

# Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

## Ripon College, Cuddesdon

November 2018

Published 2018 by the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council  
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# Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the May 2017 Periodic External Review

## Introduction

Following the report published in September 2017, Ripon College Cuddesdon produced a clear Action Plan responding to each of the report recommendations. I was pleased to sign this off in November 2017 as an appropriate way of responding to the report. A year later, in October 2018, I met with the Rt Revd Humphrey Southern (Principal) and Canon Professor Mark D. Chapman (Vice-Principal and Academic Dean) to conduct final stage of the review process. I would like to thank them both for the time they gave to this follow up visit, and the hospitality the college provided.

## Context

The PER took place at a time when the College's Governors and Senior Staff were already engaged in serious reflection and planning as to how the College could best consolidate the very significant expansion which had happened over the previous decade, while continuing to live out its 'calling to serve the Church' in the rapidly changing world of theological education, and its commitment to 'serious engagement with the breadth and diversity of the Church of England.' Thus the PER report added further momentum, and some shaping, to existing internal directions of travel.

There has been significant change within Ripon College Cuddesdon since the PER. Most visibly four key staff members have left, the Directors of Worship and of Pastoral Studies and the Deans of the Oxford Ministry Course and of West of England Ministerial Training Course; and there has been a far-ranging reconceptualization of how the different pathways within the institution relate to the whole, and are presented publicly. Indeed, the name used for the whole institution has now changed to simply *Cuddesdon*. The substantial Strategic Development Plan 2017-2022 has been produced, outlining a coherent programme; its second iteration is about to be approved.

Overall Cuddesdon has responded whole-heartedly to the PER, taking forward its main thrusts with real energy. The scale and breadth of the staff and institutional changes have understandably delayed the implementation of several recommendations, but these are now clearly in process.

I comment below on the implementation of the recommendations of the September 2017 report. The recommendations are in bold, an account of progress with each is in regular type, and my concluding assessment is in italics.

## Recommendation I

**We recommend that the Principal leads a thorough-going review of the range of partnerships and dispersed communities / pathways which form RCC to identify:**

- (a) the uniting narrative, ethos or calling which creates a clear identity for RCC throughout these different communities;**
- (b) the synergies or other benefits which could come from the breadth and diversity of these communities / pathways;**

- (c) whether it is feasible for RCC to thrive while containing within it the current diversity of communities / pathways with diverse relationships to the 'centre';**
- (d) structures and policies to set out clearly what activity and oversight takes places at the RCC level, and what is delegated to each community/pathway; and**
- (e) the appropriate way of enabling the voice within the governance structures of dioceses for whom RCC is the provider of Reader and non-stipendiary ordination training.**

Wide-ranging change has taken place in the area covered by this recommendation. The old identities have been replaced with a far-clearer pattern: Cuddesdon Full-Time and Part-Time Pathways; and Cuddesdon Gloucester & Hereford and Portsmouth Pathway Cuddesdon. In the process the legacies of the competing identities lingering from the period of mergers and expansion have been sensitively but firmly dealt with.

What was previously the Residential Student Community and the Oxford Ministry Course has now become Ripon College Cuddesdon Full-time Pathway and Part-time Pathway. Moving away from the 'Oxford' name makes sense, given that currently only half the students on the Oxford Ministry Course are actually from Oxford Diocese. These changes, supported by Oxford Diocese, have facilitated a far greater coherence across the whole student body, and have allowed the college to develop a new full-time context-based pathway, and support the growth of the 'dual-track' programme, where ordinands draw on both the full-time and part-time pathways. What had been different identities has now become different modes of theological education within a common identity.

Similarly the move from WEMTC to Cuddesdon Gloucester & Hereford represents the completion, or next evolution, of the partnership established in 2011. It focuses attention on the current partnership between the TEI and the dioceses in question, letting the history of the journey to this point fade, and creates a harmony with the more recently partnership with Portsmouth Diocese – Portsmouth Pathway Cuddesdon. It has created a more transparent structure, both in terms of the oversight of the pathway by the senior leadership of Cuddesdon, and the significance of the particular dioceses and their strategic needs.

These changes have been thorough-going. For example, the titles of the senior staff members heading up the different pathways changing from 'Dean', which suggests the leader of an institution, to Director, generally used within theological education to suggest the leader of an aspect of an institution. The name of the overall institution has been changed in general use from Ripon College Cuddesdon to simply Cuddesdon, which facilitates names such as Cuddesdon Full-Time Pathway or Cuddesdon (Hereford) and signals an important change (Ripon College Cuddesdon remains the legal name and is used for the physical site at Cuddesdon). Publicity material has been thoroughly revised. These changes have been carried out in consultation with and with the support of the student body. Accompanying these changes has been the rethinking of the governance link with the partner dioceses with boards of reference being set up.

The partnership with CMS was always different because CMS is an independent charity, with much activity outwith the Cuddesdon partnership. Nevertheless here too a revised partnership agreement has been drawn up to allow a smoother sharing of resources, for example allowing Cuddesdon students to take CMS programmes free of charge.

Much of this still needs to bed down. But initial signs are very positive, such as the inclusion of Portsmouth Reader candidates into Cuddesdon residenceals, and the shared induction to Cuddesdon in Sep 2018 for all part-time students – Cuddesdon Part-time Pathway, Portsmouth Pathway Cuddesdon, Cuddesdon Gloucester

& Hereford – which promoted a new sense of integration. The leadership of the college have plans to continue gaining the benefits of the new clearer identity in the next phase of curriculum design, and to identify further synergies.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

## **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend that a clear set of criteria is developed and agreed by the Board of Governors which would guide any future consideration of further expansion/ diversification.**

The College has a clear strategic plan, and papers regarding income generation and planning priorities, which respond to the insecurity and anxiety which lay at the heart of this recommendation. The College continues to wish to respond positively to requests from dioceses (for which it was commended in the original report), to develop the global reach of the college, and believes that the changes in the funding of ordination training in the Church of England require continued diversification. Criteria for all plans for the development of academic programmes are being drawn up. Although achieved in a different way than set out in the recommendation, and the work is ongoing, the goal of greater clarity over future developments to give stability and reduce anxiety has been substantially achieved.

*Implemented being taken forward; no further action.*

## **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that once Recommendation 1 is implemented, the college reviews its publicity and communications strategy to ensure that it is appropriate and balanced given the emerging nature of RCC, and it communicates clearly and confidently the identity of RCC.**

The publicity and communication aspects of the changes outlined under recommendation 1 have been fully addressed, with new logos and letterheads, job titles and a new website.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

## **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend that RCC reviews the pattern of worship for the residential community, and the approach set out in the chapel handbook, against its own commitment to embracing diversity within the Church of England to ensure:**

- (a) that students from a range of backgrounds and experiences find their own worship style and tradition respected and affirmed;**
- (b) that students are helped to understand and embrace the range of worship traditions and styles which will be present in the churches in which they will serve; and**
- (c) that the balance between order and creativity serves the formational and training needs of the students.**

Three changes have been made which respond well to this recommendation. The senior leadership team have taken clear ownership of the patterns of worship (particularly, currently, the Vice-Principal) ensuring that the

college's commitment to embracing the diversity within the Church of England is manifested in practice. The pattern of worship and of the music used have been mildly (but effectively) revised to give greater respect to 'less liturgical' worship, and greater musical diversity within more formal liturgies. The Director of the Part-time Pathway has taken on a clear responsibility for the oversight of worship at the weekend and summer residential to ensure good collaboration, staff involvement and feedback.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

#### **Recommendation 5**

**We recommend that, as RCC emerges from a period of rapid change and expansion, serious scrutiny is given to staff work-load and work/life balance.**

The Academic Dean (a new role in 2017) has established a systematic approach to timetabling and allocation of staff time. This has resulted in the withdrawal of a number of elective modules which were very heavy on staff time but were not core to the curriculum. There is a more rigorous review and appraisal process to attend to the manageability of staff workloads. The large number of staff changes since the PER did regrettably, but understandably, add to pressure on staff, and the wider pressures within theological education continue to impact on tutors, but the actions taken have been a serious response to the recommendation.

*Implemented being taken forward; no further action.*

#### **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend that, once the review of the Strategic Plan is complete, the Governance Structures are reviewed to ensure that they enable the implementation of that plan.**

The governance structures have been developed, within the flexibility allowed in the current constitutional framework. Governors have been nominated by the Bishops of Gloucester, Hereford and Oxford, and the Chair remains the Bishop of Portsmouth. Councils of Reference have been established for Portsmouth, Gloucester and Hereford.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

#### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that the process of review continues with a sense of purpose and the three workgroups fully report by the end of 2017.**

The three working groups (Curriculum; Team Culture and Process; Branding, Marketing and Outreach) completed their review work, and contributed to the significant changes in the college since the PER. The continuation of their work is now part of the ongoing management of the college rather than specific review groups.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that, in support of the emerging policy on appointment on the basis of expertise, the skill gaps in the current Governing Body are identified, and new appointments are made explicitly to fill those gaps.**

The Board of Governors has attended to the question of skill gaps and expertise. Appointments made since the PER have contributed to the closing of gaps as well as meeting the need for representation from partners. There is one remaining vacancy and there is a clear sense of what expertise that governor should bring.

*Implemented being taken forward; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 9**

**We recommend that the process of the formulation of the Strategic Plan be pursued according to the agreed timescale.**

A comprehensive strategic plan has been developed and approved. It is reviewed annually.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 10**

**We recommend that the deployment of staff across the Pathways is reviewed, such that students on the PP and WEMTC are more frequently taught by Core members of RCC staff, and that the learning experience at Cuddesdon is enriched by the skills and practical experience of the associate staff.**

Such a review has taken place, alongside other changes in the staff team. The actions detailed under recommendation 1 have also contributed to closer collaboration. Those on part-time pathways are taught regularly by core members of staff as well as, in the case of Portsmouth, and Gloucester & Hereford, by associate staff in those locations. Teaching by core staff is particularly concentrated in the residentials, but the directors of the 'off-site' part-time pathways who regularly contribute weekday teaching are now more clearly 'core staff'. The full-time pathway still draws little on the experience of the associate staff. However, there are strong operations reasons (travel times and geography) why it is hard to fully integrate the teaching teams. The current approach seems an appropriate way to handle this issue.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 11**

**We recommend that staff continue to be encouraged to further develop collaboration across the teams and share learning.**

The college is honest that implementation of this recommendation was delayed last year because of the staff changes, which left remaining staff stretched, and new relationships needing to be built. However, there are concrete plans in place for staff development days during the current academic year, and an increase in team teaching.

*Implemented being taken forward; no further action.*

## **Recommendation 12**

**We recommend RCC explore how the whole student body might be enriched by more widespread opportunities for pioneering placements and how these might relate to and impact on existing models for mission and ministry.**

The appointment of a new Tutor in Pastoral Theology in January 2018 means that there is a full-time staff member dedicated to ensuring a wide range of placements are used, and the expertise available through the CMS partnership has meant that all students have teaching and experience in new models of mission and ministry.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

## **Recommendation 13**

**We recommend that RCC explores ways in which the relationship between CMS and Cuddesdon might creatively develop further to bring to the benefit of the whole student body the strength of CMS' mission and evangelism teaching and its resources and culture for outward-facing engagement with the world and world church.**

The partnership continues to develop, for example the use of CMS expertise in global mission to locate scholars to benefit from spending time studying and living at Cuddesdon. The revised agreement between Cuddesdon and CMS is a good platform for further development, and makes it easier for Cuddesdon students to access CMS modules. Nevertheless there is still some distance to travel to fulfil the aspiration 'to bring to the benefit of the whole student body the strength of CMS' mission and evangelism teaching ...'.

*Implemented being taken forward; no further action.*

## **Recommendation 14**

**We recommend that as part of the process of consolidation, RCC focuses on core worship skills required by IME 1 and liaise with diocesan staff if there are concerns about IME 2 provision.**

The worship teaching has been reviewed and evolved to focus more on the core basic skills for leading worship and what is realistic to be achieved at the end of IME 1.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

## **Recommendation 15**

**We recommend that further consideration is given as to how the college:**

**(a) adequately prepares all students to be able to lead worship and preach in a parish of a charismatic or conservative evangelical tradition; and**

**(b) supports students from a charismatic or conservative evangelical tradition in developing a sustaining pattern of prayer and worship.**

As outlined under recommendation 4, the college has made some important modest changes in the patterns of worship, which contribute to the fulfilling of this recommendation. At the same time there has been a change of tone, with the emphasis being on helping students understand that the liturgical traditions with which they

are unfamiliar are *authentic* forms of Anglican worship. There is also a new emphasis on helping students understand, and thus perhaps appreciate, different patterns such as the scriptural nature of the daily office, charismatic-style worship, and the quiet time provided by the 'greater silence' each day. These issues are always complex in an institution which encompasses a significant diversity; the approach being taken seems genuine, thoughtful and helpful.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 16**

**We recommend that RCC considers carefully how to ensure that responsiveness to the student/partner voice does not undermine the strategic need for consolidation.**

The evidence of the changes since the PER suggest that these issues have been balanced appropriately.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 17**

**We recommend that the TEI should:**

- (a) identify the main committees/groups relating to the Common Awards;**
- (b) illustrate the relationships and reporting lines between them; and**
- (c) clarify the roles and responsibilities of each committee/group in relation to Common Awards provision.**

The college has admitted that the structure at the time of the PER had not fully integrated the Common Awards Management Committee into the pre-Common Awards committees and structures within the college. The whole area has now been streamlined and brought into a coherent scheme. The different pathways need separate Boards of Study to ensure that the voices of students on the geographically dispersed pathways have proper representation, but these are now properly structured and scheduled to give a clear flow through to the Common Awards Management Committee.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 18**

**We recommend that the TEI should clarify and implement its minimum expectations for core information to be presented on Moodle module sites.**

This has been done; and is monitored by the Academic Dean and Administrator.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 19**

**We recommend that the TEI should require each and every delivery centre to develop and use an academic handbook that makes use of standard text and complies with the TEI's minimum expectations.**



This has been done. Common electronic submission via Moodle has also further pulled together the practices of the different centres.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 20**

**We recommend that the TEI should review its academic handbooks to ensure that the content is accurate and up-to-date.**

This has been done.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 21**

**We recommend that, as the Common Awards programmes progress and larger numbers of students graduate from the programmes, CAMC should give more detailed consideration to graduate destinations.**

Cuddesdon has experienced some difficulty in relation to this recommendation, since the terms of reference for the CAMC make no reference to graduate destinations, and it believes that the question of graduate destinations and ongoing progression for those completing Common Awards programmes would be best done by the Church of England centrally, which already holds data on ministers.

*Further work on this issue is required, but it is outside of the college's control.*

### **Recommendation 22**

**We recommend that the TEI should:**

- (a) explore possibilities for improving its collection of digitised texts; and**
- (b) provide fuller information about all the libraries that students may access at present, including possibilities such as libraries in the Oxford-based Common Awards TEIs and (as suggested by the student representatives) the libraries at Pusey House.**

The college has taken action to improve its collection of digital texts, given the constraints of the CLA, and ensures information about other libraries in the Oxford area is passed on to students. More broadly, there have been some improvements in the access to electronic resources through the CA Hub and SCM ebooks. This would be further improved if Common Awards students had access to the resources which are available to Durham University students, but that is outside of the college's control.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

### **Recommendation 23**

**We recommend that the TEI should develop further the academic peer-review process:**

- (a) to ensure that cross-centre peer-review of core and associate staff takes place;**
- (b) to ensure that CAMC considers any relevant issues to be addressed;**

**(c) to formalise the process of identifying and sharing good practice within and between delivery centres; and**

**(d) to maximise the enhancement potential of peer-review as an opportunity for reviewers to learn from reviewees.**

The college is honest that while renewed peer-review structures and processes were designed, their implementation was undermined last year by of the significant staff changes which took place. This is regrettable but understandable. The college is now taking this forward with commitment.

*Recommendation being taken forward; no further action.*

#### **Recommendation 24**

**We recommend that the TEI should reflect further on how it might: make the most of its diversity and size; work corporately to identify best practice; and provide institution-wide professional development opportunities to bring together core and associate staff from across all delivery centres.**

The college reflected carefully upon this, and what was a realistic way of implementing this given the complexity and geographical dispersion of the intuition. It has established staff training days each term for core staff. It has decided that it is not feasible for associate staff from all delivery centres (who will not be teaching every term) to be involved in gathered institution-wide events, but has clarified the responsibility for professional development of associate staff within the role of each pathway director.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

#### **Recommendation 25**

**We recommend that TEI should take a more proactive approach to setting assignment deadlines and monitoring feedback to ensure that, wherever reasonably possible, target turnaround times are met.**

The college has implemented new systems overseen by the Academic Dean in this area, which has been further facilitated by the introduction of online submission from Sep 2018 which makes tracking submissions easier. Due appreciation has been given to the relationship between deadlines and staff workload.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

#### **Recommendation 26**

**We recommend that the TEI should formalise the reporting structure between Boards of Studies and CAMC by:**

**(a) developing common Terms of Reference and Membership for Boards of Studies;**

**(b) requiring Boards of Studies minutes to be submitted to CAMC routinely;**

**(c) ensuring that CAMC identifies and discusses issues arising from the Boards of Studies minutes (including common issues across different delivery centres, and examples of good practice); and**

**(d) clearly documenting within the minutes CAMC's discussion of these matters.**

This has been done.

*Recommendation implemented; no further action.*

I commend Cuddesdon, its governors, staff and students, for the openness and commitment that has been put into taking forward the recommendation of the PER.

**Revd Professor Jeremy Duff, Senior Reviewer**

**November 2018**