

**REVIEW OF VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY AND
CLERGY FORMATION IN THE DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA**

CONFIDENTIAL

PART I

1. SEMINARY FORMATION

1.1. Introduction and General Comments

This report has been undertaken at the request of the Most Rev. Mark Edwards, Bishop of Wagga Wagga and has been directed according to the Brief for a Seminary and Priestly Formation Review: Diocese of Wagga Wagga, which was prepared by a working group of the Diocesan Consultors.

At the request of Bishop Edwards, Sr Prof. M. Isabell Naumann ISSM and the Most Rev. Anthony Randazzo, Bishop of Broken Bay undertook the Review, which commenced with the visitation to Vianney College **from Friday 12 March until Monday 15 March 2021**. During the course of the visitation, Sr Isabell and Bishop Anthony conducted face to face interviews with 26 people, including clergy and lay women and men from the Diocese of Wagga Wagga. Meetings also occurred with seven seminarians drawn from Years 5 & 6; 10 seminarians drawn from Years 2, 3 & 4, Bishop Edwards, the Rector and seven members of the Staff; and the Propaedeutic men and Formator.

Each interview or group consultation focused on the areas of the Seminary and Priestly Formation that were considered to be strengths and/or challenges. The participants were also asked to identify opportunities for enrichment and/or improvement of the seminary and the program of formation.

The Rector of Vianney College, Rev. Fr Peter Thompson, CM., also provided administrative documentation which contained Policy and Guidelines on the following: Seminary Statutes; Plan of Formation; Affiliation with Urbaniana University; Rule of Life; Propaedeutic Handbook; Academic Handbook; Pastoral Manual; Internet Policy; and Child Protection.

The positive cooperation and participation of all involved is gratefully acknowledged. The visitation provided a respectful space for people to speak and contribute positively to the Review process. The Rector, Staff and seminarians are also to be commended for their generous spirit of hospitality. It was noted on more than one occasion that the community spirit, the prayerfulness of the Mass and liturgy, and the positive atmosphere within the seminary household were quite noticeable.

Situated within this brief background, we respectfully offer the following observations and recommendations to Bishop Edwards.

1.2. Formation Staff

New Staff appointments in the areas of formation

The current residential formation team, under the leadership of Fr Thompson, is perceived to be ecclesiastically formed and it is generally felt that there is cohesion amongst them. The Rector is seen to have a clear force regarding recommendation of men for orders due to his experience in seminary discernment and his long tenure in this role. The residential formators are approachable and are seen to work diligently in their role as formators.

Areas of challenge regarding the seminary formators include a lack of professional training for the areas required by the Ratio Fundamentalis. As is the case in most seminaries in Australia, formation staff are chosen because the bishop needs good men who are good priests in the seminary.

Unfortunately, the definition of “good” is quite subjective. In the case of Vianney College, it would appear that very few of the formators have been professionally trained in the areas of Human and Pastoral formation beyond their own formation as seminarians. This is not a criticism of the formators, merely a fact that was proffered as a challenge.

Another area of challenge is that there is limited pedagogical formation. This is much deeper than teaching style. It encompasses the diversity of culture, ecclesial experience, human interaction with members of the Church and public beyond the confines of the seminary, peer formation and performance reviews, as well as engagement with both ordained and lay faithful, including male and female members of the community of the Church.

Role descriptions of Staff

Apart from the canonical nomination of the Seminary Rector (CIC83 cc.238 §2; 239 §1; 260-262; 985), the Vice-Rector (c.239 §1), and the Spiritual Director (c.239 §2), there are no position descriptions provided for seminary formators. This is a lacuna that is being addressed in the Church via the *Ratio Fundamentalis* and the *Ratio Nationalis*. In the interim, it is **recommended** that Vianney College undertake the development of a Position Description (PD) for the residential formators including but not limited to the following: Rector, Vice-Rector, Spiritual Director, Propaedeutic Formator, Human Formator, Pastoral Formator. In addition, the Academic Formators will benefit from a PD specific but not limited to the field of expertise of each lecturer. Included in the PD should be a description of the role; responsibilities; inter-relationships; qualifications and experience; human qualities and virtues of each formator. By way of transparency and accountability, there should also be provision made for performance management, ongoing formation, professional development as well as personal and spiritual development.

Strategic Planning

From the interviews carried out, it emerged that throughout the history of Vianney College, there has been very little, if any, strategic planning beyond the initial construction and development of the seminary by Bishop Brennan.

The model of governance inherited is perhaps one of the greatest weaknesses that has emerged in this review. While the dedication and personal loyalty of the Rector and staff has been attested to, the recruitment, selection, formation, and oversight of the formation staff has lacked a strategic plan. Alongside this, there appears to be no coordinated governance plan that ideally would include a collaborative management system, financial planning and budgeting, and a professional program to facilitate personnel employment, development, and sustainability. For the Seminary to be viable into the future and for the Diocese to undertake the necessary financial planning and budgeting, it is **recommended** that a strategic plan of governance be an absolute priority.

Processes and Policies

The Vianney College community enjoys a rich blend of people from various communities, cultures, ethnic backgrounds, language groups, parishes, and ecclesial communities. This seminary is a veritable melting pot of the Church. It is diverse in so many ways, and yet the process of formation and the accompanying policies included in the handbook provided by the Rector, seem to overlook this rich tapestry of faith, life, and ministry. The seminarians, and ultimately the Church, will benefit greatly if this is strengthened.

One of the strengths identified throughout the Review is the “Catholicity” of the seminary. On multiple occasions, those interviewed repeated that Vianney College is “orthodox” and that it is in line with the teachings of the Church. This observed strength is to be lauded, as it is a requirement for the seminary to form generous and loving shepherds who are zealous preachers of the Word, faithful teachers of the Truth, and devoted servants at the Altar. However, the mere repetition of the word “Catholic” or “orthodox” does not ensure that the men being formed as priests will have their hearts filled with love for God, their minds opened to a lifetime of learning, or that they will be formed as humble servants who will lead God’s holy people.

Processes and policies are only useful if they are accessible to the generation for whom they are developed. They require attentive updating in the Conciliar spirit of *aggiornamento*. The pedagogy of “keep the rule and the rule will keep you” has very little effect in forming Shepherds after the heart of Christ.

It is the **recommendation** of this Review that the Processes and Policies for Vianney College be reviewed taking into consideration the strengths already embedded in the existing documents, while addressing what might be identified as a fear or distrust of “less orthodox” communities of the Church as well as the secular world. Fostering self-discipline in each seminarian is praiseworthy, however, if it is situated within a semi-monastic structure of the seminary, there is the risk that the future priest might be set up for failure, as the institutional structure of the seminary is less frequently maintainable in a parochial or ministerial setting.

It has been noted on several occasions during this Review that there is a lack of systems and protocols, including screening and checks, when accepting enrolments of extra-diocesan aspirants as well as international enquiries. This extends also to the process of accepting men who have either been rejected by other dioceses or Religious Institutes, or who have departed from a previous seminary or house of formation. The potential risk to the Diocese in such cases should be considered as high. At the diocesan level, it would be beneficial to the bishop if there were a coordinated strategy, supported by processes and policies, between the Vocations Team, the Ministries and Orders Commission, the Rector and Seminary Formation Team.

Accountability and transparency in the formation process is an area that has also been highlighted as needing revision. An enriched pedagogy of formation will inevitably demonstrate the need for the engagement of people skilled in the various dimensions of formation – Human, Spiritual, Academic, and Pastoral. The seminarian will benefit if those who accompany him on the pathway to priesthood are able to support him or refer him to those who are best qualified to assist. It is no longer reasonable to expect that the responsibility for each seminarian’s formation rests with the Rector. Ultimately, the seminarian himself is the protagonist of his formation. The Rector, assisted by a professional and well-trained team of formators in the seminary and in the diocese, ultimately will assist the bishop who will call the man to Orders.

Regular staff meetings; ongoing professional staff development

The good intention, loyalty, fidelity, and dedication to the seminary project on the part of the Rector and the formators at Vianney College is worthy of praise. This Review acknowledges the good work that is being done to prepare men for the ordained priesthood in this seminary. It has been noted that some of the part-time, non-residential formators have found it challenging at times as they are not always able to be present due to parochial or other ministerial commitments. What has emerged in the Review is that there is at times a lack of coordination regarding the *coetus* of formators. It would appear that there are not regular, systematic meetings of the formators. Some have noted that they deal with their own field of expertise, but are not connected formally to the conversation regarding the individual seminarians. This has been noted as a weakness in the seminary process of accompaniment for the seminarian and risks creating blind spots at the level of evaluation, performance review, and engagement.

It is the **recommendation** of this Review that a system for the regular meeting of staff be developed. It should have an approved agenda and minutes should be recorded and filed.

Professional development opportunities need to be made available to the formators of the seminary. As the Position Description of each formator is being prepared, developed, and authorized, provision for ongoing formation and professional development should be embedded in the PD. As new formators are called forth to seminary ministry, it will need to be made explicit that professional development is an integral aspect of the ministry and work. Budgetary allocation will also need to be considered and provided.

1.2.1. Areas of Formation

1.2.1.1. Human formation

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis* (PDV), Pope John Paul II highlighted the importance of both the human and ecclesial contexts with reference to the formation of priests: “God always calls his priests from specific human and ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts the priest is sent for the service of Christ's Gospel.” (PDV 5). It is vital that the human formation program has as its focus the accompaniment of each man to maturity in life, faith, virtue, and character. First of all, it must be recognized that human formation relies upon special assistance from the grace of Jesus Christ (cf PDV 72). Formators must be well trained in human behaviour, Catholic anthropology, and communication. The social sciences and the use of psychology can be of assistance in this area; however, it must not be left solely to these disciplines. They are useful tools that must be used in conjunction with tried and tested formation methods from seminary tradition.

Areas in need of development and strengthening at Vianney College include a formation plan encompassing affective maturity; human character - including but not limited to manly character, psychosexual maturity, emotional capacity, and personal identity. The formation plan will be useful if it is developed not as a series of courses but as an initial reflection upon the nature of the person while developing an evolving perception and awareness of self as a relational being. This kind of foundation will segue to the ongoing formation needed for the priest to remain healthy and positive as a human being.

Human formation cannot be limited to course work, nor can those who accompany the seminarians only be clerics. As Saint John Paul II noted, formation of the human person occurs within human and ecclesial contexts. With this in mind, it is highly **recommended** that the development of the human formation plan and its engagement include the involvement and participation of clergy as well as lay men and women who are expert in the field. The priest is firstly a man who is relational. His life and ministry will be with other people, both male and female, in the Church and in the world – this is his human context. The priest is ordained as a man of God. He will live and minister to others in the Church and in the world – this is his ecclesial context. The seminarian will benefit greatly if people from these contexts are engaged in his initial formation and his ongoing formation post ordination.

For over 40 years in Australia psychological and psychometric testing has been in regular use by diocesan vocation teams and in seminaries. These forms of testing have been valuable when they are considered in conjunction with a developed human formation plan. They must never be used in isolation. Nor must they be manipulated by formators to determine whether the aspirant for the seminary or the seminarian has a vocation. Testing of this kind must be carried out by professionals and respectfully communicated by reporting to the individual himself as well as the nominated formator. It has become general practice in Australia for the aspirant to undertake psychological testing prior to engagement in the formation program as part of his vocation discernment within his diocese. These tests have a limited shelf life, and therefore it may be useful for the individual to engage in a similar process after having been part of the seminary program for several years. The focus must always be on allowing the individual to understand his behaviour and gain greater self-awareness. It is also aimed at allowing the seminarian to understand better his strengths and weaknesses, which in turn might expand his relational and emotional capacity. It must never be used as a tool to remove the seminarian from the program of formation.

At Vianney College, an improved system of psychological testing has been identified as an opportunity to strengthen the human formation program. Given the cultural and linguistic diversity of seminarians at Vianney College, it may prove beneficial in some instances for this testing to be delayed until the seminarian has a greater command of language and context. This should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Vocation Team and the Seminary Formation Team.

From time to time, a seminarian may benefit from psychological support given by a professional exterior to Vianney College. It would be of value for the seminary to consult others in this field and to compile a list of Catholic professionals who might be competent to assist. The care of mental health and ongoing development of self-awareness are vital for a healthy affective priest. Provision and openness to this area of human development in the seminary will help create a culture of care and alleviate any stigma post ordination.

Because of the cultural diversity within Vianney College and because of the cultural demographic in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga, the process of acculturation within human formation is vital. This has been identified as an opportunity for development and growth within the Seminary formation program. While proficiency in the English language is vital for life and ministry in Australia, acculturation should not be limited to language. The use of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and tutoring in English language are necessary, however it is **recommended** that a plan of acculturation/interculturalism would be more beneficial. This would include learning and incorporating the values, beliefs, language, customs, and mannerisms of the human and ecclesial contexts in which the seminarians are living and in which they will minister as priests. Importantly, it will occur respectfully, honestly, and openly in dialogue with the person's original culture.

1.2.1.2. Spiritual formation

During the visitation of Vianney College, reference to the strength of the spiritual formation in the seminary was made on multiple occasions. Both staff and seminarians evaluated the liturgical life as good, suggesting that liturgy was well taught and that there was good guidance in the homilies that were preached. Mass and prayer are timetabled, as one would expect to find in a seminary. The sacrament of Penance is freely available, devotional prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints is promoted and encouraged, and Eucharistic devotion outside of Mass is also fostered privately and communally. Each seminarian has access to the Spiritual Director who also conducts classes in spirituality. Care should be taken to ensure that the seminarians also have access to external confessors.

Without detracting from the good work that is done in fostering the life of holiness in each seminarian, the further development of the program of Spiritual Formation is an area of opportunity at Vianney College. The outline of the Spiritual Dimension of Priestly Formation can be found in the Rule of Life for Seminarians, pages 7 – 12. It is well referenced and systematic, however it is rather generic.

It is the **recommendation** of this Review that the Spiritual Director be a full-time position. Currently, the Spiritual Director is also a professor of Philosophy. He is teaching over a dozen courses in that field, which would make the ministry of Spiritual Director his second function in the seminary. Given the essential nature of Spiritual formation in the life of the priest, this is a heavy burden for one individual to carry.

It is **recommended** that this dimension of the program would benefit from a deeper inclusion of the biblical foundation of Catholic spirituality alongside the sacramental life. Together, scripture and sacraments, form the foundation of the spirituality of the diocesan priest. At the heart of spiritual formation in the seminary is the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Christocentric dimension of the priest needs to be formed and cultivated, not to separate the priest from others, rather to insert him more fully into the Body of Christ. This insertion will not only configure the seminarian to Christ the Priest, but it will also animate him for the mission of evangelization. The spiritual formation ideally will equip the priest for a lifetime of personal conversion and transformation so that he may practice what he preaches.

It is also **recommended** that the role of the Spiritual Director would benefit by being reviewed. This review would allow the priest appointed to the role to have a clear position description, opportunities for ongoing professional development, as well as the option of forming a team of formators that is expert in Catholic spiritual traditions, Liturgical studies, Christian anthropology, and the spiritual life of the diocesan priest. A strength that would emerge from this proposal is the development of a specifically diocesan and mission orientated spirituality which would be useful in both urban and rural contexts.

One of the challenges in any seminary is to form men for life and ministry both at the seminary and in parochial or ministerial contexts beyond the seminary. Thought and discernment needs to be given to creating pathways for an harmonious transition from seminary to parish for the new priest, especially in his spiritual life. There is no substitute for self-discipline, however, if it is not wedded to the desire to be a man of prayer, who is grounded in the community, who is a collaborator with the bishop, and who is a man of the Church, then the danger will arise that he lives the priesthood for himself as merely a profession or still worse as a career. The spiritual life will be reduced to the personal preference of an individual. The seminarian who is formed in prayer and spiritual life that

begins and ends in the Blessed Trinity will have the solid foundation needed to sustain priestly leadership and service in the Church. How to make these dimensions real in the life of the seminarian will need to be considered further in the Spiritual Formation at Vianney College.

The execution of Mass and prayer in common at Vianney College is reverent, dignified, and solemn. The formators are to be commended for their example and diligence in this regard. An opportunity for Vianney College will be to ensure that liturgical formation and instruction is not reduced to observance of rubrics. Preparation is only one dimension of liturgical formation. The seminarian will be assisted by the spiritual formators who for their part will facilitate opportunities to deepen their love for the Word and the sacraments, especially the holy Eucharist. They will also gain much if they are invited to pursue liturgical scholarship, which is a work of both the mind and the soul. Reflecting thoughtfully, critically, and informatively will allow the seminarian to see the Mass and the liturgy as being the work of the whole Church. It should provide opportunities for the seminarian to learn the art of presiding and celebrating the Mass, the sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours, and preaching homilies.

Cultivating the foundation of the spiritual life through personal private prayer is a high priority in the seminary. Ideally, this would include the daily commission of spiritual reading. The Spiritual Director should have a broad ranging bibliography from which to recommend books and articles to the seminarians. The bibliography should be drawn from classical as well as contemporary texts and it should be updated and augmented on a regular basis. In this way the bibliography will become a living collection of writings which will inspire the seminarians to seek out and read spiritual writings as a normal part of priestly life.

All prayer is directed to the Triune God; however, prayer is both private and public. Emphasis is needed on developing a balance between private and public prayer for the priest. This would preferably be explored and matured while the seminarian is in formation at Vianney College. Thought might also be given to exploring pathways for ongoing fraternal life, prayer, and ministry in the communion of the presbyterate of the diocese which might also include a coetus of trained Spiritual Directors post ordination.

1.2.1.3. Pastoral formation

Of the four dimensions of formation articulated in *Pastores dabo vobis*, Pastoral formation at Vianney College would benefit greatly from a review of current practice as well as the development of a comprehensive Pastoral plan. It is the **recommendation** of this Review that a Pastoral Director be appointed and that a team of formators who are professionally trained in this field be established to work at this task both within the seminary and the diocese. It is highly **recommended** that the Pastoral Team be composed of diocesan clergy as well as male and female members of Christ's lay faithful.

A concrete and systematic plan for Pastoral formation will include instruction in methods of pastoral care as well as opportunities for supervised practicum. These placements provide opportunities for the seminarian to put theory into practice while being mentored by experienced clergy as well as members of Christ's lay faithful. It will provide pastoral opportunities in a variety of ministerial settings such as, but not limited to, parish, schools, hospital, aged care, charitable works, and youth ministry. In each of these settings the seminarian will engage with others as part of a team so that he can experience and be formed in collaborative ministry.

The use of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), which is already incorporated into the program of formation at Vianney College, is also highly **recommended**. The CPE placement in a hospital, for example, presents occasions for the seminarian to develop his skills in pastoral and spiritual care with people from various backgrounds, cultures, age groups, and life situations. The clinical setting will often confront the seminarian with the major questions of meaning and purpose beyond what might be learned in a Philosophy lecture. It will provide the seminarian with learning opportunities in which he may offer effective pastoral care.

Embedded in the development of a Pastoral formation plan will be professional instruction and reflection on the exercise of power, authority, and leadership. In his ministry, the priest will take the lead to teach, sanctify, and govern the portion of the People of God entrusted to his pastoral care. Planning and facilitating healthy and sustainable models of leadership are an essential part of priestly formation.

The Pastoral formation plan at Vianney College will also be enriched by linking pastoral care to mission. The program of studies and the supervised practicum must be outward focused, that is to say, it should place priestly leadership and ministry at the service of the People of God through evangelization and mission. A particular component needing development will be how best to form candidates for the priesthood who will minister in a diocese which has both urban and rural contexts. How to resource this formation plan will also require consideration, at both the human and financial levels.

One of the great opportunities presented by creating a plan for Pastoral formation is ongoing formation for priests after ordination. The first five to 10 years of ordination are formative years for the priest often providing rich ministry upon which the priest can reflect and mature. It is the **recommendation** of this Review that a collaborative program between the diocese and the seminary be explored and developed. The consultation of newly ordained priests will be essential if this project is to be valued and accepted as a normative component for the ongoing formation of priests.

1.2.1.4. Academic formation (see suggestion of affiliation with CIS)

The recommendations regarding Academic formation at Vianney College are largely dealt with in Section 2 of this Review, however, several general observations are offered here by way of situating Academic formation as one of the four dimensions articulated in PDV.

Vianney College prides itself on offering seminarians doctrinally sound teaching as part of their Academic formation. Pedagogically, the seminary relies heavily on Thomistic philosophy and theology. While this is laudable, a neo-Thomistic approach can place limitations on the breadth of Catholic scholarship. It also carries with it the risk of not allowing for the development of critical thinking, which is needed if priests are to address the contemporary issues found in Australian society.

The Academic plan of formation will aim to assist seminarians to integrate what they study with other formation activities in the Seminary. For this to occur, a suitable program of studies and monitoring of progress within the overall framework of formation would be advantageous. Seminars and colloquia within the seminary and possibly in collaboration with other seminaries around Australia

may provide pathways for theological and philosophical debate, which in turn would provide platforms for academic formation beyond the classroom.

As mentioned above, the rich diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds at Vianney College also presents a challenge in the Academic formation of seminarians. The facilitation of individual tutoring, special testing (IELTS), and other educational needs for seminarians will need to be planned and well developed. This is an area of educational specialization that may allow for collaboration between Vianney College and Catholic Education, Diocese of Wagga Wagga (CEDWW), especially when dealing with seminarians who have English as a second or third language.

It was noted during the visitation to the seminary that the library building is well situated and well designed. It was also noted that the library collection, while containing some excellent volumes was also lacking in some academic fields. It is the **recommendation** of this Review that consideration be given to the updating of the seminary library, the establishment of a Library Fund or Trust, and the possibility of opening the collection by making it accessible for use in the Diocese as part of a Pastoral Centre for mission and faith formation. The opportunities arising from such a Centre would benefit the clergy and the laity from around the diocese. It is **recommended** that the seminary remains a house of formation for priests, but that a study be undertaken as to the feasibility of the Theological and Pastoral Centre operating from the library complex where studies may occur in collaboration between seminarians, permanent deacons in formation, priests, and the lay faithful.

1.3. Finance Council

Article 4 of the General Statutes of Vianney College states that in accordance with canon 1280 CIC83, the seminary shall have a Finance Committee. The model provided for the administration of the patrimony of Vianney is similar to that of a diocese (cf. c.492).

Chapter 4 of the General Statutes is dedicated to the Seminary Finance Council. The reason for the change from Committee to Council is not clear in the Statutes. In any case, it can be presumed that an attempt has been made to accommodate the canonical requirements for accountability of the seminary financial affairs.

It is noted that there has been a high level of economic administrative autonomy since the foundation of Vianney College by Bishop Brennan. Concern has been raised regarding the lack of a comprehensive financial plan. It would seem that the building, running and maintenance of the seminary has been financed from diocesan funds and investments, however, the separation from diocesan administration presents as an area of high risk. It is the **recommendation** of this Review that an independent audit of the seminary portfolio be undertaken so that future financial planning may be based on accurate financial data.

Regarding the Norms governing the Seminary Finance Council, it is **recommended** that the Norms be reviewed and updated to create the Seminary Finance Committee as a sub-committee of the Diocesan Finance Council. This will provide the bishop greater ability to manage the Seminary economic affairs with less administrative repetition. This recommendation allows for greater planning as well as financial transparency.

The Rector, who acts in the person of the seminary, should preside at the Committee meetings. The Finance Committee will help the Rector in his task of administering the seminary goods by offering appropriate advice on financial priorities and by assisting in the preparation of an annual budget. It

would also be worth investigating the establishment of a Seminary Fund for the purpose of supporting and developing Vianney College into the future.

While the economic affairs to the diocese are important, they must not determine the mission of the Church, they must employ sound financial means by which to support it. This model calls for close collaboration between the Rector and the diocesan financial advisors to the bishop, always keeping in mind the end view, which is the instruction and formation of priests.

1.4. Seminary Council (clergy and lay people/professional and other)

This Review **recommends** the establishment of a Seminary Council whose members would be drawn from the clergy and Christ's lay faithful. The purpose of the Council would be to assist the bishop with his oversight of the seminary. This might occur by advising the bishop and, when necessary, making recommendation about the seminary formation program. It would also include participation in the discernment and assessment of potential aspirants for the seminary. The Seminary Council would liaise with the Rector and formation staff regarding the seminarian's pastoral placements. In collaboration with the Ministries and Orders Commission and the Rector and seminary formators, the Seminary Council would be consulted at the various transitional stages of formation (e.g. candidacy, lector, acolyte, reception of holy Orders). The Seminary Council would also assist the seminary Rector in an advisory capacity. The Rector would attend the general meetings of the Council, but not *in camera* sessions.

The Bishop of Wagga Wagga has the oversight to appoint or remove members of the Seminary Council. The Chair would be the bishop of the diocese or Bishop Edwards may choose to delegate this role to another bishop from the Province who has seminarians at Vianney College. Ex-officio members would include the Vicar General, the Vicar for Clergy, and a representative from the theological provider. Other members would be chosen for their knowledge and proficiency in the fields of human formation, pastoral care, and diocesan life and ministry. Members would be drawn from the clergy and Christ's lay faithful – male and female.

To accomplish this recommendation, Statutes for the Seminary Council would require careful and creative thinking. It would be important to ensure that the Seminary Council does not become another institutional or structural layer. It is envisaged that it would be a useful instrument for the bishop, the rector, and ultimately a benefit to the men in formation for the priesthood.

1.5. Collaboration with other Seminaries

Given the size of the Catholic population of Australia and the smaller number of clergy in most Australian dioceses, it has been queried if there are too many seminaries in Australia. One of the major factors behind this question is the increasing challenge of preparing formators who are well qualified, as well as pastorally and professionally experienced for the work in seminaries. It has been suggested by some that it would be better to close the smaller seminaries and establish a single National seminary or possibly two larger seminaries based in Metropolitan cities.

This Review does not consider these options in the first place. Before such zealous proposals might be considered, it seems reasonable that the review and assessment of the current structures should first occur, as in the case of Vianney College.

It is the **recommendation** of this Review that Vianney College consider the possibility of collaboration with Corpus Christi College, Carlton (CCC) and Good Shepherd Seminary, Homebush (SGS). It emerged during the visitation that this more or less occurs during the Celibacy workshops with CCC. It is proposed that further exploration of shared resources, curriculum, formation modules, teaching and formation staff, and pastoral supervisors might be considered. The benefits of such collaboration are substantial. Each cohort of seminarians would benefit from the broader relational encounters with others preparing for the priesthood; they would attain critical mass for the best formation experience; and they would build long term relationship and networks for ministry and mission amongst the clergy of the future. The opportunity for creative and sustainable formation experiences is also more likely to be achievable when seminaries collaborate.

It is also reasonable to say that Vianney College offers a unique possibility for formation in a rural context. Most dioceses in Australia have a rural component. If Vianney College were to explore and develop a formation plan or a specialized study or practicum for evangelization and mission in the rural context, this would be a major contribution not just for the Diocese of Wagga Wagga, but for the Church in Australia.

1.6. Other recommendations

One area identified as a lacuna in the formation program at Vianney College is the absence of training the seminarians for ministry with Aboriginal people. It seems that this is an area of great opportunity not only for the seminary but for the Church in Australia.

Given that the foundation of Vianney College was fundamentally for the instruction and formation of priests in the rural ecclesial context and that the majority of Indigenous Australians live and work in rural settings, it would be an area of major importance to initiate and develop this within the overall program of priestly formation.

Aboriginal people have a long history and a rich culture that extends between 50,000 and 120,000 years in Australia. Formation for Catholic priests to minister to and accompany our Indigenous communities is essential. A well-developed program of formation at Vianney College will prepare priests who will promote and celebrate the Catholic identity of Aboriginal people and encourage and assist them to feel at home in the Catholic Church. Formation for the seminarian in this apostolate will touch on the four dimensions of formation articulated in PDV. In some regards it will be of utmost importance to begin in the human formation of the seminarian otherwise there will be nowhere for the other dimensions to be grounded and integrated.

The program plan for Indigenous pastoral care and ministry would need to be outward looking to encourage, assist, and develop Aboriginal leadership within the community and the Church. Formators would be drawn from professionals who are expert in their field, however, it would be of the utmost importance that Aboriginal leaders and people be invited to collaborate as members of the formation team. The development of a sound program will necessitate consultation and discernment with the Aboriginal leaders. Consultation with the School of Indigenous Australian Studies (SIAS) at Charles Sturt University may also be beneficial.

Another important area of development in the program would be that of evangelization, mission, and inculturation. Working with and ministering to the Aboriginal communities will open opportunities for the sound adaptation of Catholic teachings and practices to cultures. This would need to be grounded firmly in the Academic and Pastoral formation plans. Further to the Pastoral plan, the seminarian would need to understand and experience how the priest can support the Aboriginal people entrusted to his pastoral care. He would listen to the people in their needs and aspirations, and encourage others to support them in their struggle for justice.

It is the **recommendation** of this Review that such a program for ministry to Aboriginal people be developed and resourced at Vianney College.

Part II

2. AFFILIATION WITH AN ECCLESIASTICAL FACULTY

2.1. Introduction

In the Apostolic Constitution on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties *Veritatis gaudium*, Pope Francis promotes the renewal of Catholic higher studies, within “the changed social-cultural context worldwide,” characterized by “a wide-ranging ‘anthropological’ and ‘environmental crisis’”. He says there is need of a “wise and courageous renewal” of ecclesiastical studies “for a more effective mission in this moment of history.”¹

Starting from the “primary need today” for a “missionary transformation of a Church that ‘goes forth,’” and which involves the whole People of God, Pope Francis says that ecclesiastical studies are called not only “to offer opportunities and processes for the suitable formation of priests, consecrated men and women, and committed lay people” but constitute “a sort of providential cultural laboratory in which the Church carries out the performative interpretation of the reality brought about by the Christ event and nourished by the gifts of wisdom and knowledge by which the Holy Spirit enriches the People of God in manifold ways – from the *sensus fidei fidelium* to the magisterium of the bishops, and from the charism of the prophets to that of the doctors and theologians.”²

Previously, “theology and Christian culture have lived up to their mission whenever they were ready to take risks and remain faithful on the borderline,” and today, so Pope Francis, we face “a great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal” – a path of renewal, of a missionary reorientation, that is also demanded of ecclesiastical universities and faculties.³

This, the Pope says, requires “a radical paradigm shift, or rather... ‘a bold cultural revolution’” in which “the worldwide network of ecclesiastical universities and faculties is called to offer the decisive contribution of leaven, salt and light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the living Tradition of the Church, which is ever open to new situations and ideas.”⁴ In working toward this aim, Pope Francis offers four fundamental criteria for the renewal and revival of the contribution ecclesiastical studies can make for a missionary Church:

1. The “priority and permanent” criterion is “the contemplation and spiritual, intellectual and existential introduction to the heart of the kerygma, namely, of the new and fascinating joyful proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus.” This proclamation is manifested notably by “the option for the last, for those that society rejects and puts aside,” which must “permeate the presentation and further reflection of the Christian truth.”
2. The second criterion “is that of dialogue in all areas, not as a simple tactical attitude, but as an intrinsic exigency,” for a “culture of encounter among all the authentic and living cultures, thanks

¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium*, Foreword 1, 3. [Hereafter *Veritatis gaudium*]

² *Veritatis gaudium* 3, 1.

³ *Veritatis gaudium* 5, 6. [Emphasis mine]

⁴ *Veritatis gaudium*, 3.

to the mutual exchange of respective gifts in each area of partly open light by the love of God for all His creatures.”

3. The third criterion, continues the Constitution, is “the inter- and the trans-disciplinarity exercised with wisdom and creativity in the light of Revelation”: “It is about offering, through different courses proposed by the ecclesiastical studies, plurality of knowledge corresponding to the multi-form richness of the real by the partly open light of Revelation, which at the same time is harmonically and dynamically gathered in the unity of its transcendent source.”

4. Finally, the fourth criterion concerns “the urgent need to ‘network’ between the different institutions that, everywhere in the world, cultivate and promote ecclesiastical studies.” It is about giving “new impulse to scientific research,” of “being equipped with specialized centres that deepen dialogue with the different scientific milieus.”⁵

In the light of these fundamental criteria the document points out that “ecclesiastical studies cannot be limited to passing on knowledge, professional competence and experience to the men and women of our time who desire to grow as Christians, but must also take up the urgent task of developing intellectual tools that can serve as paradigms for action and thought, useful for preaching in a world marked by ethical and religious pluralism. To do so calls not only for profound theological knowledge, but also the ability to conceive, design and achieve ways of presenting the Christian religion capable of a profound engagement with different cultural systems. All this calls for increased quality in scientific research and a gradual improvement in the level of theological studies and related sciences.”⁶ Further, “it is not only a matter of ... adding to the mass of available data for interpreting reality, but of a deeper study that seeks “to communicate more effectively the truth of the Gospel in a specific context, without renouncing the truth, the goodness and the light which it can bring wherever perfection is not possible.”⁷

Thus, any quality-oriented intellectual education offered in an ecclesiastical faculty ought to have a threefold foci, a didactic, formative and a dialogical focus in order to equip students/seminarians to become well-formed, balanced and mature ‘hearers’, ‘interpreters’, and ‘doers’ of the Word.⁸

2.2. Proposed Change of Affiliation

Proposed Change of Affiliation of Vianney Seminary College [VC] from the Faculty of Theology of the Urbaniana University to the Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology/CIS, Sydney.

⁵ *Veritatis gaudium* 4. See here 2.2.4.

⁶ *Veritatis gaudium* 5. The document speaks of “the pressing need to give new impulse to scientific research conducted” in such institutions. *Veritatis gaudium* 5. [Emphasis mine]

⁷ *Veritatis gaudium* 5.

⁸ A didactic focus enriches the capacity of learners to understand and communicate the faith of the Church. In union with the whole Church, under the guidance of the magisterium, each local Church deepens its sense of belonging and feeling with the Church (*sentire cum ecclesia*) as a primary criterion of ministerial discipleship. A formative focus aims to mature the mind and heart of each learner through an ever-deepening reception of the wisdom of Scripture and Tradition as the foundational witness to Divine Revelation. A dialogical focus aims to develop critical thinking and the necessary skills to communicate, explain and give witness to the faith of the Church in the contemporary context. *Ratio Nationalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*. Draft edition, October 2020, 70-71. [Emphasis mine]

Given the feedback we received during our interviews at VC, we noted that over the last 25 years the affiliation of VC with the Urban University proved to be positive and beneficial in maintaining academic standards within the framework of the first circle of ecclesiastical studies.

However, Vianney College's association with the Urban University might call for a re-evaluation in view of the above (*Veritatis gaudium*) and the *Instruction on the affiliation of institutes of higher studies* (2020) which state that the affiliating Faculty and the affiliated Institute usually require being in the same country or cultural region⁹; and in point of fact, the Urban University's associations usually occur with seminaries in developing countries.

It is arguably also a question if, due to the distance, real academic collaboration and exchange, oversight and applied quality assurance with the affiliated Institute is indeed possible. Further, with the growing demands on accountability in an increasingly legislative framework and administratively related matters, it becomes increasingly significant to adequately respond to such impending issues.

Besides these concerns, our observations led to the question if the academic formation at VC is proportional and an integral part of the total formation of the seminarians or if it constitutes the most dominant part.

In reference to these comments, we would propose an affiliation of VC with the Ecclesiastical Faculty in Australia, the Catholic Institute of Sydney, and suggest considering the advantages of such an affiliation.

2.2.1. Ecclesiastical Faculty – the Catholic Institute of Sydney [CIS]

In 1954, CIS was granted the status of an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology by the Holy See: the *Facultas Theologica Sydneyensis* for Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania. As such, the Faculty is governed by the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* (which in 2019 updated the previous Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*) and its own Statutes. The Chancellor of the Faculty is the Archbishop of Sydney, Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP.

CIS faculty hold national and international higher degrees including ecclesiastical degrees. The faculty publishes in nationally and internationally recognised journals and also with well-respected presses. CIS faculty provide intellectual formation to a diverse student body of seminarians, candidates for the permanent diaconate, religious and the lay faithful; by teaching an extensive curriculum of undergraduate and postgraduate course units. The teaching is received well by students with consistently high reviews.

CIS faculty are committed to the integrity of doctrine and to the theological sciences, to the universal and local Church and to working in the Australian context – thus supporting Church and community in enquiry into the fundamental question of human life and Catholic faith.¹⁰

⁹ *Veritatis gaudium* 50; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Membership of Institutes of Higher Studies* (8 December 2020), Art 43, 1.

¹⁰ *Veritatis gaudium* 26. See here *Veritatis gaudium: The purpose of Ecclesiastical Faculties* are:
§ 1. through scientific research to cultivate and promote their own disciplines, i.e. those directly or indirectly connected with Christian revelation or which directly serve the mission of the Church, and therefore especially to deepen knowledge of Christian revelation and of matters connected with it, to enunciate systematically the truths contained therein, to consider in the light of revelation the most recent progress of the sciences, and to

The faculty engages in research supervision of Licentiates, ecclesiastical Doctorates, as well as civil Masters- and Doctoral degrees – both within the institution and externally.

2.2.2. Program of Studies

“In arranging the studies, the principles and norms which for different matters are contained in ecclesiastical documents, especially those of the Second Vatican Council, must be carefully observed. At the same time account must be taken of sound advances coming from scientific progress which can contribute to answering the questions being currently asked.”¹¹

The ecclesiastical awards offered and awarded by the Institute include the five-year STB (a Baccalaureate of Theology), the STL (a Licentiate in Sacred Theology, equivalent to a Master’s degree at a secular university) and the STD (a Doctorate in Sacred Theology). Area of systematic pastoral theology are included in the program.

Ecclesiastical studies offered at the Catholic Institute of Sydney aim to assist students to integrate their understanding and experience of the broader culture with the beauty of divine revelation. Graduates are sent forth as participants in this important dialogue so that they might help people today to hear the message of the Gospel.

Regarding the secular degrees, from the first semester of 2022 on, CIS will no longer offer the Sydney College of Divinity awards but those of Notre Dame University Australia. These will be offered conjointly by Notre Dame University and CIS.

In terms of these secular degrees offered at CIS, the First Cycle in the Ecclesiastical Faculty/STB corresponds to a 5-year degree of Bachelor and Master of Divinity AQF7&9 (Australian Qualification Framework, level 7&9). The First Cycle in the Ecclesiastical Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences (HIRS) corresponds to a 3-year vertical degree of Bachelor of Divinity AQF7 (or 3-year Master of Divinity AQF9 for those who already hold an AQF7 degree in any field).

The three-year Bachelor of Theology (BTh) is popular –particularly among the lay faithful– as it gives both breadth and depth in the study of theology and related disciplines. It is possible to take one year of the BTh and graduate with a Diploma of Christian Studies (DipChSt), or after two years to graduate with the Associate Degree in Christian Thought and Practice (AssocDegChThPr). The Graduate Graduate Certificate and the Diploma in Theological Studies are both graduate, foundational courses in theology. The Master of Theological Studies (MThSt) are best suited to those who already have a bachelor’s degree in a non-theological discipline but wish to undertake theological studies.

Another important point shall be mentioned here: It is in regard to the ongoing formation of non-seminarians. With the civil accreditation available, VC could open its doors and invite into the wider

present them to the people of the present day in a manner adapted to various cultures;

§ 2. to train the students to a level of high qualification in their own disciplines, according to Catholic doctrine, to prepare them properly to face their tasks, and to promote the continuing permanent education of the ministers of the Church;

§ 3. to collaborate intensely, in accordance with their own nature and in close communion with the Hierarchy, with the local and the universal Church the whole work of evangelization. *Veritatis gaudium*, Part I, General Norms, sec I, Art 3.

¹¹ *Veritatis gaudium*, Section VI, Art. 37, § 1.

accredited program those who want to become permanent deacons, RE teachers, catechists, parish mission teams, health professionals and other interested lay faithful all those who seek sound theological and pastoral formation.

2.2.3. Academic Staff

“Cooperation between Faculties, whether of the same University or of the same region or of a wider territorial area, is to be diligently striven for.[82] In fact, such cooperation is of great help in promoting the scientific research of the teachers and a better formation of the students. It also fosters the advance of interdisciplinary collaboration, which appears to be ever more necessary, and it contributes to the development of complementarity among the various Faculties. In general, it also helps to bring about the diffusion of Christian wisdom throughout all culture.”¹²

Of lecturers in Ecclesiastical Faculty is required that they have pontifical degrees either a Licentiate or a Doctorate. If this is not the case, a nihil obstat (from the Congregation for Catholic Education) is required. At CIS all lecturers are required to possess civil accreditation in order to teach the civil accredited courses.

As most of the members of VC’s faculty have also civil degrees, an enriching collaboration and exchange between VC and CIS lecturers are possible, in both teaching units and award offerings. Here are various modes of collaboration possible.

CIS also provides ongoing professional development and assistance (including conferences, sabbaticals etc.) which corresponds with *Veritatis gaudium* where emphasis is placed on the need for lecturers to undertake research, further professional development and publication of articles in Academic Journals.¹³

2.2.4. Seminarians/students

“In the single Faculties let that scientific method be used which corresponds to the needs of the individual sciences. Up-to-date didactic and teaching methods should be applied in an appropriate way, in order to bring about the personal involvement of the students and their active participation in their studies.”¹⁴

“In each Faculty the disciplines should be arranged in such a way that they form an organic body, so as to serve the solid and coherent formation of the students and to facilitate collaboration by the teachers.”¹⁵

For the benefit of students/seminarians, both the riches of the Catholic philosophical and theological tradition as well as the best of contemporary scholarship should inform the academic staff in their teaching and academic supervision of research students.

¹² *Veritatis gaudium*, Section X, Art. 66.

¹³ *Veritatis gaudium*, Section III.

¹⁴ *Veritatis gaudium*, Part I, section IV, Art. 37, §2.

¹⁵ *Veritatis gaudium*, Part I, section IV, Art. 40, §2.

As faculty, CIS specialises in the face-to-face mode of teaching, and places a high value on the quality of the learning experience in the classroom. Our students appreciate the possibility of engaging directly with lecturers and with their fellow students. The academic staff endeavours to provide a vibrant learning community, which stimulates enquiry and facilitates deep learning. At the same time, partly due to the pandemic, but more so in consideration of students from country dioceses, CIS has recently started to establish an IT infrastructure with IT support staff to develop and maintain a CIS online learning system.¹⁶

Regarding the admission into the program of studies, students/seminarians are enrolled in both the ecclesiastical degree and the civil degree. The required material for the STB, as indicated in the Ratio, is studied in two semesters per annum and intensives between semesters (both face-to-face teaching and online teaching when required). There is also the possibility of undertaking intensive units and/or independent studies.

Because students/seminarians are (beside the ecclesiastical degree's) enrolled in the civil degrees they will benefit from FEE-HELP or even HECS-HELP.

For non-Australian seminarians/students the IELTS academic test with results of 6.5 or higher in all bands (listening, reading, writing, speaking) is required. If an applicant has not completed secondary school or a bachelor's degree in Australia (or Canada [in English]), New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, or the United States of America) an English language test is required.

However, if the required result of 6.5 in the IELTS test is not achieved, the seminarian/student can be enrolled as a non-award student. And, having successfully completed four course units, the student will then be moved into the degree course.

Prospective international undergraduate students will usually first apply for the Bachelor of Theology (BTh) program.

Some students may wish to apply for postgraduate admission into one of the Master's awards (MA, MTh). For postgraduate admission eligibility, their prior completed studies need to meet the admission requirements for the award. IELTS requirements remain the same except that the level for post-graduate studies is 7.0 in all bands.

In case of an affiliation of VC with CIS, CIS would seek civil accreditation (in part or full) for units already completed by VC seminarians during their course of required studies.

2.2.5. Academic Administration

Within the framework of an affiliation CIS, as the Ecclesiastical Faculty, would provide Oversight and regulation including assessment and moderation of VC. As a campus of CIS, VC would maintain its own identity but would enter into an arrangement with CIS for the benefit of their students, graduates and staff and to cooperate in the further promotion and development of each Institution. As such, VC would adopt the quality management systems of CIS.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Veritatis gaudium*, Appendix I, 6.

¹⁷ An example of such an arrangement is the affiliation between CIS and The Good Shepherd College, Auckland (GSC). For many years, GSC has offered courses as an offshore campus of the Catholic Institute of Sydney. GSC

Part of this quality management systems of CIS is for example an annual appraisal of the academic staff with is based on the voluntary anonymous feedback from the student body, on general and more specific matters related to teaching, methodology, research area and output and ongoing professional formation).

As an ecclesiastical faculty, CIS being canonically erected by Papal authority through the Congregation for Catholic Education, depends on the Holy See.

As a civil institution, CIS, like all tertiary institutions in Australia, is subject to the appropriate civil authorities –via a third-party arrangement– this authority being the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). TEQSA is Australia’s regulatory and quality agency for higher education. TEQSA’s primary aim is to ensure that students receive a high-quality education at any Australian higher education provider.

Details of an affiliation of VC with CIS would need to be worked out and laid down in a Memorandum of Understanding. And it would need the approval from the Holy See (Congregation of Catholic Education).

2.2.6. Administration and Fees

The administrative particulars and financial provisions, e.g. remuneration of faculty and staff, student fees etc. will require detailed discussion between the two parties.

2.3. Brief Summary of some Advantages of VC affiliating with CIS

Beside the ecclesiastical studies, VC would be affiliated with an Australian Higher Tertiary Provider and its seminarians/students will receive civil accreditation;

Shared Resources (personal, material, financial);

Wider Library access/online resources;

Exchange of life and inspiration within the context of priestly formation (not only intellectual but in all four areas of formation); broader intercultural exchange and processes; Student benefit of fee-help;

Interaction between lecturers and ongoing professional development of lecturers; professional exchange and encouragement in research and publishing;

Systematic pedagogically sound assessment processes;

is owned by the Bishops of New Zealand. It is the college with responsibility for the academic theological formation of seminarians in New Zealand. It teaches the program with the approval of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

Offering sound theological and pastoral formation also for permanent deacons, RE teachers and other professional and non-professional groups and individuals among the lay faithful.

2.4. Vianney College Seminary – as a Theological and Pastoral Centre for the Diocese

“The Apostolic See, in carrying out its mission, is clearly aware of its right and duty to erect and promote Ecclesiastical ... Faculties destined for the education of both ecclesiastical and lay students. This See is very desirous that the whole People of God, under the guidance of their Shepherds, should cooperate to ensure that these centres of learning contribute effectively to the growth of the faith and of Christian life.”¹⁸

VC’s location is at the heart of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga and as such, it could provide a “heart function” of sound Catholic teaching and culture for the entire diocese and maybe for neighbouring dioceses.

Through an affiliation with CIS, VC would be in a position to offer a variety of accredited programs to those who want to become permanent deacons, RE teachers, catechists, parish mission teams, health professionals and other interested lay faithful who seek sound theological and pastoral formation.

And last but not least, ongoing clergy formation and professional development and administrative support could be undertaken and facilitated through this Centre.

The facilities at VC are well suited to accommodate such a “Centre.”

The library building would provide ample space for shared classes (attended by both seminarians and other students) or for classes for specific professions, e.g., classes in Catholic Morals and Ethics for health providers etc.

Students would choose VC not to become qualified in an isolated profession, but to deepen their faith and give coherence to their spiritual lives, while yet also seeking to learn the practices and theory that will equip them to participate more fully in the life and mission of the Church.

Such a Centre of Theological and Pastoral Studies would attract a diverse student body – mature and young, male and female, culturally diverse, seminarian, religious and lay.

It would contribute to a healthy interaction between clergy and lay who must learn to interact because both are involved in the Catholic community, in their parishes and in the wider work of the Church. And confidently, making availability this kind of formation would certainly shape people who are not afraid to ensure that the Catholic Church maintains a voice in the public forum.

Classes specifically designed for seminarians and all other sessions of human formation could be facilitated in the main Seminary building. Such an arrangement would warrant the integrity of the Seminary setting and its intern formation.

¹⁸ *Veritatis gaudium*, Forward to the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (1979), III. See also *Veritatis gaudium* 5.

2.5. Conclusion

A possible affiliation of VC with CIS would guarantee the continued relevance of Vianney Seminary College for the diocese of Wagga Wagga and other rural dioceses. It would institutionally benefit from a more extensive professional, pastoral, intercultural and administrative engagement with another national Ecclesiastical Faculty with international links. Furthermore, VC as a Theological and Pastoral Centre would offer an opportune resource for the ongoing faith formation of the people of the diocese and beyond.

PART III

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review of Vianney College and the Program of Priestly Formation has provided an opportunity to evaluate the institutional effectiveness of the Seminary as well as acknowledge the good work that has been done in forming priests for the Diocese of Wagga Wagga and beyond. By way of adhering to the goals of this Review, we offer the following summary of recommendations made in this Review report:

- 1) that Vianney College undertake the development of a Position Description (PD) for the residential formators including but not limited to the following: Rector, Vice-Rector, Spiritual Director, Propaedeutic Formator, Human Formator, Pastoral Formator;
- 2) that the Processes and Policies for Vianney College be reviewed taking into consideration the strengths already embedded in the existing documents, while addressing what might be identified as a fear or distrust of “less orthodox” communities of the Church as well as the secular world;
- 3) that a system for the regular meeting of staff be developed;
- 4) that the development of the human formation plan and its engagement include the involvement and participation of clergy as well as lay men and women who are expert in the field;
- 5) that a plan of acculturation / interculturalization be formed and developed which would include learning and incorporating the values, beliefs, language, customs, and mannerisms of the human and ecclesial contexts in which the seminarians are living and in which they will minister as priests;
- 6) that the Spiritual Director be a full-time position;
- 7) that the Spiritual formation program have a deeper inclusion of the biblical foundation of Catholic spirituality alongside the sacramental life;
- 8) that a Pastoral Director be appointed and that a team of formators who are professionally trained in this field be established to work at this task both within the seminary and the diocese;
- 9) that the Pastoral Team be composed of diocesan clergy as well as male and female members of Christ’s lay faithful;
- 10) that the use of Clinical Pastoral Education, which is already incorporated into the program of formation at Vianney College, be continued and developed;
- 11) that a collaborative program between the diocese and the seminary be explored and developed for the ongoing formation for priests after ordination;
- 12) that the Vianney College remains a house of formation for priests;

- 13) that a study be undertaken as to the feasibility of the Theological and Pastoral Centre operating from the library complex where studies may occur in collaboration between seminarians, permanent deacons in formation, priests, and the lay faithful;
- 14) that Vianney College affiliate with the Catholic Institute of Sydney
 - a. for the benefit and strengthening of the program of priestly formation,
 - b. for the ongoing faith formation of the people of the diocese and beyond as a Theological and Pastoral Centre;
- 15) that consideration be given to
 - a. the updating of the seminary library,
 - b. the establishment of a Library Fund or Trust, and
 - c. the possibility of opening the collection by making it accessible for use in the Diocese as part of a Theological and Pastoral Centre for mission and faith formation;
- 16) that a strategic plan of governance be developed, including an independent audit of the seminary portfolio
 - a. to undertake the necessary financial planning and budgeting,
 - b. to base future financial planning on accurate financial data;
- 17) that the Norms governing the Seminary Finance Council be reviewed and updated to create the Seminary Finance Committee as a sub-committee of the Diocesan Finance Council;
- 18) that a Seminary Council be established and that the members be drawn from the clergy and Christ's lay faithful;
- 19) that Vianney College consider the possibility of collaboration with Corpus Christi College, Carlton and Good Shepherd Seminary, Homebush including options for shared resources, curriculum, formation modules, teaching and formation staff, and pastoral supervisors;
- 20) that a program for ministry to Aboriginal people be developed and resourced at Vianney College.

It is the considered opinion of this Review that these recommendations have the potential to provide the groundwork for the ongoing evolution of Vianney College. They correspond to the integral dimensions of priestly formation as well as offering models of good governance and financial oversight for the bishop. Finally, these recommendations attempt to provide a pathway for the Diocese of Wagga Wagga, under the leadership of Bishop Edwards, to aspire to excellence in all areas of priestly formation as well as the future Theological and Pastoral formation of the clergy and Christ's lay faithful, both in the diocese and beyond.

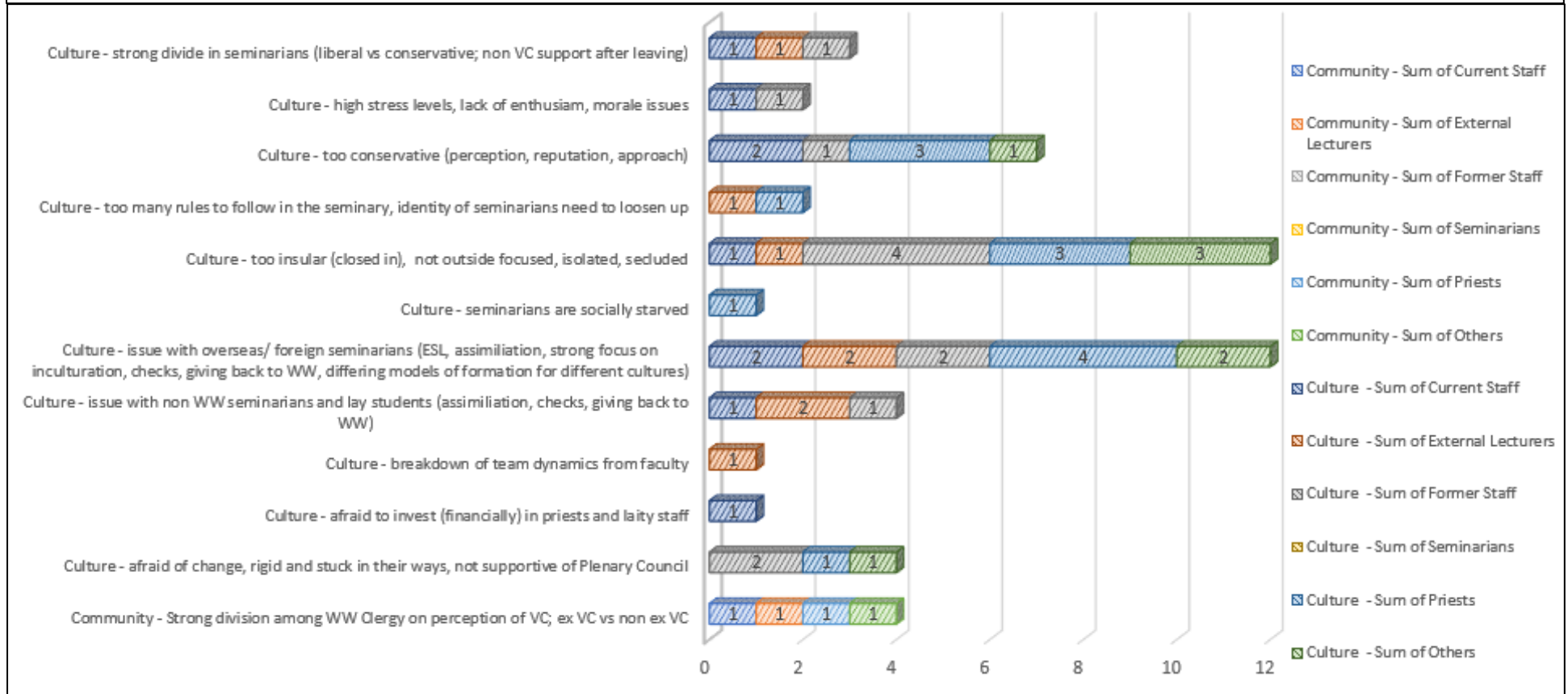
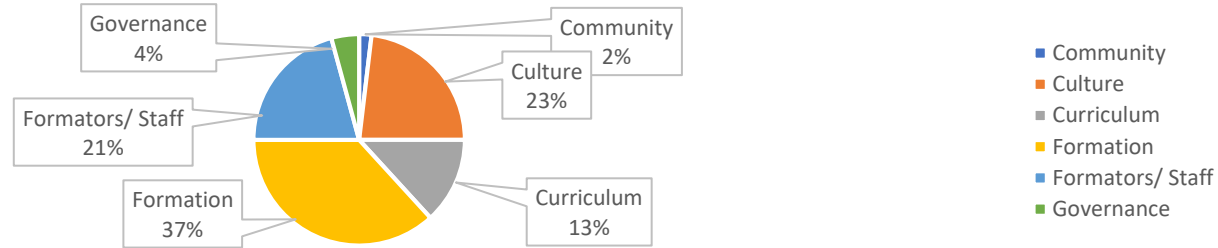
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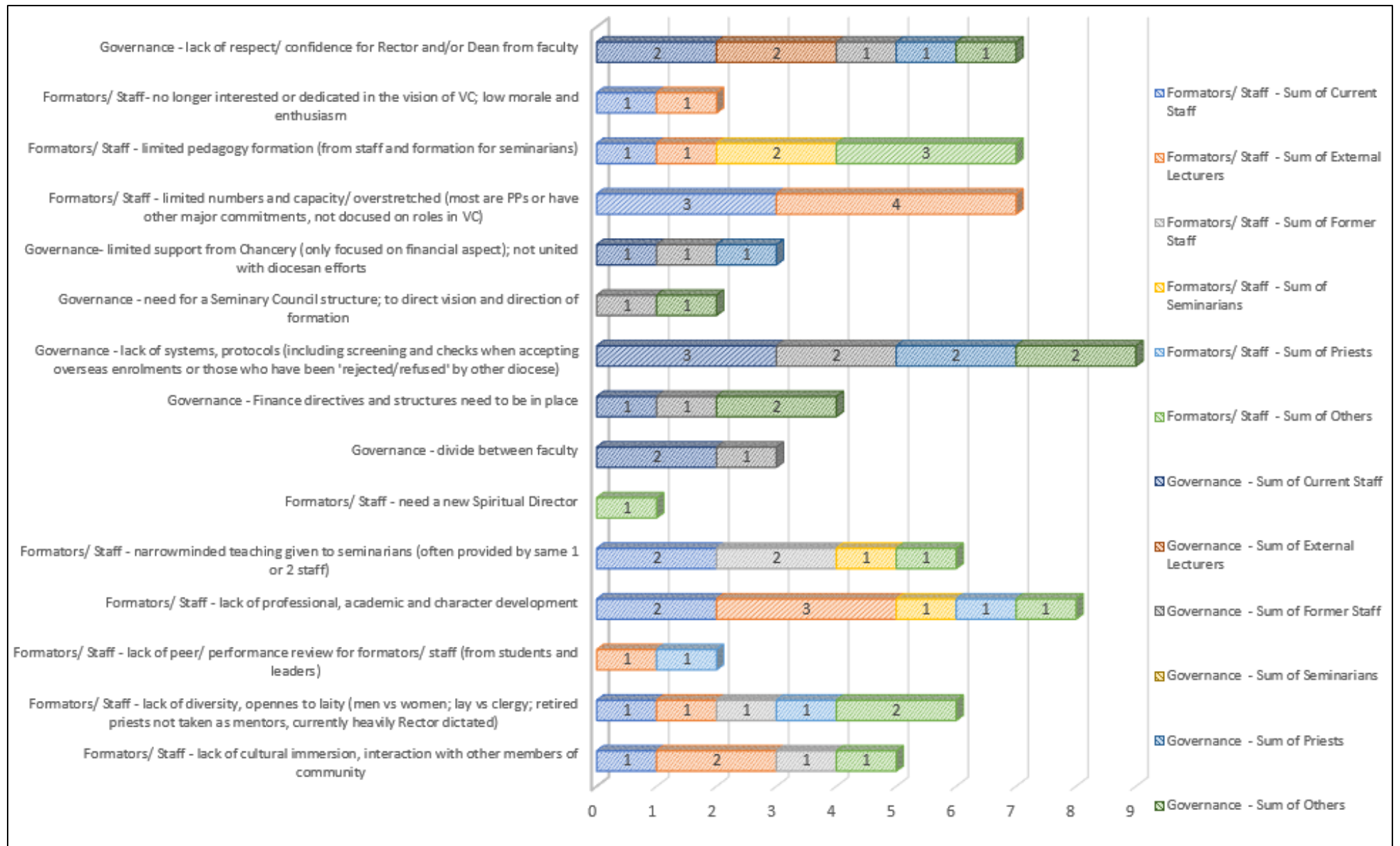
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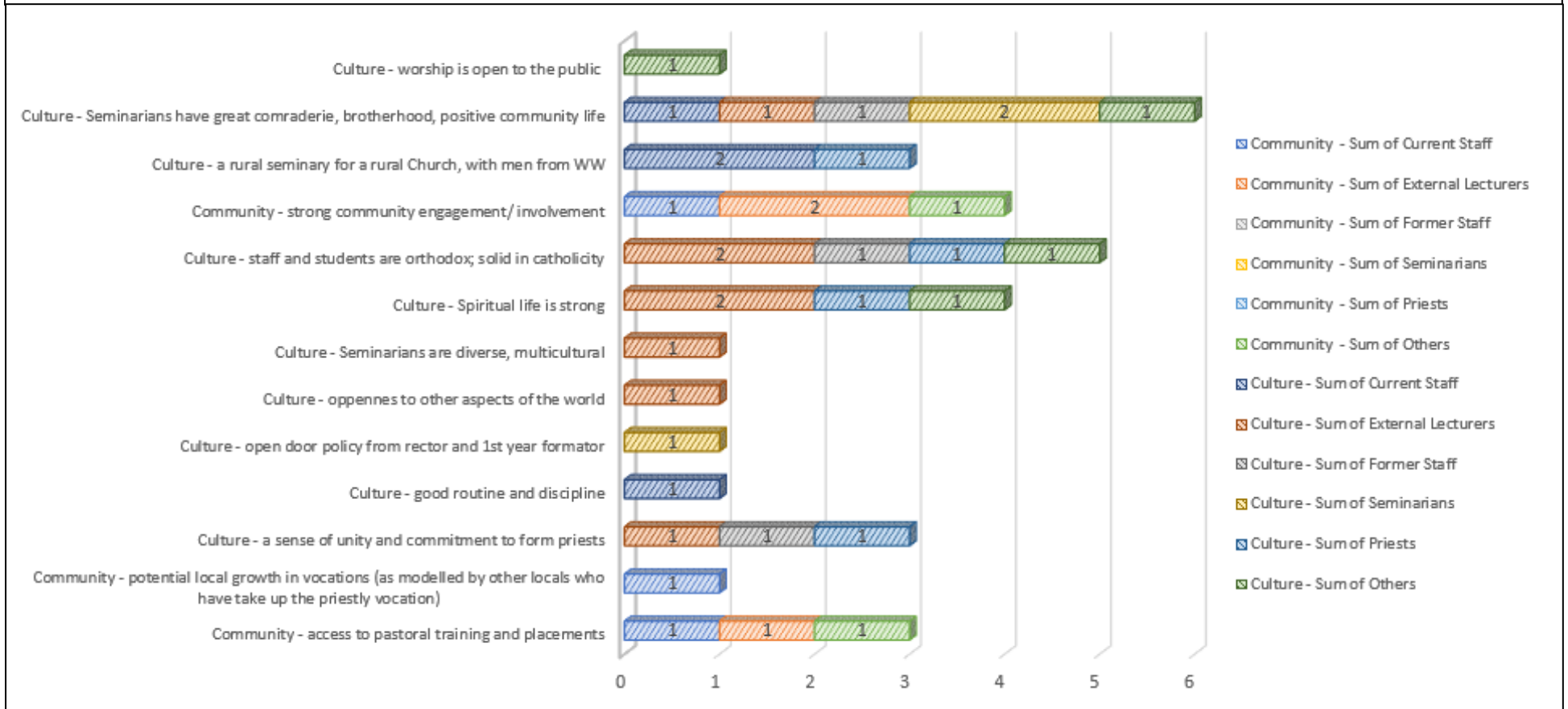
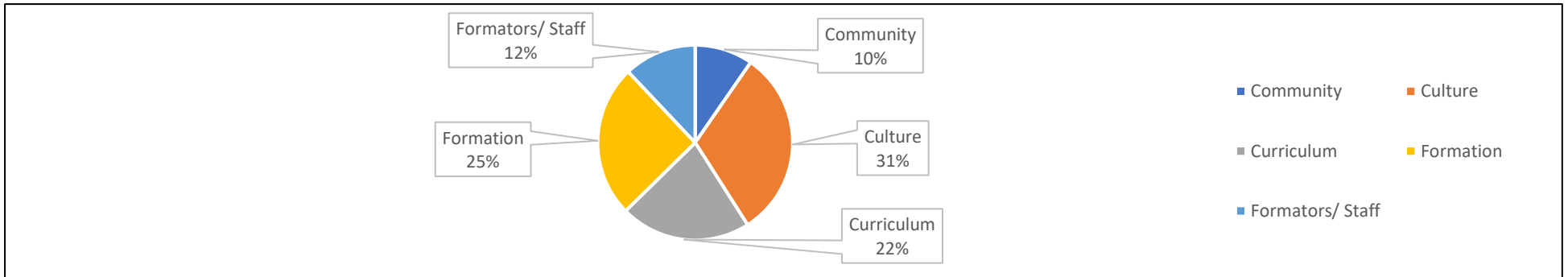
Summary of interview data collated: Named Challenge/issues

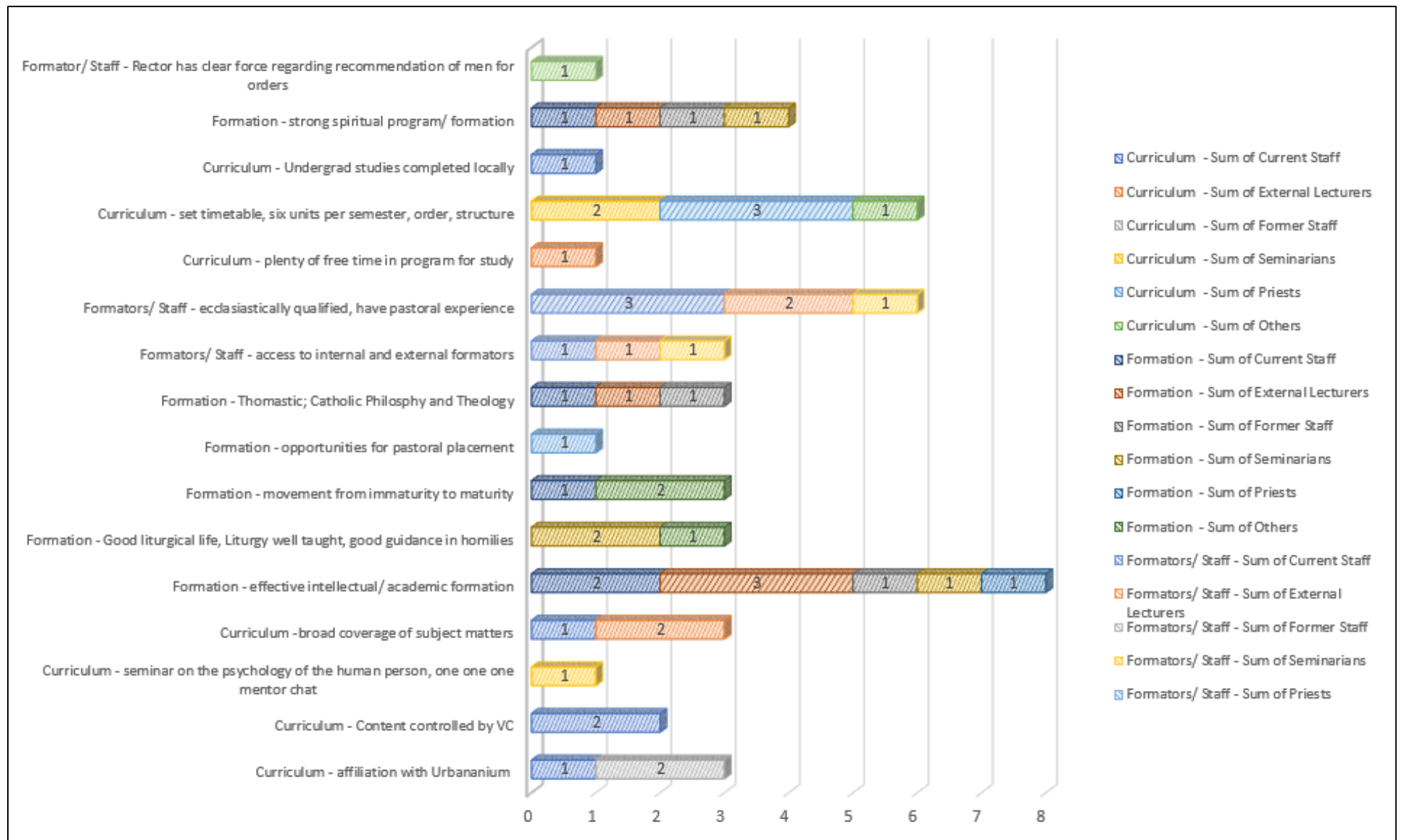






Summary of interview data collated: Named Strengths





Summary of interview data collated: Named Opportunities

