

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

Lindisfarne College of Theology

January 2019

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Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the January 2018 Periodic External Review

Introduction

Lindisfarne College of Theology (LCT; known then as Lindisfarne Regional Training Partnership), underwent PER in January 2018. The report, published in April 2018, made 31 Recommendations, including one Condition from Durham University, and this necessitated a follow-up visit. This visit was made by Revd Prof Jane de Gay, Lead Reviewer, who met with Revd Dr David Bryan, Principal; Kirsten Tattersall, Executive Director; and Canon Isabella McDonald Booth, Chair of the Board of Trustees, at Cuthbert House, Durham, on 16th January 2019.

In advance of the meeting, LCT had provided the following documentation: the Business Plan (dated 13.8.18); a detailed Action Plan responding to the PER recommendations; a draft Policy on Staff Development; and the Policy on Different Integrities. Validation documents for the MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission were supplied on 17th January, following the formal approval of the programme by Durham University.

Summary of outcomes of the follow-up visit

The Action Plan showed that the following recommendations had been **acted upon satisfactorily**: **Recommendation 1** (creating new public-facing material); **Recommendation 3** (reaching a wider audience); **Recommendations 4-5** (prominent display of policy documents, including Safeguarding information); **Recommendation 6** (regular discussion of Safeguarding at the Board); **Recommendations 7 and 30** (audit of facilities for accessibility); **Recommendation 8** (guidelines on corporate worship); **Recommendation 10** (inclusion of woman presidents in Eucharistic rota); **Recommendations 14 and 27** (election of a student representative to the Board); and **Recommendation 28** (review of parity of experience for all groups). The production of a Policy on Different Integrities meets **Recommendations 9 and 10**. Among these actions, the new website (**Recommendation 1**) is particularly commendable as it presents the course attractively and in a user-friendly, accessible format.

The Action Plan also shows that responses to other recommendations are **close to completion**: data-gathering (**Recommendation 25**) is in progress and the course team are reviewing the process for the gathering and analysis of data in the future. The Lead Reviewer has confidence that this will be complete by the target date of Easter 2019. The course team have given students further guidance on compiling their portfolios (**Recommendation 23**). In discussion, the Lead Reviewer was able to clarify that the reviewers were calling for students to be encouraged to engage more closely with reflexive criticism: the course team found this clarification helpful, and will incorporate it into future guidance. The Principal would be meeting the Bishop of Berwick (Newcastle Diocese) and the Bishop of Durham to discuss the different pathways in January 2019 (**Recommendations 2 and 24**) and a paper is to be written outlining all the pathways for clarity and transparency. The course team has adopted Moodle in order to make more creative use of the VLE, and this is under development (**Recommendation 29**).

The Business Plan, which had been compiled in response to **Recommendation 20 and 26**, incorporates responses to several other recommendations, and this was the particular focus for the discussion in the

follow-up meeting on 16th January. The Lead Reviewer was also encouraged to hear from the course team that significant progress had been made since the publication of the Business Plan in August 2018.

The original PER team had expressed concerns, leading to recommendations in the following areas: governance and management, including the course team's relationships with students, the Board of Governors and the Dioceses; and Finance and Sustainability. The Lead Reviewer was reassured to see that significant progress had been made in these areas.

Governance and Management

Since the PER visit, the programme has undergone a change in identity, replacing the former name Lindisfarne Regional Training Partnership (which had reflected the fact that the course was dependent on the Dioceses), with a new name: Lindisfarne College of Theology. This name reflects the status of the course as an independent entity. The name was chosen in consultation with existing students and the course team have reflected carefully on the new identity. Since the PER visit, the Board has also undergone significant changes, including the appointment of a new Chair. Although there were only four trustees when the Business Plan was published, the new Chair is making progress with recruiting others: she is close to recruiting three others, including one with extensive financial expertise (**Recommendations 13 and 21**). In addition, a student representative has been elected to the Board (**Recommendations 14 and 27**): the team reported that this has opened up channels of communication and has changed the dynamic of Board meetings so that issues raised by students are now being discussed.

The Executive Lead has now been in post for a year. She has had monthly meetings with the Chair of the Board, a practice that she has found to be a source of 'fantastic support'. This meets **Recommendation 15**, that 'the Board fully supports the Executive Lead in taking over her new role.' The Transition Manager has now withdrawn, as her work is complete. Roles have been revised to reflect the new approach to management. The Dean has now become Principal, reflecting his leadership role within the programme. The Senior Formational Tutor has now become Director of Studies, while a new post of Formational and Placement Tutor has been created. A Finance and Operations Manager has also been appointed.

As a result of changes to the Board and the new roles, a new ethos had developed among the staff, with an 'open approach' to teamwork and collaboration. The team agreed that 'everyone has the opportunity to contribute' and all voices are heard. A pattern of weekly staff meetings has been developed, with staff taking turns to lead prayers. These meetings are regarded as 'protected time'. This meets **Recommendation 16**, on team-building. Staff also have regular opportunities to review the progress of the organization (**Recommendation 17**), including an Envisioning Day, which took place on 21st March 2018, at which the new identity was discussed. A follow-up is planned for the autumn of 2019. The Executive Lead is being mentored by the Chair, and mentors are being sought for other members of the Board (**Recommendation 18**). The Chair welcomed the suggestion that she might ask a peer from another TEI to become a mentor.

Staff workload is now kept under review, with a HR Tracker, to ensure that staff are taking annual leave and study leave as appropriate (**Recommendation 11**). Staff members agreed that this was useful for raising awareness of the importance of making use of their annual leave allocation. The addition of a new member of staff (the Formational and Placement Tutor) has eased the burden. The Policy on Staff Development demonstrates that the team are paying attention to the importance of research, study and professional

updating (**Recommendation 31**). Team members are happy with the policy, which was approved by the Board on 5th December 2018.

The team reported that LCT has moved to a 'mature' relationship with the Dioceses, appropriate to its status as an independent body. Contracts have been drawn up to reflect this new relationship and were signed on January 17th (**Recommendation 12**). The Dioceses recognize the distinctive contribution of LCT to the training needs of the diocese, leading to a willingness to co-operate and support. The focus is now on student recruitment, with both parties making mutual contributions.

Finance and Sustainability

In the PER report of April 2018, the reviewers had expressed concern about the sustainability of student numbers and the impact this would have on the financial position of the LCT. The LCT had been awarded the contract for training in the Durham and Newcastle dioceses based on an annual recruitment of 11 Ordinands and 11 Readers-in-Training across both dioceses, but their recruitment did not meet these targets in 2017-18. The reviewers accordingly recommended that 'LRTP enters into discussion with its commissioning dioceses as a matter of urgency to ensure adequate block funding should the aspirational numbers of per-capita funded students not materialize.' (**Recommendation 19**)

The Business Plan of August 2018 noted that 'the figures for 2018-19 intake year have not met the aspirations of both Dioceses and LCT. As a result of these numbers being low, the income received over the three-year period will be reduced' (p. 33). However, as a consequence of this projection, LCT entered into discussion with the Dioceses about (a) increasing numbers in subsequent years and (b) addressing any shortfalls in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 intake years. This consultation, documented in an appendix to the Business Plan, took place in June/July 2018. Both dioceses agreed to provide additional funding to ensure that LCT would continue trading in order to allow ordinands and readers-in-training sponsored by the dioceses to complete their training. Each diocese would contribute 50% of the forecast loss for three academic years, subject to review in June 2019. The LCT course team noted that, although the Dioceses did not agree to the *de minimis* payment that the reviewers had recommended (**Recommendation 19**), the financial support provided would achieve the same aim of financial sustainability, at least over three years. More importantly, the Dioceses had both committed to work with LCT to improve recruitment of ordinands and readers-in-training: for example, both dioceses have reviewed and made changes to their provision of Vocations guidance.

These are encouraging developments. LCT also provided details of ways in which they are seeking to diversify income streams to supplement income from ordinands and readers-in-training. Plans include a Pastoral Leaders Course, which is projected to bring in £6000 each for 20 students, and a Master of Arts in Theology, Ministry and Mission, to commence in 2019-2020. This would bring in £2,500 per student per annum, from a student body that would mainly be self-funding, though some would be eligible for grants. The course team have done market research for the MA: it is anticipated that a number of alumni would be recruited to the programme. This programme was validated on 17th January.

The Business Plan also includes an aim to identify and apply for relevant grants. This process is already underway and it is hoped that the course will be able to draw on the expertise of the new Board members and the alumni community to help identify potential sources of funding.

The creation of a revised risk register (**Recommendations 21 and 22**) as part of the Business Plan also shows an awareness to keep the future under review. Although not all items have been given completion dates, it was explained that this is because they are to be considered at every meeting of the Board.

For ease of cross-reference, the 31 recommendations of the 2018 PER are set out at the end of this report.

Conclusion

From the evidence, the Lead Reviewer is able to conclude that the course team has given thorough consideration to all the recommendations of the PER. Many of these have been met, others are close to completion, and others are being carefully addressed. Although the sustainability of the course can never be assured, especially in a competitive and changing climate, the course team are thinking creatively and proactively, and working hard to ensure that LCT will continue to trade and train students into the future.

Revd Prof Jane de Gay, Leeds Trinity University
Lead Reviewer

31st January 2019

Recommendations of the January 2018 Periodic External Review

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the LRTP develop public-facing material as a matter of urgency, in order to articulate the distinctive features of the programme for a wider audience.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that LRTP give due consideration to clarifying priorities for the revalidated programme, especially intended audiences for 3-year and 2-year pathways.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that LRTP find ways to reach out to a wider audience with a view to being more inclusive.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the policies for Safeguarding; Worship; Respect at Work and Study; Placement and Fieldwork; and Common Awards Admission Complaints be made easier to find on LRTP's website, and that all policies have dates and review dates.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Designated Safeguarding Officer's name and contact details be published on the opening page of the Safeguarding Policy.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that Safeguarding be a stated, fixed item on all Board agendas.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that LRTP conducts an audit of facilities and practices to ensure that the requirements for potential students with additional needs are met.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the guidelines on attendance at corporate worship at the weekly Monday teaching evenings should be amended to 'all should; none must'.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the Course produces a policy for any conscience issues, for both individuals and the course as a whole, if and when the president at the Eucharist is a woman.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the Course considers inviting a woman to preside at the Eucharist on occasion.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the Board of LRTP keeps the workload of the core staff under review, factoring in opportunities for continued learning, research, reflection on practice, and spiritual renewal, as well as ensuring that legal standards for annual leave and rest days are met.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the LRTP Directors/Trustees ensure that LRTP are fully conversant with all sections of the commissioning contracts and the joint statement by the two dioceses.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that the Board (governing body) establishes clear roles and responsibilities for governors and staff.

Recommendation 14

That LRTP considers opening up its structures to enable regular staff representation and student input at meetings of the Board (governing body).

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the Board fully supports the Executive Lead in taking on the new role, including enabling her in terms of time and capacity to take over the tasks of the Transition Manager.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the LRTP permanent staff find suitable time to further engender cross-working and team-building in order to fulfil the aspiration of developing positive relationships within the new structure.

Recommendation 17

We recommend that the Board and staff regularly review progress in meeting the aims and objectives of the organisation and identify landmarks for determining confident ways of working in the new setting.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that the LRTP considers putting in place a mentoring process for its Board members.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that LRTP enters into discussion with its commissioning dioceses as a matter of urgency to ensure adequate block funding should the aspirational numbers of per-capita funded students not materialise.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that LRTP puts in place a robust and realistic business plan at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that the LRTP Board considers extending its membership to include a member with management accounting expertise, especially during the first phase of the contract to 2021, to ensure that its financial responsibilities are met.

Recommendation 22

We recommend that the LRTP Board considers the inclusion of review dates for particular risk items within its risk register, to ensure that the balance of risk versus the number of items to be monitored becomes more transparent.

Recommendation 23

We recommend that students be given further guidance and support with the analytical and reflective aspect of the Ministerial Development Portfolios.

Recommendation 24

We recommend that initially a careful monitoring is carried out to ensure that the students are placed on the most appropriate pathway for their training needs.

Recommendation 25

We recommend that the Course collect and review statistical data on progression, student outcomes and title placements, and use the information for planning purposes.

Recommendation 26

The review team requires that the TEI provide the Business Plan, updated Risk Register and any supporting documentation (such as reports and minutes of the Board of Trustees) to the University within three months of the publication of PER report. (The University of Durham review team have made this a Condition.)

Recommendation 27

The review team recommends that the TEI considers how best to ensure the student voice is represented at the Board of Trustees.

Recommendation 28

The review team recommends that the TEI keeps under review the parity of experience for all groups of students, and the relative value of joint versus tailored activities.

Recommendation 29

The review team recommends that the TEI considers using the VLE more creatively, and not simply as a repository for programme information.

Recommendation 30

The review team therefore recommend that LRTP ensure that systems are in place to routinely check the continued accessibility of premises and their suitability of students with additional needs.

Recommendation 31

The review team recommends that the TEI creates a strategic approach to the identification, implementation, and review of staff development needs for all staff (including core and associate tutors), with a particular focus on supporting research-led teaching.