

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

St Mellitus College

April 2019

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Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the October - November 2017 Periodic External Review

Introduction

Since the 2017 PER report St Mellitus College (SMC) has experienced its biggest intake to date with an increase in London full-time ordinands (74; 44 in 2017), although the expectation for 2019 is that the intake will return to previous levels. The total number of ordinands is now 302 (up from 250). The new East Midlands centre opens in September; a director has been appointed and is in place. The former North-West Director, the Rt Rev'd Dr Jill Duff, is now the Bishop of Lancaster; she has been replaced by the Rev'd Dr Michael Leyden.

The issue of capacity has been eased by using Swanwick for all residentials. The extra travel time has been mitigated by reducing the number of weekends by one.

At the London base teaching capacity has been increased by the conversion of the basement of the former vicarage into three new teaching rooms.

I met with the Dean, the Rev'd Dr Andy Emerton, on Thursday 25 April.

The formal response of the TEI to the review team's recommendations, with an Action Plan and progress report, together with the senior reviewer's commentary, follows below. This report sets out the original recommendations in **bold**, the actions identified in the Action Plan in *italics* and the reviewers' comments in Roman (normal) type.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the TEI review the governance of its LLM training programme with its partner dioceses (including oversight of quality of teaching when not provided by SMC).

Action taken

The presenting issue has been addressed by implementing a 180-credit pathway for Chelmsford LLMs and non-accredited ministerial input being delivered on Saturdays for Chelmsford students; for London students all external tutors must be agreed by the management team. Governance is being reviewed for both dioceses.

Recommendation implemented, though the governance review needs to be completed.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the college review the viability and intensity of the LLM pathway with the diocese of London.

Action taken

The St Edmund's Course continues to impact the cohort size. The college has reviewed this with the London Director of Ministry and a minimum cohort of six has been agreed (at the time of the review there was a cohort of one). The college is expecting that this minimum size will be met in the September 2019 intake.

Recommendation implemented; no further action.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the college review the way contextual placements (and supervisors) are selected, resourced and integrated into the learning community (see also Recommendations 10 & 19).

Action taken

Placements are reviewed every year; good practice has been added to the Centres Working Group as a regular agenda item and the supervisor form is included as part of the annual review cycle.

The change in funding arrangements (so that placements are no longer required to make a financial contribution) has enabled greater protection to be given to study time (minimum one day, and ideally two days, per week) and has given rise to a broader range of placements.

Recommendation implemented; college to consider further training of supervisors in theological reflection.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that SMC consider whether there is a normative understanding of partnered and family life present within the college ethos/culture, and if so, whether such an understanding needs to be broadened in order to take into account more fully the lived realities and experiences of all students.

Action taken

Language has been changed to 'spouses and key supporters'; a singles seminar has been scheduled for the June residential.

Recommendation partly implemented; further consideration would be given to having a singles focus group.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the policy and/or guidelines on worship should include:

- 1. Provision for those unable to receive communion when the celebrant is a woman.**
- 2. Guidance on posture and the 'mechanics' of worship.**
- 3. Encouragement to explore ways of introducing a range of metaphors for God (or more expansive language and imagery) through creative prayer, visual imagery, hymns and preaching.**

Action taken

(1) was recognised as an unfortunate aberration and future provision has been ensured.

(2) & (3) The tutor in liturgy & worship has been asked to write guidance about this in the worship guidelines of Moodle (by July 2019).

Recommendation being implemented.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that SMC gives consideration to establishing a senior executive group (which does not include trustees), to review matters such as strategy, finance, risk and quality, before this information is shared with trustees, and that the Board sets aside time each year specifically to discuss strategy, the forward financial plan and other key issues facing SMC.

Action taken

The first part has been addressed by adding financial reports to the Business Management Team agenda; strategy, risk and quality are already discussed.

The second part has been discussed at the February 2019 Board but also awaits the restructuring of the board (see below).

Recommendation being implemented.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that SMC consider changing the terms under which Board members are recruited, giving founding partners different legal status without the right to appoint trustees directly (they could, for example, have rights of appointing the Chair and a right of veto over appointment of trustees); and introducing an open appointment process for trustees to encourage greater diversity in addition to appropriate skills, knowledge and experience, including academic.

Action taken

Following a review, a new board is due to be in place in July 2019. Founding partners will have equal legal status and the capacity to appoint trustees through an open process – with the aim of professionalising the board, giving due regard to a breadth of factors including diversity, skills and experience.

Recommendation being implemented.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that SMC consider including more specific and measurable objectives in its strategic plan for at least the following year, so the annual review can set out the extent to which these were achieved and what might need to change if they were not met or if they were exceeded.

Action taken

Board review of the strategic plan began in February 2019 and will be completed by the reconstituted board. More strategic objectives are being identified; the next stage is to work out how they can be measured.

Recommendation being implemented.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the risk register is reviewed to become more specific to risks likely to affect SMC in the next 2-3 years, is related more closely to the achievement of its strategic plan, and is reviewed and updated at least quarterly.

Action taken

The use of the risk register is being reviewed as part of the board's review of the strategic plan. It will be reviewed annually by the board and termly by the management team. The termly review will flag any significant risks to be discussed by the board. It is also on the agenda of the audit committee under the new governance arrangements.

Recommendation being implemented.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that SMC review the quantity and range of placement opportunities for both ordinands and (with its partner dioceses) for LLMs (see also Recommendations 3 & 19).

Action taken

A new database is being created by the senior academic co-ordinator to enable tracking of the range of placements; an annual report will summarise the quantity and range of placements for ordinands and LLMs, comparing changes year on year.

Recommendation being implemented.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that SMC review how the marks of mission concerned with social justice and stewardship of creation are reflected in the college's life and curriculum.

Action taken

The annual programme review has addressed this - with the establishment of a Green Week and of the 'Green Team'.

Recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that SMC consider whether independent students and (in cooperation with the dioceses) LLMs may benefit from having a personal learning plan.

Action taken

A personal learning plan for independent students has been trialled in 2018-19 and will be reviewed at the end of the year. For LLMs this is being addressed by greater clarity at interview about alternative pathways and working with Reader Training Officers in devising appropriate pathways for students taking prior learning into account.

Recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that SMC continue the work being undertaken to clarify expectations for the operation of the Formation Groups for all students.

Action taken

Student-facing formation group documentation has been reviewed as part of the annual review cycle. Training in group process is being provided for tutors as well as individual mentoring.

Recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendations 14 and 15

We recommend that the TEI consider using Moodle more creatively, and not simply as a repository for programme information.

We recommend that SMC develop its use of online teaching via Moodle to support greater parity of module delivery across centres, facilitate the wide range of learning styles, and open up space for discussion and interaction during face to face teaching sessions (Ministry Division).

Action taken

Staff training on the use of Moodle has been scheduled for April 2020.

Recommendations have been implemented.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the TEI: (a) should keep under review its investment in physical resources, making use of management information (usage data) and student feedback; (b) ensure that SCONUL information is routinely circulated to students at the earliest possible opportunity to ensure that students are able to benefit from accessing this facility; and (c) consider the opportunities for extending the library opening hours.

Action taken

- (a) This is to be reviewed as part of the end of year survey.*
- (b) This has been included as part of library induction; next year it will also be circulated as part of the Dean's email.*
- (c) The college has considered this but does not consider the staff have the capacity to extend hours.*

Recommendation has been implemented (though with a negative outcome concerning library opening hours).

Recommendation 17

We recommend that SMC support the tutorial staff in using a range of teaching styles, which make more use of the opportunities for student discussion and interaction, and which help students to develop as skilled theologians able to facilitate the learning of others (Ministry Division).

Action taken

Staff training in teaching styles has been scheduled for May 2019; teaching styles has been added to the peer review form; pedagogical review has been included as part of the annual programme review; a staff training schedule has been formalised.

Recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that SMC undertakes a review of the range of contexts and perspectives reflected in module reading lists and teaching sessions, and considers how best to support students in engaging with the breadth of theological voices, including those from marginalized contexts and those offering alternative critical perspectives.

Action taken

The college considers that this review is already included in the module leadership responsibilities document. It is planning to set up a BAME focus group.

Recommendation has been partially implemented.

Recommendation 19

The review team recommends that **SMC**:

- (a) strengthens the link between the learning in the placement context and the classroom;
- (b) ensures clear expectations with regards to placement supervisor engagement;
- (c) strengthens the opportunities for sharing good practice on placement provision;
- (d) ensures that all trainee LLMs (in consultation with their dioceses) and part-time ordinands have working/learning agreements for their placements;
- (e) routinely share key programme documentation with supervisors to support their engagement with the wider curriculum; and
- (f) consider the opportunities to provide additional support and guidance to supervisors (See also Recommendations 3 & 10)

Action taken

- (a) *The academic working group is researching possible assessment options linked to the placement.*
- (b) *Training for supervisors has been enhanced through sessions specific to the year of student.*
- (c) *Panels at supervisor days are being used to share good practice.*
- (d) *Part-time ordinands' working agreements are in place and these will be used as a basis for LLMs.*
- (e) *A link to programme information will be included in the first supervisors' email.*
- (f) *This has been considered but current capacity does not allow for additional support for supervisors at present.*

Recommendation has been implemented (though with a negative outcome with regard to extra support for supervisors).

I am satisfied that the recommendations of our review are being appropriately addressed. There is an action plan that has been, and is being, continually updated. Not all our recommendations have been accepted in terms of changing practice, but I am confident that they have been carefully considered.

The Revd Canon Nick Moir, Senior Reviewer

May 2019