panel outcome.

Your DDO will be in touch with us, and we will take your expression of concern seriously and explain to you the process by which we will investigate it.

Whilst the advice of the Bishops' Advisers will already be decided and will not be able to be altered, where appropriate the Panel Secretary would let your Bishop know about the concern expressed so that this forms part of the material on which the Bishop makes their final decision.

Thank you again for engaging with this part of the Shared Discernment Process. May God bless you in the weeks and months ahead.

The Discernment Team

March 2022

Appendix

Discernment Stage 2 Panel



PRAYER & WORSHIP

Everything that takes place at the Stage 2 Panel is done within the framework of Prayer and Worship. The day will start with a welcome, briefing, a light lunch together, and short act of Worship.

REFLECTION

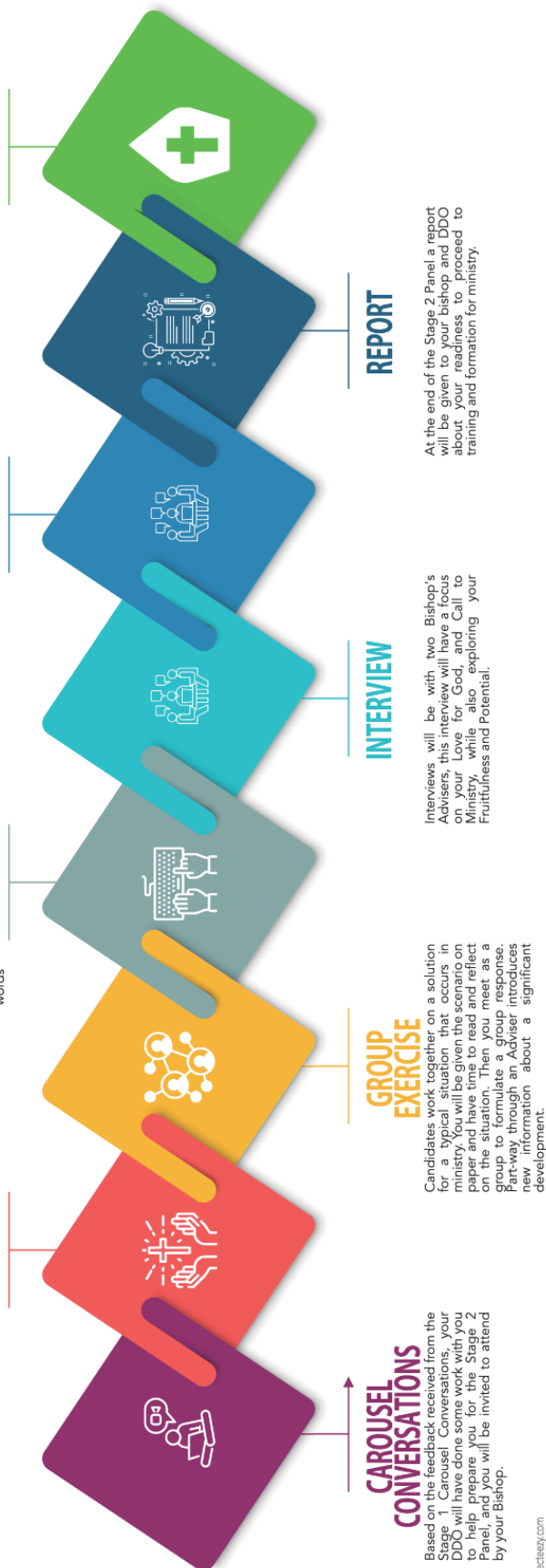
Having participated in the Group Exercise you will be asked to reflect on your own experiences in the exercise in preparation for discussing your participation in the subsequent Interviews. While in your free time the remainder of the Panel you are asked to write a short reflection of up to 500 words.

INTERVIEW

Interviews will be with two Bishop's Advisers, this interview will have a focus on your Love for People, and Wisdom, while also exploring your Fruitfulness and Potential.

BISHOP'S DECISION

Based on the report received from the Stage 2 Panel, your Bishop will make a decision about you going forward for training.



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