

# BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

## College Candidacy / Stage 2 Inspection

**NAME OF INSTITUTION:** Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland College

**ADDRESS:** 133 Woodlands Road  
Glasgow  
G3 6LE

**HEAD OF INSTITUTION:** Rev Dr James Tallach

**DATE OF INSPECTION:** 2 May 2018

**ACCREDITATION STATUS:** Unaccredited

### DECISION ON ACCREDITATION:

- Accreditation awarded for six months
- Decision on accreditation deferred
- Award of accreditation refused

DATE: 25 June 2018

## PART A – INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background to the institution

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland College (the College) has been in operation since 1896, three years after the foundation of its parent organisation, which is the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (FPCS/the Church). The aim of the College is to train ministers for the Church. The College is owned by the Church and managed by the Church's Training of the Ministry Committee (TMC).

The Church is a registered Scottish charity and the Church and its College is funded from contributions from congregations, donations, legacies and the interest accruing from investments.

The TMC's authority to manage the College comes from the Church's Synod, which is the Church's governing body. The TMC is appointed annually by the Synod, although its members normally serve several terms. The TMC comprises the Convener or Chair of the TMC, who is the head of the College and the programme manager, the three tutors who deliver the course and some other ministers and/or elders of the Church. While the number of TMC members who are elders can vary, the TMC normally has a maximum of ten members. The TMC reports annually to the Synod.

The TMC is responsible for the Synod's educational functions and for the College and its Divinity course. The Divinity course is the College's sole course. It is a three-year course for those seeking to be licensed as Ministers in the FPCS. College training is delivered on three Scottish sites, which are Glasgow, Aberdeen and Ness on the Isle of Lewis.

The College's administrative headquarters are in Glasgow, within the St Jude's Congregation's church building. The General Treasurer (GT) is the chief administrator and finance officer for the Church and the College and manages a Secretarial Assistant. The GT is appointed by the Synod, with his assistant being appointed by the Church's Finance Committee. The Convener and tutors are ministers of the Church. The role that the Convener, GT, and three tutors play in training ministers is therefore part of their broader role in the Church. The proportion of their overall church activity that is devoted to the work of training students for the ministry varies according to the cyclical demands of the programme and the students' needs.

### 2. Brief description of the current provision

After a gap since 2014, the Divinity course begins in September 2018 and will be taught in the three College sites in Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Ness. It consists of three years of study running from September to April each year. It has three distinct components. Each component is delivered on a different site. Systematic Theology and Cognate Subjects will be delivered in Glasgow, Old Testament Hebrew and Cognate Subjects will be delivered in Aberdeen and New Testament Greek and Cognate Subjects will be delivered in Ness. Each component is taught by a different tutor.

The College plans to start the 2018 course at the Ness base. Students will then rotate to study the other two subjects at the other two locations in the following two years. Tutors therefore teach only once every three years. The components can be taken in any order. As a result, a student on the first year of the programme may be in the same class as a student in the final year of the programme.

Successful students are given a certificate from the TMC stating that they have passed their exit examinations. This is an essential prerequisite for being licensed as a Minister of the FPCS.

Delivery of each component of the programme is face-to-face for all students for six months. Students from outside the United Kingdom (UK) then complete the component using online meeting facilities with the class of UK students and the tutor. International students then come back to the UK for a further six months and undertake the next year of the programme. UK students are in face-to-face contact throughout the course.

Three students are due to begin the course in September 2018. Two students are from the United Kingdom (UK) and one is from Zimbabwe. Another UK student is due to begin the course in 2019. Typically, the course has had between one and four students. All the students are male and over the age of 21. Typically, students have been in their late 20s.

A student is referred to the TMC by their presbytery. Prospective students are interviewed by the TMC, which may arrange for students to take pre-entry courses. Most prospective students have been arts graduates, so these additional pre-entry courses are often intended to improve their knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, an essential foundation for the programme. These courses may be undertaken in traditional universities or by distance learning through the Open University. After completing any additional studies, prospective students sit a written entrance examination.

### **3. Inspection process**

A one-day inspection of the Glasgow premises was undertaken by one inspector. Meetings were held with the TMC Convener, General Treasurer and one of the tutors. A tour of the premises included the classroom, library, private study area, meeting rooms and student kitchen. Relevant documentation was provided and scrutinised.

## PART B - JUDGMENT AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

### INSPECTION AREA - MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

#### 1. The institution is effectively managed

- |     |  |   |                             |
|-----|--|---|-----------------------------|
| 1.1 | The management structure is clearly defined, documented and understood, including the role and extent of authority of any owners, trustees or governing body.                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.2 | The head of the institution and other senior managers are suitably qualified and experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and are effective in carrying them out. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.3 | There are clear channels of communication between the management and staff.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

This standard is judged to be:

Met  Partially Met  Not Met

#### Comments

The College's structure and its relationship with the Synod are set out in a clear organisation chart. The powers and duties of the trustees are set out in the Scheme of Financial Administration (1960) and Finance Committee meetings include periodic review and discussion about the duties of the trustees. As a result, the roles and responsibilities are well understood.

All members of the TMC and College staff are well qualified for and experienced in their roles. The TMC Convener has held that post since 2004.

The TMC provides a clear channel of communication for the Convener, tutors and the GT. It has continued to meet despite there being no students. It normally meets twice a year. The Convener and the GT confirmed there was also regular informal contact between TMC members.

#### 2. The administration of the institution is effective

- |     |  |   |                             |
|-----|--|---|-----------------------------|
| 2.1 | Administrators are suitably qualified or experienced and understand their specific responsibilities and duties.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2.2 | The size of the administrative team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the institution. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2.3 | The administrative support available to the management is clearly defined, documented and understood.            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2.4 | Policies, procedures and systems are well documented and effectively disseminated across the institution.        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2.5 | Data collection and collation systems are effective.   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

This standard is judged to be:

Met  Partially Met  Not Met

#### Comments

The GT is a qualified actuary who has been the head of administration and finance for the Church and the College since 2007. The Secretarial Assistant has worked for the College for 20 years. This staff complement is appropriate for the number of students expected to join the course in 2018 and 2019. As a result, the administrative support available is good.

**3. The institution employs appropriate managerial and administrative staff**

- 3.1 There are appropriate policies and effective procedures for the recruitment and continuing employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff.  Yes  No
- 3.2 Experience and qualifications claimed are verified before employment.  Yes  No
- 3.3 There is an effective system for regularly reviewing the performance of staff.  Yes  No

**This standard is judged to be:**

Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

The Finance Committee is responsible for setting the employment conditions for the staff who are employed centrally, including those of the General Treasurer. The related policies and procedures are appropriate and effective.

Staff are required to have appropriate knowledge and experience of their academic area or, in the case of the GT, knowledge and experience of finance and administration, as well as demonstrating an ongoing commitment to the Church. Tutors report at least once a year to the TMC. The TMC is required to report annually to the Synod. TMC membership is fixed-term and it can be terminated after a year if the Synod wishes, including if it is dissatisfied with the performance of the Convener, tutors or GT. This forms part of an effective system for regularly reviewing the performance of the teaching, management and administrative team.

**4. Publicity material, both printed and electronic, gives a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate description of the institution and its curriculum**

- 4.1 Text and images provide an accurate depiction of the institution's location, premises, facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered.  Yes  No
- 4.2 Information on the courses available is comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date.  Yes  No

**This standard is judged to be:**

Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

4.1 The College does not produce publicity material as students are referred by presbyteries and are not actively recruited. Therefore, this key indicator is not applicable.

The Church's Manual of Practice outlines the required study and preparation for the training to the ministry. More detailed and accurate information on the course for students due to enter in 2018 has been produced. There is no specific course information on the website.

**5. The institution takes reasonable care to recruit and enrol suitable students for its courses**

- 5.1 Entry requirements for each course are set at an appropriate level and clearly stated in the course descriptions seen by prospective students.  Yes  No
- 5.2 A formal application process ensures that students meet the entry requirements and any claimed qualifications are verified.  Yes  No
- 5.3 Students are properly briefed on the nature and requirements of the courses for which they apply, and all application enquiries responded to promptly and appropriately.  Yes  No

5.4 Any overseas recruitment agents are properly selected, briefed, monitored and evaluated.  Yes  No  NA

**This standard is judged to be:**  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

The Regulations for the Reception and Training of Students for the Ministry in the Church's Manual of Practice detail the process of entry to the College and the College's expectations of students. Prospective students are required to be familiar with these.

The presbytery to TMC referral is dependent on spiritual, not academic, criteria. There is an effective application process. The presbytery evaluates the applicant. Set questions are used and these are included in the Regulations. Once a prospective student has been referred by the presbytery, the TMC interviews the applicant to discuss the course and evaluate their pre-entry needs.

The College has a written entrance examination that tests applicants' knowledge and understanding of Scripture, Catechism, Greek and Hebrew. Detailed information on the course for students due to enter in 2018 has been produced. As a result, they are well briefed on the requirements of the course.

**6. There is an appropriate policy on student attendance and effective procedures and systems to enforce it**

6.1 There is a clear and published policy on student attendance and punctuality.  Yes  No

**This standard is judged to be:**  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

Registers are taken and absences are part of tutors' reports to the TMC. Full attendance is expected, and documentation specifies that attendance at all classes is obligatory. The registers show that attendance has been very high.

Certificates are produced at the end of each year of the course. These specify whether the student has attended all classes.

**INSPECTION AREA – STUDENT WELFARE**

**18. Students receive pastoral support appropriate to their age, background and circumstances**

18.1 There is at least one named staff member responsible for student welfare who is suitably trained, accessible to all students and available to provide advice and counselling.  Yes  No

18.2 Students receive appropriate advice before arrival.  Yes  No

18.3 Students receive an appropriate induction and relevant information upon arrival.  Yes  No

18.4 Students are issued with a contact number for out-of-hours and emergency support.  Yes  No

18.5 The institution has policies in place to avoid discrimination and a published procedure for dealing with any abusive behaviour.  Yes  No

18.6 Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and are regularly reviewed to keep all students safe.  Yes  No  NA

18.7 Effective arrangements are in place to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.  Yes  No

**This standard is judged to be:**

Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

The tutor contacts the student, before admission, to provide any advice or assistance, including with accommodation. The tutors remain the major source of ongoing pastoral support. The TMC Convener, or another member of the TMC, has a confidential discussion with each student at least annually, where they are encouraged to speak freely about any aspect of their experience.

All students are expected to behave in accordance with the moral teachings of the Church.

Given that the course has not had any students since 2014, and will soon be admitting three, a student handbook would provide a useful amalgamated source of information, refreshed where necessary, for the new intake.

**19. International students are provided with specific advice and assistance**

19.1 International students receive appropriate advice before their arrival on travelling to and staying in the UK.  Yes  No

19.2 International students receive an appropriate induction upon arrival covering issues specific to the local area.  Yes  No

19.3 Information and advice specific to international students continues to be available throughout the course of study.  Yes  No

19.4 Provision of support takes into account cultural and religious considerations.  Yes  No

**This standard is judged to be:**

Met  Partially Met  Not Met  NA

**Comments**

The College provides useful and appropriate information and advice to international students. This includes assistance with visa applications. The tutors and members of the congregation help international students to settle into the local area.

**20. The fair treatment of students is ensured**

20.1 Students apply for and are enrolled on courses under fair and transparent contractual terms and conditions.  Yes  No

20.2 Students have access to a fair complaints procedure of which they are informed in writing at the start of the course.  Yes  No

**This standard is judged to be:**

Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

The Regulations set out the clear and fair terms and conditions for entering the course, and this is reinforced as part of the interview with the TMC.

There is an appropriate written complaints procedure.

**21. Where residential accommodation is offered, it is fit for purpose, well maintained and appropriately supervised**

21.1 Any residential accommodation is clean, safe and of a standard which is adequate to the needs of students.  Yes  No

21.2 Any residential accommodation is open to inspection by the appropriate authorities, including Ofsted where students under 18 are accommodated.  Yes  No  NA

21.3 Clear rules and fire, health and safety procedures are in place, with appropriate precautions taken for security of students and their property.  Yes  No

- 21.4 A level of supervision is provided appropriate to the needs of students.  Yes  No
- 21.5 Separate accommodation blocks are provided for students under 18.  Yes  No  NA

This standard is judged to be:  Met  Partially Met  Not Met  NA

Comments

**22. Where home-stay accommodation is organised, the welfare of students is ensured and the institution's relationship with hosts is properly managed**

- 22.1 Due care is taken in selecting home-stay accommodation which both provides a safe and comfortable living environment for students and is appropriately located for travel to the institution and back.  Yes  No
- 22.2 Any home-stay accommodation is inspected before students are placed and is subject to regular re-inspection by a responsible representative or agent of the institution.  Yes  No
- 22.3 The institution has appropriate contracts in place with any hosts, clearly setting out the rules, terms and conditions of the provision.  Yes  No
- 22.4 Appropriate advice and support is given to both hosts and students before and during the placement.  Yes  No
- 22.5 Clear monitoring procedures are in place with opportunities for student feedback and prompt action taken in the event of problems.  Yes  No

This standard is judged to be:  Met  Partially Met  Not Met  NA

Comments

**23. The institution provides an appropriate social programme for students and information on leisure activities in the area**

- 23.1 Students are provided with appropriate information on opportunities for participation at events and other leisure activities which may be of interest.  Yes  No
- 23.2 The social programme is responsive to the needs and wishes of students.  Yes  No  NA
- 23.3 Any activities within the social programme have been chosen with consideration for their affordability by the majority of students.  Yes  No  NA
- 23.4 Any activities organised by the institution are supervised by a responsible representative with suitable qualifications and experience.  Yes  No  NA

This standard is judged to be:  Met  Partially Met  Not Met  NA

Comments

## INSPECTION AREA – PREMISES AND FACILITIES

### 24. The institution has secure possession of and access to its premises

- 24.1 The institution has secure tenure on its premises.  Yes  No  NA
- 24.2 Where required, the institution has access to suitable external premises for academic or non-academic purposes of a temporary or occasional nature.  Yes  No  NA

This standard is judged to be:  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

#### Comments

FPCS owns the three buildings the College occupies.

### 25. The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for students and staff

- 25.1 Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured.  Yes  No
- 25.2 The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness.  Yes  No
- 25.3 There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard (e.g. science laboratories), made readily available to students, staff and visitors.  Yes  No  NA
- 25.4 General guidance on health and safety is made available to students, staff and visitors.  Yes  No
- 25.5 There is adequate signage inside and outside of the premises and notice boards for the display of general information.  Yes  No
- 25.6 There is adequate circulation space for the number of students and staff accommodated, and a suitable area in which to receive visitors.  Yes  No
- 25.7 There are toilet facilities of an appropriate number and level of cleanliness.  Yes  No
- 25.8 There is adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms.  Yes  No

This standard is judged to be:  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

#### Comments

The part of the Church building that houses the College and the bookshop is open to the public, but the public does not have access to the College premises. Therefore, access to the College is effectively secured.

The repair, decoration and cleanliness of the premises, including toilets, is satisfactory. Appropriate health and safety information is displayed on notice boards. The College intends to display student-related information on notice boards when the new intake of students arrives.

### 26. Classrooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the courses offered

- 26.1 Classrooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation in size and number for the classes allocated to them.  Yes  No
- 26.2 Classrooms and/or any specialised learning areas (e.g. laboratories, workshops, studios) are equipped to a level which allows for the effective delivery of each course.  Yes  No

26.3 There are facilities suitable for conducting the assessments required on each course.  Yes  No

**This standard is judged to be:**

Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

The library provides a multi-purpose teaching space and private study space. It has sufficient space to accommodate the number of students expected. It provides the necessary room, access to books and wireless access. It is suitable for written assessments and the evaluation of the practical aspect of the course.

**27. There are appropriate additional facilities for students and staff**

27.1 Students have access to sufficient space and suitable facilities for private study, including library and IT resources.  Yes  No

27.2 Teaching staff have access to sufficient personal space for preparing lessons, marking work and relaxation.  Yes  No

27.3 Students and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink where appropriate.  Yes  No  NA

27.4 Students and staff have access to storage for personal possessions where appropriate.  Yes  No  NA

27.5 There are individual offices or rooms in which academic staff and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings.  Yes  No

27.6 Administrative offices are adequate in size and resources for the effective administration of the institution.  Yes  No

**This standard is judged to be:**

Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

The Glasgow tutor, the GT and the Secretarial Assistant all have their own offices in the Glasgow building. These are sufficiently spacious to hold meetings with all students on the course.

The reference library contains the religious texts which are the foundation of the course. There is an on-site Church bookshop where students can order books at a discount price. Students use their own laptops to access any relevant online material. The only computer in the library is the electronic library catalogue. This would pose a problem if a student was unable for some reason to use their own laptop.

There is a modern and well-equipped kitchen and relaxation area for students' use.

**COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated  Yes  No

## PART C - SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Numbering of action points aligns with that of the minimum standards

### MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

#### Institution's Strengths

The College is a close-knit community with shared beliefs and a clear goal, which is reflected in the staff's commitment to producing graduates with the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour for the ministry.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
None	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

### STUDENT WELFARE

#### Institution's Strengths

The College aims to provide personalised attention to students. It includes very good pre-entry and financial support which are tailored to the individual needs of the student.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
None	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

### PREMISES AND FACILITIES

#### Institution's Strengths

The Glasgow headquarters are suitable for the small number of students the FPC caters for. There is scope for some internal reconfiguration of rooms if numbers were to rise.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
None	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

### RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

To be reviewed at the next inspection

It is recommended that the TMC consider placing additional information and/or relevant links regarding training for the ministry, including an accurate depiction of the College's location, premises, facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered, on the Church's website in order to provide an overview of the College's training role.

The College should consider consolidating relevant policies and guidance into a comprehensive student handbook for the 2018 intake.

It is recommended that the College provides a computer in the library as a contingency.

### COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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