

## An Introduction to the Graduate Profile

At Oak Hill College, we are committed to preparing students for ministry in the real world. So we've thought long and hard about what theological education with that goal needs to look like.

### What does theological education have to do?

In order to be clear on what theological education is *for*, we need to know what Gospel ministry *needs*. There are four critical sources which define this.

1. Foundationally, God reveals the shape of ministry to us in the Bible: in places such as Titus 1:5-9, we see the godly character, the tasks and the biblical and theological wisdom God requires of those called to minister in his Church.
2. Christian leaders and churches who partner with us in training – Independent and Anglican – draw on their valuable experience in contemporary ministry to add depth to this picture. They detail some practical competencies and skills necessary for the week-on-week realities of church life.
3. Our evangelical and Reformed heritage offers us important models and lessons about the shape of ministry and of the theological curriculum that supports it.
4. Current trends and debates among seminaries and colleges worldwide broaden our horizons as we think globally, creatively and rigorously about effective theological education.

If we gather these insights – the **character**, **competencies** and **core knowledge** ministry requires – we have in outline a ministry profile. This enables us to have fruitful conversations with churches about which candidates are suitable for ministry roles, which aspects of training College is best suited to provide, and what significant progress might look like over one, two, three or four years of training for each individual student. We have tried to capture all of this in the form of **a graduate profile** which we can then link specifically to the Oak Hill College curriculum and experience.

### Our graduate profile

A graduate profile is **not a target or a destination**. It's not something someone ever reaches or accomplishes perfectly or definitively. It's **not a tick list**. It's **not a set of absolute or easily measurable outcomes**. A graduate profile is also **not a straitjacket or a tool for pressurising College life**.

So what **is** a graduate profile? It is a framework for orientating study, placement experience and personal growth. It **helps us to track progress** towards what Gospel ministry needs. It enables useful conversations and reality checks along the trajectory of training for ministry.

### How the Graduate Profile can help

#### Before College

- conversations with sending churches
- conversations with applicants

#### College Experience

- planning module choices
- planning church placement priorities
- planning personal areas for growth
- conversations with personal tutor
- conversations with placement supervisors

#### Beyond College

- conversations with receiving churches
- report and reference writing
- planning goals for further progress in ministry/curacy and beyond

## **The graduate profile and the College experience**

As indicated above, there are several ways that the graduate profile will be useful during a student's College experience:

### **Personal Development Planning**

Each year, College will ask full time students to engage in a Personal Development Planning (PDP) exercise. Within the framework provided by the graduate profile, students will reflect on their own progress and decide on particular areas for prayerful, focused effort towards further growth. This process will involve times of conversation and prayer with a personal tutor. For part time students, the PDP will be made available to their church to work through with them and develop the same kind of agenda for growth.

### **Module Choices**

Each student has a set of modules that makes up their programme. With the help of the graduate profile – and in conversation with a student's sending church, personal tutor (for full time students) and placement supervisors – each student can see specific areas of personal progress as they move through compulsory modules, and can be guided in choosing which elective modules to take.

### **Placements**

Students are normally required to serve and participate in various capacities in local placement churches. The graduate profile provides a context for identifying both areas of strength from which a student might be able to contribute in this placement context and, importantly, areas for targeted growth that might be considered with a placement supervisor.

### **Report and reference writing**

Churches often like to communicate with College in determining suitability and best fit for ministry appointments beyond College. For Church of England ordination candidates, this involves a series of reports submitted by personal tutors against the CofE Formation Criteria. The graduate profile offers a useful bridge to writing these reports. Independent churches – affiliated with the FIEC or otherwise – also have specific expectations for ministry trainees. Here, too, the framework of the graduate profile enables tutors to provide potential receiving churches with specific and helpful references for those we train.

### **Progress for ministry at Oak Hill**

We believe that the graduate profile is a significant tool in preparing for ministry in the real world. The profile presents a holistic and compelling vision of what God asks ministers in his church to be and to be progressing towards. The new undergraduate programme, the formative College experience and our invaluable coordination with local churches align powerfully with this vision.