

## GUIDANCE NOTES FOR APPLICANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in the work of our diocese.

For some clergy, having to complete a job application form departs from traditional methods of recruitment and provokes uncertainties and worries. We hope that this 'Guidance Note' will support you in preparing and submitting an application to the best of your abilities and in line with our processes.

### Before completing the Application Form

- ❖ From 31 January 2011, all our clergy appointments are offered under a new form of tenure, known as Common Tenure. This is in line with the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009 and its respective regulations and directions. To learn more about common tenure before applying for the role, please visit our dedicated pages at [www.oxford.anglican.org/commontenure](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/commontenure) or the Church of England pages at [www.commontenure.org](http://www.commontenure.org)
- ❖ Role descriptions and person specifications are increasingly being used in appointments. These help all parties to be clear about what qualities and experience are being sought and on what basis the decision to appoint will be made. Please read carefully the Role Description and Person Specification (if one has been sent to you with the application pack) for the role that interests you and ask yourself
  - Do I have all the qualifications, skills, qualities and experience necessary for the role?
  - What do I bring to this role?
  - Have I got at least three individuals who will be willing to support my application?
- ❖ You may want to browse the diocese's website [www.oxford.anglican.org](http://www.oxford.anglican.org) to familiarise yourself with its geographical areas, its vision and values before you apply.
- ❖ You may also want to contact someone you know that is familiar with this type of role or knows about this diocese and its ways of working
- ❖ If you have any preliminary questions or if you would prefer to receive a hard copy of our clergy recruitment pack, please call the office running the recruitment campaign. This is usually written on the advert or the vacancies page on our website

### Completing the Application Form (General)

This form helps you to demonstrate your calling to the post, showing how your gifts, skills, experience and qualities match the criteria. It allows those making appointments to demonstrate their discernment of the successful candidate by assessing candidates against selection criteria in a structured way, avoiding bias.

- ❖ The most important thing when filling in the form is to put you in the place of the person who is likely to be reading and using it. While in some cases, short-listing will be undertaken purely by the patron, or by the patron and bishop's representative together, for most vacancies short-listing will include lay representatives elected by the parishes and possibly representatives of the deanery. This wider circulation should be assumed in completing the application form, and the fact that some of those involved in short-listing will be doing so for their first time.
- ❖ You are advised to avoid any terminology, jargon, acronyms or descriptions that require inside knowledge.

- ❖ You are encouraged to complete the form electronically. Those applying for more than one post will save significant time in this way, as unvarying parts of the application form will be already completed for any further applications. This also eases administration and allows interviewers to concentrate on the facts you are presenting rather than having first to read your handwriting.
- ❖ The **clergy application form can be downloaded from our website** if you were sent the pack by post and do not have the form electronically. However, if you decide to submit a handwritten application, please make sure that your handwriting is legible for it to be considered.
- ❖ Personal information is confined to the confidential part of the form, so just the person administering the process and the bishop will have access to it. It means those interviewing you are not influenced by factors that are not relevant in making the appointment.
- ❖ The information you supply on the Recruitment Monitoring Form will not be seen by the selection panel. Therefore, we encourage you to send this form separately to the Recruitment Monitoring Officer, Diocesan Clergy HR at the address provided on the form.
- ❖ If there is a particular requirement about a post holder, for example a PCC has passed a Resolution under the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1994 and a woman is not an acceptable appointee or someone remarried after divorce and with a former partner still living is not acceptable, the person specification will have made this clear and if appropriate you need to address it in your personal statement. Some requirements however are more general and will not be mentioned in the person specification. For example, the Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limit) Measure 1975 does not normally allow the appointment of those over 70. If you are in any doubt about your eligibility you should ask the body filling the post before you complete your application.
- ❖ Please read each section of the application form carefully and ensure you have completed each section fully, 'see CV attached' for example, is not sufficient. If you choose to attach your Curriculum Vitae (CV) to your application form, it will be read only in conjunction with the information you have submitted in the application form.

## **Completing the Application Form (Section by Section)**

The following notes relate to each section of the application form.

### **SECTION 1**

In giving a precise date, please give the month in letters rather than numbers, to avoid confusion between English and American conventions as to how dates are given in numeric form.

### **SECTION 2**

This is the section which should give the appointments panel insight into the title, dates and nature and range of the ministry and responsibilities with which you are currently engaged. It is therefore important to answer the second part of the question: some idea of congregational numbers, parish size and church tradition.

Please note that if you are currently an Assistant Curate in Training, you will need to carefully complete subsections ii and iii here. We would not consider applicants that have not completed/are likely not to complete curacies. As part of the recruitment process, proof will be required in the form of the letter from the respective Bishop.

### **SECTION 3**

When listing dates, please start with the most recent one. For example, your most recent role; your most recent qualification or course. We do consider other professional and/ practical qualifications obtained when assessing your transferable skills and experience. So, please list them in this section.

#### **SECTION 4**

Please note the final sentence in subsection (i): five or six words can give a brief description of the context within which a particular post was held. Subsection (v) is often answered quite poorly. The appointments panel needs to read something about both the main steps along your personal journey and what lasting mark they have had upon you. A good answer will give some sense of what inspires and motivates you, what you are passionate about within theology and spirituality. A poor answer will be a general expression about your flexibility, eg 'having served in a variety of parishes, I can honestly say I am comfortable with most things that are not extreme.'

#### **SECTION 5**

It is worth checking with the application pack and perhaps emphasising those responsibilities and interests or recreations that may be indications of your particular suitability for the post in question.

#### **SECTION 6**

This section is particularly important and it is an opportunity to pull together the relevant information from other parts of the form to state why you think you are suitable for the role. The short-listing panel will determine which applicants to invite to an interview based on what has been written in this section.

- ❖ Make sure you clearly state how you meet each of the selection criteria outlined in the Person Specification using examples from your recent work experience to demonstrate your suitability for the post. If relevant, you may also include any skills, responsibilities and experiences gained outside ministry, e.g. organising community or relevant interests. Concentrate on facts, things your interests have caused you to do, rather than mentioning a general interest in a particular subject. However, please note that you need to be concise, 2 pages of personal statement is enough as the interview gives the opportunity to explore these areas further.
- ❖ As you need to make clear to the panel how your experience and passions in ministry match with the specifications for which the parish is looking, the parish profile is also crucial for answering this question, and your answer should be systematically framed around, for example, the bullet-points or similar within the pack or advertisement. Common mistakes include:
  - Not referring to the parish profile, role description (if provided) and person specification.
  - Referring to the parish profile only after giving personal reasons for moving (eg geography, family, etc). Do give such reasons, but briefly, at the end.
  - Giving answers that are inadequately based on evidence. Eg 'I share your passion for youth ministry.' You need to provide evidence that shows that you can turn your passion into action.
  - Telling the parish what a wonderful place it is. The parish does not need your affirmation of its virtues at this stage; rather it needs to see how you fit in with its requirements.
- ❖ There is no need to be coy or diffident. The best evidence that God will use you in some way in the future is that God has done so in the past. It is important for us to know both what you can directly attribute to your own involvement and what has been the product of those groups and structures of which you have been part.

#### **SECTION 7**

The transport question is included in the generic application form. However, it will be considered only where public transport is considered not to be sufficiently good to enable a priest to carry out their duties without access to, and the ability to use, their own motorised transport. In such cases, and only in such cases, this is a 'genuine occupational requirement'. The candidate's suitability for the role will also be assessed against a number of other selection criteria.

## SECTION 8

This section will be removed by the person administering the application process and will only be made available to the chair of the appointments panel and the bishop.

- ❖ Most candidates offer a good range of referees. Most references are not taken up until after short-listing. Please be advised that by completing and submitting the application, you allow us to take up references before the interview. If you are really concerned about this, then please state so in a cover note accompanying the application.
- ❖ You may want to note that the Clergy Appointments Adviser is an officer based in London who holds details of clergy seeking positions within the Church of England. The adviser is able to interview clergy and circulate their details across all dioceses; collects and collates references so that referees do not need to be troubled on each occasion. Particular advice can be given to those applying from overseas.

### After Completing the Application Form (General)

- ❖ Once you have completed the form read it through again to make sure you have shown how you meet each of the criteria specified in the person specification and that it does not contain any errors and/ omissions.
- ❖ By submitting the form you are declaring that the information you have provided is correct. If any information is later found to be untrue, it may result in dismissal if you are appointed.
- ❖ Check the closing date and make sure you allow enough time to return your application. Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.
- ❖ Individuals offered appointments in the diocese of Oxford will be required to produce evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK. Please see Appendix A for a list of what can serve as documentary evidence.
- ❖ When an invitation to interview is made, references will be taken up as explained on the application form. Please ensure you have contacted the individuals that will support your application in good time.
- ❖ Your bishop may ask you questions about the confidential information at your private interview because he has to assure himself that your lifestyle is commensurate with a) priestly ministry and b) the person specification for the post.
- ❖ If you are appointed you will need to provide information about you and your family (usually by updating your Register of Ministers form) so that the bishop has the information he needs to provide you with pastoral care.

**Please be advised that the processes we describe below would apply to the majority of the clergy appointments in this diocese. However, certain parishes may have specific/local arrangements for running their appointment processes that are not referred to in this document.**

### Shortlisting

- ❖ The shortlisting panel will decide, from the evidence supplied on the application form, which candidates best meet the criteria outlined in the person specification.
- ❖ If you have been shortlisted, we will contact you about an interview. Usually no more than 6 candidates are shortlisted for interview.

- ❖ All short-listed candidates will be asked to complete the 'Application form - Supplementary questions for shortlisted applicants' that includes two health related questions and some disclosure information.
- ❖ If you do not hear from us within two weeks of the closing date, please assume that you have not been shortlisted on this occasion.

## **Interview Preparation**

We strongly advise you to prepare for the interview by:

- ❖ Reading through a copy of your application
- ❖ Reading the Parish Profile; Role Description and Person Specification once more to familiarise yourself with the requirements of the role
- ❖ Preparing for any questions the panel may ask you – often these are derived from the Person Specification or Role Description
- ❖ Preparing in advance a variety of examples which demonstrate your experience
- ❖ Finding out a little more about the parish/deanery/archdeaconry and diocese from our information pages on [www.oxford.anglican.org](http://www.oxford.anglican.org) .
- ❖ Asking our staff to send you any additional documents you require;
- ❖ Having questions ready (if you have any) that you'd like to ask the panel.

## **Tasks and presentations**

- ❖ Depending on the nature of the role, in addition to the interview, you may be asked to prepare a short presentation, show a portfolio of your work, or do a pre-interview task relevant to the role. We will let you know in your invitation for interview letter if you are required to do this.
- ❖ If you are required to do a presentation it will usually take place in the first 10-15 minutes before the interview commences. The decision to appoint will not be made solely on your performance in your task.

## **The interview**

- ❖ The interview will usually last from forty five minutes to one hour and thirty minutes depending on the nature and seniority of the role. The interview panel will consist of three to six individuals, relevant to the role. Usually either the Bishop or the Archdeacon will usually be part of the selection panel.
- ❖ All candidates are asked the same core questions, although the panel may ask each candidate different supplementary questions if necessary. The panel will take notes during the interview, but don't let this put you off. There will be an opportunity at the end of the interview for you to ask any questions.
- ❖ Depending on the approach, the programme of the day may also include presentations, exposition to a biblical text; tests and visits and meetings with key clergy and lay people in the parish. When this is not feasible, such a visit is organised for another day.

## **Final Selection**

- ❖ When the panel have reached a decision as to which candidate they feel is best for the role, the person leading the selection process, usually the Bishop or the Archdeacon, will contact the candidate. This is usually by telephone, to see if you want to accept the offer.
- ❖ The offer of appointment will then be made in writing, subject to satisfactory references; a successful Criminal Records Bureau check, eligibility to work in the UK and proof of your qualifications. A health screening will also be conducted prior to starting the appointment.
- ❖ All employers in the UK are legally bound to comply with the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. All those offered a post (including UK nationals) are required to provide evidence that they are legally able to work in the UK. Before you commence in your new role you must provide us with the necessary original document (s). As indicated previously, please refer to Appendix A for examples of documents that can be used as supporting evidence.

**If you do not provide the evidence indicated above or you do not successfully pass our clearances, than the Diocese will not be able to confirm you in the post.**

- ❖ Unsuccessful candidates will be informed of the decision in writing, usually within one week of the interview. We are happy to give feedback on your interview on request.

## **Co-ordinating the announcement and the date of move when confirmed in post**

- ❖ Once these clearances have been received, you have formally accepted the offer and, in the case of incumbent appointments, the patron has given notice of presentation to the bishop, a public announcement may be made.
- ❖ You will normally be required to give not less than three months notice of leaving your old post if you work elsewhere. This can sometimes be varied by agreement.
- ❖ Every case is different due to personal circumstances, however, you will generally move into your new parish some weeks before the licensing or institution.
- ❖ During the first month of your appointment you will be issued a Statement of Particulars document that will outline your rights, entitlements and obligations in your new office. This is issued by the Archdeacon as the designated person by the Diocesan Bishop.

## **Further information**

If you would like any further information or you have any questions about the role you wish to apply for, please do not hesitate to call the office running the recruitment campaign. For more general enquiries on appointments processes and clarification on the guidance notes you may contact Clergy HR on 01865 208770

**We wish you the very best of luck with your application.**