

Witness Name: Mike Higton  
Statement No.: 1  
Exhibits: 2  
Dated: 21/02/2019

## THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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### Witness Statement of Mike Higton

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I, Mike Higton, will say as follows:-

#### Introduction

1. I am conscious that much of this response may not be directly relevant to the inquiry, as Durham University is not contracted to deliver (or to oversee the delivery of) safeguarding training to Anglican ordinands, nor, given our indirect relationship to the student body, are we in a position to hear safeguarding concerns raised by or about ordinands during their training. There are two main reasons for this, summarised here and explained in greater detail below.
2. First, in the Common Awards scheme, Durham University's responsibility is for setting the academic standards and monitoring the quality of the academic programmes delivered by various Theological Education Institutions (TEIs). Safeguarding training in those institutions is delivered alongside, rather than as a component of, those academic programmes, as part of the wider training that enables ordinands to meet the criteria for ordination set by the Church and monitored by Ministry Division (acting for the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops). Second, in the scheme, the University plays no direct role in admitting or teaching students, in offering pastoral care to them, or in declaring them fit for ministry; those roles are the responsibility of the TEIs.

#### Overview of the Common Awards scheme

3. Under the Common Awards scheme, Durham University has, since 2013, been contracted by the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England to provide a set of academic services. These services fall into two broad areas:
  - a. a commitment to consider validation arrangements for the award of academic programmes at a number of individual Theological Education Institutions (TEIs);
  - b. provision of academic resources to staff and students based at participating TEIs (this currently includes some academic journal access, a staff conference, and transcripts and parchments for credits and awards gained).
4. Governed by the terms of the overarching contract, the University has also, since 2014, signed a 'Standard Validation Contract' with each of nineteen individual TEIs. This

contract defines validation as ‘a process by which the University recognises a programme of study designed, delivered and assessed by a TEI as being of an appropriate quality and standard to lead to an award of the University.’

5. The Common Awards scheme was created to allow the participating TEIs to have their provision (or the majority of their provision) validated by a single degree awarding body.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the development of Common Awards, each of those TEIs had its own separate validation arrangements with a university of its choosing. Those arrangements differed considerably, because the universities involved all had different approaches to validation.
6. In practice, the Common Awards scheme is a validation arrangement between three groups which have the following key responsibilities:
  - a. the Archbishops’ Council (through its Ministry Division) is responsible, in consultation with the TEIs, for the development of the Common Awards curriculum, and for submitting it for approval by the University;
  - b. Durham University is responsible for upholding the academic quality and standards of the Common Awards programmes; for the granting of credit and awards to students who have completed the programmes; and for approving and reviewing the offering and delivery of the programmes by the TEIs;
  - c. individual TEIs are responsible for the delivery of the approved programmes, and for the students who are registered on the programmes. Under the terms of the validation agreements, Common Awards students (currently c.3000) are admitted, taught, assessed, and provided with tutorial or pastoral support by their TEI.
7. Under the contracts, Durham University’s specific responsibilities involve:
  - a. the scrutiny and approval of a suite of academic Programme Specifications (which outline the requirements of each of the Common Awards programmes) and Module Outlines (which outline the requirements of each individual module);
  - b. the development and maintenance of a set of academic policies governing how those specifications should be implemented by TEIs; and
  - c. the development and operation of a set of processes for monitoring the academic quality of that implementation and for supporting TEIs in delivery of the programmes to appropriate academic standards.

These programme designs, academic policies, and quality assurance processes constitute the ‘Common Awards framework’.

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<sup>1</sup> A small number of providers have chosen to remain outside of the scheme, and a number of TEIs also offer additional programmes validated by other universities.