

11/18 Steps to encourage ordination

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Key Points

- The need for ordained ministers of the gospel in the Diocese (let alone outside) is increasing. In particular, the number of senior minister positions becoming vacant in the next few years is expected to increase and there is a danger of supply not keeping up with demand.
- Since a high point in 2006, there has been a continuous decline in the number of students studying for full-time vocational ministry at Moore Theological College (**MTC**).
- In particular, fewer students are entering MTC as ordination candidates and many are leaving it much later in their studies to decide whether or not pursue ordination.
- A concerted effort needs to be made by the congregations of the Diocese, Ministry Training and Development (**MT&D**), as well as MTC and Youthworks College (**YWC**) to put a vision for ordained ministry before this generation of young men and women. This will involve –
 - MT&D becoming more active in the ministry recruiting space, providing resources and supporting local churches and senior ministers as they seek to recruit the next generation of gospel workers
 - MTC addressing the issue of the cost of theological education
 - Rectors and Assistant Ministers identifying and encouraging potential Christian leaders to explore full time gospel ministry, actively promoting MTC and YWC.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Synod the recommendations of the Committee established to address the request in Synod resolution 11/18.

Recommendations

2. Synod receive this report.
3. Synod consider the following motion to be moved at the forthcoming session of Synod, “by request of the Standing Committee” –

‘Synod, noting the report 11/18 Steps to encourage ordination -

- (a) encourages rectors to –
 - (i) see a key part of their role is to raise up the next generation of full time gospel ministry workers, including those ordained in this Diocese,
 - (ii) promote a culture of gospel generosity in training and sending people beyond their parish into this Diocese and beyond the Diocese,
 - (iii) develop an apprenticeship training model that helps people discern their giftedness for ministry and prepares them for more formal education and ministry training,
 - (iv) promote Moore Theological College (MTC) as the first choice College for theological training and Youthworks College (YWC) for specialist youth and children’s ministry training, and
 - (v) challenge appropriately gifted and trained assistant ministers to be prepared to seek ordination as a presbyter to lead churches and intentionally train them for this responsibility,
- (b) encourages assistant ministers to see Christian leadership is marked by sacrificial service and if suitably gifted, be prepared to seek ordination to serve as rectors,

- (c) encourages MTC and YWC to keep equipping men and women for the work of the gospel and address the cost of theological education,
- (d) encourages Ministry Training & Development (MT&D) and MTC to -
 - (i) identify gifted men and women students to consider ordination for Anglican ministry in the Diocese, and
 - (ii) help rectors to build a training and recruiting culture and actively promote MTC, YWC and ordination, and
- (e) encourages congregations to –
 - (i) see themselves as training and sending churches, and
 - (ii) seeing the urgency of gospel proclamation, pray that the Lord will raise up workers for the harvest out of their congregation.’

Background

4. Synod passed resolution 11/18 in the following terms –

‘Synod –

- (i) praises God that Moore College trains and equips men and women for a variety of ministries, including but not limited to: ordination as deacons, ordination in other denominations, university ministry, involvement in independent church plants, overseas mission and serving as lay people in their home churches,
- (ii) recognises the important role, under God, that those ordained as Presbyters and who serve as Senior Ministers play in the growth of the Gospel in our Diocese, and
- (iii) praises God for the work of Moore College in training and equipping the ministers who fulfil this role in our Diocese.

In that light, Synod requests Standing Committee to investigate what steps are being taken and what steps could be taken –

- (a) to encourage godly and gifted men and women who are in the process of studying at Moore College to consider ordination as the way that God might desire that they best use the gifts He has given them in his service;
- (b) to prioritise the recruitment of godly and gifted men to study at Moore College with the aim of ordination to the presbyterate.’

5. Standing Committee constituted a committee comprising the Rev Brett Hall, the Rev Gary O’Brien, the Rev Carl Matthei, the Rev John Lavender and the Rev Dr Colin Bale to address the request of resolution 11/18. The Committee met 3 times.

Current situation, possible causes and initial response

6. Across Australia there has been a decline in people training for vocational ministry and undertaking vocationally-oriented theological training. Most theological colleges in Australia have reported falling full-time student numbers for the past decade. A recent visit to overseas seminaries by the Principal of Moore Theological College (**MTC**) revealed this trend is widespread across the US and the UK. The growing of pastors through full-time theological education is under increasing pressure.
7. The situation is urgent. The reduced number of students at MTC and Youthworks College (**YWC**) will have a significant impact on the ordination numbers over the next few years. Further, it will lead to a decline in the number of people offering for full-time lay ministry and critical parachurch ministries.
8. The complexities of modern parish life and the need for compliance push our ministers to become more like ministry executives or administrators than gospel workers. But we need gospel workers

who lead our congregations and churches and model and teach that sharing the gospel is the most important thing any of us can do.

9. Some of our churches have become overly focussed on internal structures, processes and programs. Others are concerned about the rapid changes in the environment in which they are seeking to serve and are less comfortable sending out their gifted, godly and promising men and women when they are needed at home. Even some of our larger parishes are tending to 'hold on to' their best young leaders rather than sending them out to train at MTC and YWC and then serve elsewhere.
10. Settled, comfortable ministry does not promote the urgency of evangelism. Nor does defensiveness and inward-lookingness in the face of new and often strident opposition from influential voices in our wider community. The solution in both instances is a clear and confident proclamation of the word that generates a global gospel vision and promotes a culture of gospel urgency in all aspects of church life.
11. In general fewer rectors appear to be actively looking out for, recruiting and nurturing future gospel workers, and promoting full-time study at our theological college, MTC.
12. In large measure as a result of this, our churches generally appear to be less interested in promoting and encouraging vocational ministry. An increasing antagonism from our society, the lure of comfort and career, a misuse of the reformation concept of vocation that questions the timely urgency of vocational ministry, and the struggles, difficulties and 'sacrifices' of that ministry, have all had an impact.
13. Amongst those training for ministry there is –
 - (a) A significant increase in part-time and online ministry training with a consequent reduction in the number of those who see gospel ministry as a full-time vocation. This has arisen in part because of –
 - (i) the availability of part-time and online training options which are both convenient and attractive even if of varied quality (online programs at various levels are provided by most colleges in Australia and also overseas, but some are offering entire degree programs online, e.g. Reformed Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Ridley College),
 - (ii) the structure and incentives created by HECS and Fee-Help and new uncertainty and concern surrounding the impact of student debt,
 - (iii) changes in policy and implementation of the Ministry Training Strategy,
 - (iv) a revival and particular application of the reformation concept of vocation, which rightly gives value to work but wrongly reduces the urgency and primacy of gospel proclamation (sometimes associated with variations on the teaching of Tim Keller), and
 - (v) the emergence a reductionist approach to ministry training and theological education that gives pride of place to the acquisition of skills and gives less attention to that character formation and deepening of convictions which arises from a broad and deep immersion in the word of God and the impact of an intentional learning community made up of those with a common ministry trajectory.
 - (b) A reluctance to commit to the Sydney Anglican Diocese due to –
 - (i) less commitment to institutions more generally,
 - (ii) a sense that the Diocese is less engaged and less invested in each ordination candidate (expressed as 'what is the benefit of being a candidate?' and 'what is lost if I am not a candidate?'),
 - (iii) a let's 'wait and see' attitude to keep all options open and consider alternatives to ordination,
 - (iv) the attractiveness of the less structured model offered by the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) populated by entrepreneurial, innovative leaders, and
 - (v) the attraction of many needs and opportunities elsewhere in Australia and the world (e.g., para-church organisations, other dioceses and unreached people groups).
 - (c) An increasing number of 1st year MTC students coming from FIEC churches and less from Sydney Anglican parishes.
 - (d) An increase in the number of students with anxiety and mental health issues (some of whom may be unsuited to leadership). Mental health issues are becoming much more evident

throughout the community and rectors, assistant ministers and other gospel workers are not immune from this struggle. For some it makes full-time gospel ministry, and ordained ministry in particular with its many demands, more intimidating.

- (e) Some are just not suited, or not aspiring, to a role as rector (with its requirements for team leadership, administration, etc) because they are content as a congregational leader/pastor. Perhaps people content to continue to serve as deacons may need more encouragement to 'step up' and lead a parish in mission.

14. MTC –

- (a) has given renewed attention to recruitment, with the strategic deployment of staff and a streamlining of procedures
 - (i) recognising that 2018 saw 400 enquiries but only 14% converted to students, the College this year appointed 2 new recruitment/follow-up positions to build relationships and to follow up and support inquirers,
 - (ii) the College has become clearer and more intentional in its messaging, more intentionally focussed on recruiting,
 - (iii) in particular the College is endeavouring to make known its extraordinary performance in successive QILT surveys which ranked it the second highest amongst the country's Higher Education providers and Universities for positive student experience and satisfaction, and
 - (iv) the College has embarked on a program of encouraging rectors to be active ambassadors for MTC and ordination,
- (b) while opening up a range of flexible pathways (including an online diploma), the College remains committed to the four year full-time residential theological degree (B.D.) as the best way of growing gospel workers through passing on knowledge, acquiring and honing ministry skills, deepening theological and ministry convictions, and shaping godly character in the critical context of godly relationships,
- (c) aware of the significant cost of this type of theological education (exacerbated by a 25% levy on student FEE-Help loans), is pursuing several ways of reducing the cost to students of the theological education it offers, for example –
 - (i) seeking to have the levy removed by lobbying the government and by investigating both a change of provider classification and a change the type of award offered,
 - (ii) exercising restraint in annual tuition fee increases, and
 - (iii) building a scholarship endowment that would allow many more students to receive financial assistance with resorting to FEE-Help loans, and
- (d) has noted the number of ordinands is sufficient for Sydney Diocese's current needs, but not for the future, nor is it providing more workers for the wider ministry; and so is exploring ways (in partnership with regional bishops and senior ministers) actively to promote Sydney parish ministry and the opportunities it provides.

15. The staff of Ministry Training and Development (**MT&D**) –

- (a) remain committed to recruiting only from MTC as our Diocesan training college, and YWC as our specialist youth and children's ministry training college,
- (b) continue to respond to invitations to visit Parishes, Mission Area meetings and Regional Conferences to promote the importance of identifying and recruiting men and women for full-time ministry and ordination and answering questions about ministry in the Diocese,
- (c) continue to support the role of rectors and assistant ministers as the primary recruiters of potential ordinands as they live and serve alongside them and are best able to identify the right people,
- (d) maintain a website with information on ordination and the selection processes involved, and
- (e) meet with enquirers to discuss the opportunities and pathways to ordained ministry.

Data from Moore Theological College

16. Attachment 1 provides an analysis of the number of students enrolling at MTC each year from 2001 to 2019, with brief explanatory notes under each graph.

17. 4 trends in particular should be noted –
- (a) Overall student numbers have been declining across the period since 2001.
 - (b) There has been a slight decline of enrolments of students who have undertaken a ministry apprenticeship but there is a marked decline in the number of enrolments of students entering College who have not been ministry trainees.
 - (c) The trend of part-time enrolments has followed the same downtrend as fulltime enrolments (there was a spike in 2010 when part-time study in Year 1 of the degrees was introduced).
 - (d) The main churches sending students to College over the last fifteen years have changed significantly. The top three churches are now Uni-church UNSW, Hunter Bible Church and EV Church.

Data from Ministry Training & Development

18. Attachment 2 provides an analysis of the number of people being ordained each year between 2009 and 2018.
19. Deacons –
- (a) In 2010 there was a change in ordination policy enabling people with less than a B.Th. or B.D. to be ordained for long term specialist ministry (e.g., youth and children's ministry). This led to a significant increase in ordinations (that may also have worked through the next few years as lay workers with some theological formation decided to apply for ordination).
 - (b) During 2011-2015 the average number of ordinands each year was in the mid-thirties. From 2016-2019 the average number of ordinands was in the high twenties (27 Sydney deacons were ordained this year, 2019).
 - (c) On average 3 women and 2 Youthworks graduates were ordained each year.
 - (d) In 2017 40% of those ordained were serving as lay ministers and 60% were new graduates. In 2019 77% of those ordained were serving as lay ministers and 23% were new graduates. This indicates that students are not rushing to ordination; there is no incentive for students to become candidates early so they often apply late in College to join the two-year discernment process, or after serving for a period in a parish. This is the 'options generation' and some like to keep their options open. They are encouraged to apply for candidature at the beginning of College but usually do not. This means MT&D have less time to partner with them and less input into their training while at College (including asking them to have different parish experiences during College).
20. Presbyters –
- (a) In 2014 there was a change in the ordination policy that meant assistant ministers could be ordained as a presbyter. This led to a significant increase in ordinations, capturing deacons who previously could not be ordained when it had been tied to appointment as a rector.
 - (b) This change in ordination policy also explains why the number of presbyter ordinations continues to be higher.
 - (c) Opening up the diaconate in 2010 was designed to provide for a 'permanent diaconate'. These numbers would indicate that this has become a reality. At least half of those ordained as deacon are content to stay as deacon.
 - (d) What is not clear in these numbers is that men are slow to apply to enter the two year discernment process for ordination as a presbyter. Over the last few years, in the Ministry Development Program (1-3 years after ordination as a deacon) only 4 or 5 men annually have asked to be considered as a presbyter, the majority of applicants have been in ministry for more than three years.

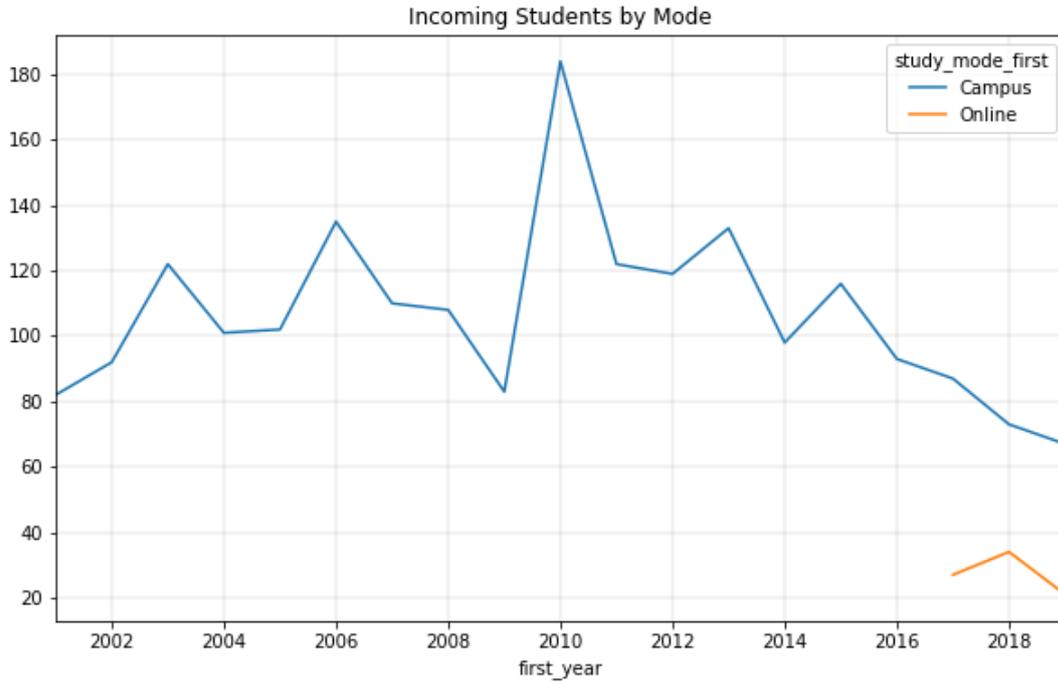
For and on behalf of the Standing Committee.

DANIEL GLYNN
Diocesan Secretary

29 August 2019

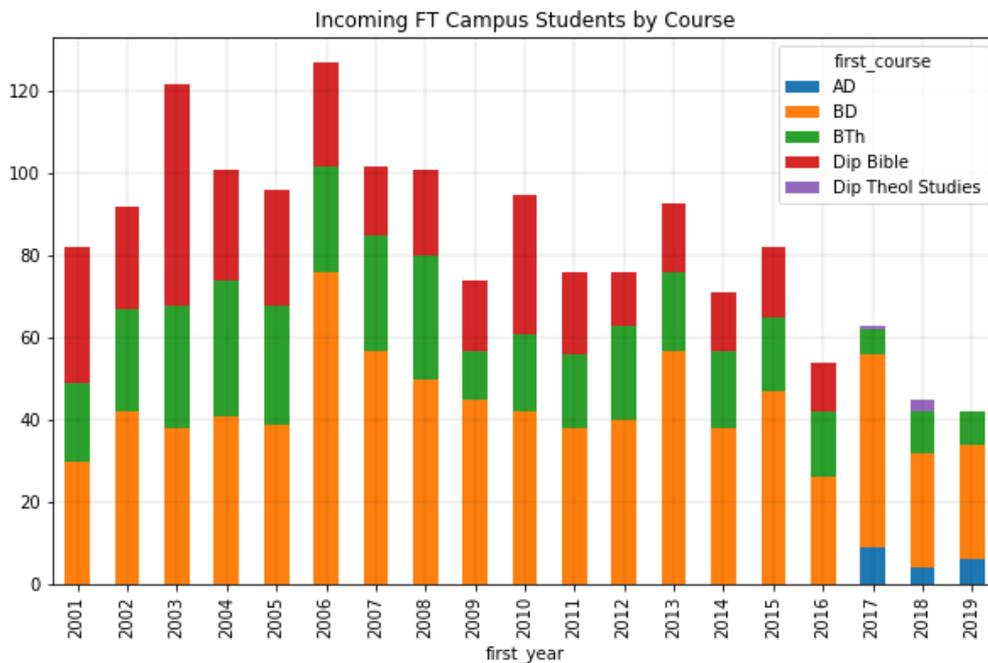
Incoming Students

Campus students have decreased since a 2010 high



- The 2010 spike is caused by the start of part-time study.
- The last few years have seen numbers consistently at the bottom of the 20-year dataset.

FT campus students have decreased by two thirds from their peak

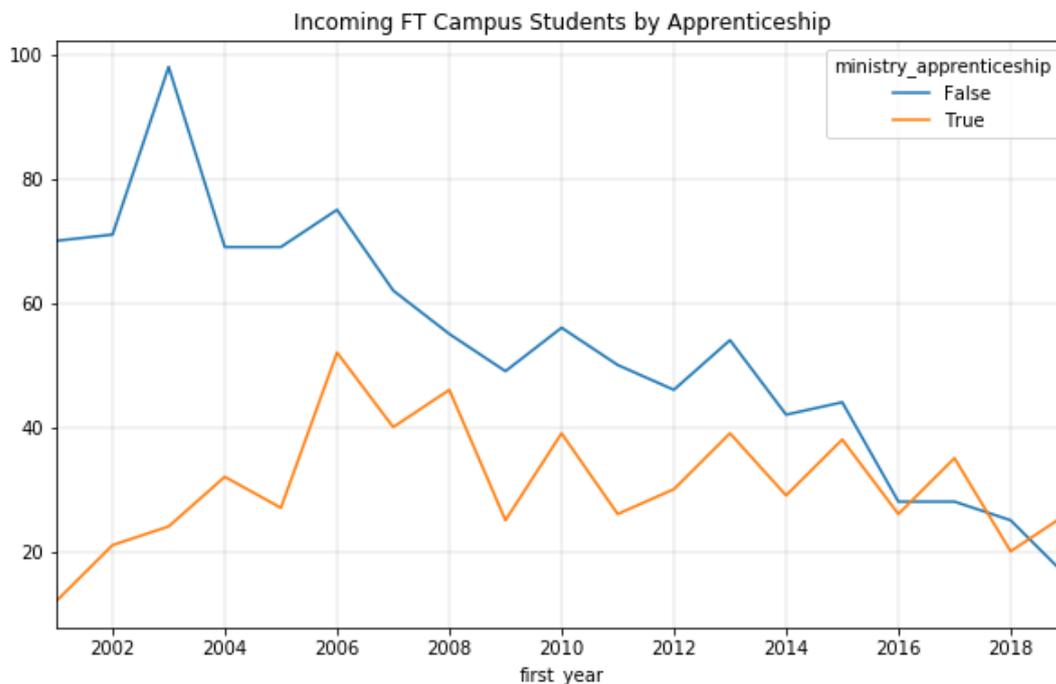


The 2019 cohort is a third of the 2006 peak, although this latter group is inflated by the start of FEE-HELP.

- These enrolments have a significant impact in the college finances.
- The AD course isn't matching the historical Dip Bible enrolments.

FT non-apprentices have decreased even more starkly

Incoming FT Bach Students by Apprenticeship



- Peak to trough, FT non-apprentices across campus courses have decreased about 80%.
- The 2009 down-step observed for FT students is present for both segments, although the 2016 down-step is particularly stark for non-apprentices.

Diocese of Sydney Ordinations 2009-2018

Deacon

YEAR	ORDAINED	NOTES
2009	33	
2010	56	Change in ordination policy opening it up to a wider group
2011	35	
2012	36	
2013	34	
2014	35	
2015	36	
2016	27	
2017	34	
2018	26	

Presbyter

2009	15	
2010	10	
2011	6	
2012	5	
2013	9	
2014	55	Change in ordination policy – assistant ministers could be ordained
2015	22	
2016	13	
2017	17	
2018	15	