

Ministry Council: Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

College of the Resurrection, Mirfield

Conducted onsite, May 2023

Published 2023 by the Ministry Development Team of the Archbishops' Council
Copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2023

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ

Switchboard: +44(0)20 7898 1000 Email: ministry@churchofengland.org

Website: www.churchofengland.org

The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England is a registered charity

Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the 2022 Periodic External Review of the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield

Introduction

Reviewers representing the Church of England's Ministry Development Team (MDT) conducted a virtual Periodic External Review (PER) visit to the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield (CoR) in March 2022. It took place over 4 days and comprised a series of zoom meetings and conversations with governors, staff, students and spouses/partners, and online observation of teaching sessions and worship. The review team initially intended to visit in person but cases of covid at the college required a late-stage change of plan. A further visit took place in person in May 2022 when the situation had eased, to enable reviewers to see something of the social and worshipping life on site and to allow informal supplementary conversations with staff and students. CoR provided full written briefing for the team ahead of the visit.

In its PER report the review team highlighted key strengths and areas for attention for the college. Strengths included the rooting of students' pattern of life in prayer and worship, positive changes being made by the new principal and staff, the unique opportunity to study alongside a monastic community, positive dynamics of the academic staff team, honest and generous attempts to live out the Five Guiding Principles, and accessible teaching across a range of levels. Areas to attend to included the need to revise outdated business and governance documents and to address the financial situation of the college through careful planning and income diversification, the challenges of student recruitment, and staff and student workload, particularly through tasks generated by the attempt to live out a monastic way of life.

The report offered 10 commendations and 23 recommendations. The review team judged that it had Confidence with Qualifications in the college, measured against each of the five PER criteria and overall, and that it regarded the College of the Resurrection as fit for purpose in preparing candidates for ordained ministry in the Church of England. As is customary, CoR then prepared for the agreement of the lead reviewer and MDT an action plan outlining its proposed response to each recommendation, with timescales, as a starting point for the lead reviewer's follow up visit to the college one year after the conclusion of the PER, to assess and report on progress.

Follow up and conclusion

The lead reviewer's follow up visit took place on 15 May 2023, with the participation of CoR staff colleagues as well as the principal. We reviewed an up-to-date response document in detail, and from that conversation it was clear that CoR has either addressed the reviewers' recommendations or is making good progress with them. Together we agreed timescales for the outstanding tasks. Hence I am pleased to report that the position overall is fully satisfactory.

Revd Prof Jane de Gay, Senior Reviewer
October 2023

The College of the Resurrection's response to the 2022 PER recommendations

The 2022 report's 23 recommendations are set out below in **bold**. Each is followed in *italics* by the college's and lead reviewer's agreed assessment of the state of play with each response, followed in regular type by the college's supporting narrative.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the College carefully reviews its ethos and identity in consultation with all stakeholders, formulating a Mission Statement that accurately reflects the identity of the College that is understood by staff, students and the wider church.

Response: Accepted & implementation has begun.

CoR may not be able to identify and consult with 'all stakeholders' but a broad reconsideration of the College Mission will help with publicity and communication. Something along the following lines will be proposed to the College Council after consultation with more obvious stakeholders:

'The College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, which uniquely shares the site and in the life of a Religious Community, wishes to be hospitable and open to ordinands from a range of traditions and to learn from them, but without losing an identity inextricably linked to the Community of the Resurrection, with its origins in the Oxford Movement.'

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the College finds imaginative and flexible ways for residential and non-residential students to work together at the Mirfield site.

Response: Accepted & implementation has begun.

Renewed efforts have been made to make the most of limited 'shared time' when St Hild College students are on site. There has been more sharing in liturgy and dining. Mirfield staff have also contributed more teaching to courses offered by other YTEP partners.

Mirfield and St Hild College, now offer a joint ordination training pathway that combines contextual learning with residential participation in the common life of CoR's formational community. St Hild oversees the academic pathway and principal placement; CoR offers some teaching, additional placements, a residential community with its distinctive common life and experience of a liturgical Holy Week. We anticipate that this joint venture will provide purpose and focus for greater collaboration.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Safeguarding Document be reproduced within the Student Handbook.

Response: Accepted and implemented.

The College safeguarding Document is now reproduced within the College Handbook.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the College considers appointing a Chaplain on a voluntary basis to cater for the spiritual and pastoral needs of ordinands, their spouses, partners and families.

Response: Accepted & implemented.

A chaplain has been appointed and his role incorporated into the life of the college. Appropriate meeting space and administrative support are provided.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Spouses' Handbook is updated to include, among other considerations, the diversity of committed relationships.

Response: Accepted & implemented.

The Student and Spouses handbooks have been combined in a single document that is more diverse and inclusive. This revised Student Handbook was prepared in consultation with students and been made available online.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that details of accessible routes should be clearly signposted around the campus.

Response: Partially Accepted.

We are producing a new map to outline accessibility on the Mirfield site. It will take account of significant recent developments and include a newly adapted ground floor wheelchair-accessible bungalow on the campus which was at the planning stage during the PER.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the College should liaise with the College Council to renegotiate working practices for staff. These could include setting up a rota for evening duties and protected time for scholarship and study.

Response: Accepted, implemented and kept under review.

The College Council has discussed and agreed some revised working arrangements and further amendments may be made in due course. The Principal has already adjusted the College timetable for Fridays and allowed staff one Sunday per month free from all College duties. Weeknight duties have been spread to allow for some shorter working days. Staff are given sabbatical leave as per their contracts and Fridays are free of timetabled teaching.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the Governance Manual is revised, setting out clearly the respective roles and responsibilities, including matters delegated from one body to another, and subsequently agreed and approved by the Trustees and College Council.

Response: Accepted and implementation has begun.

A new governance Handbook has been reviewed and amended by the Frere Trustees. It lies with the Community's solicitors and will be considered and approved by the College Council as soon as possible.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that greater clarity on trustee recruitment and training is established and published in the Governance Manual.

Response: Accepted & implementation has begun.

The College Council itself has no authority to implement this recommendation in isolation from the Governance Handbook. The Frere Trustees have, however, received this recommendation, and will implement it with the Governance Manual adjusted accordingly. Members of the Frere Trustees were previously all members of the Community of the Resurrection; the terms of the trust have been amended to provide for two external trustees.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that CoR should produce an entirely new Business and Strategic Plan, budget and risk register through discussions between CR and CoR.

Response: Accepted and implementation has begun.

A Business Plan has been drawn up by the College Bursar. It is being reviewed by stakeholders and needs to be seen alongside the Business Plan of the Community that owns the College and an additional fundraising plan.

The College Business Plan is centred around growth in residential student numbers and diversification of its pathways. Significant work had already taken place and the College Council will consider the Business Plan in November with a view to giving its approval.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that CoR explores new forms of income generation.

Response: Accepted & implementation has begun.

The development of income streams is under constant consideration and involves a diversification of our training offers, a growth in freestanding modules and a fundraising strategy.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the College reviews its syllabus in order to fully embed mission and evangelism into the modules.

Response: Accepted: implemented & to continue.

Staff have considered how to bring evangelism more explicitly into focus within existing modules and the College is now focusing annually upon one of the five Marks of Mission.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that CoR creates and adopts a Disabled Students' Policy and that all staff are briefed on it and given training on putting it into action.

Response: Accepted & implemented.

A Disabilities Policy was drafted in collaboration with students. It was amended and approved by the College Council and has been implemented. It is published within the Student Handbook. A member of the core teaching staff has been appointed as the Disability Officer.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that ways are found to integrate the content of the Themed Weeks more fully into the core curriculum and its assessment.

Response: Accepted & implementation has begun.

There have been staff conversations about rebalancing aspects of the curriculum to give a greater emphasis upon those for which there has, hitherto, been no formal accreditation. The positioning of theme weeks has been adjusted to bring 'leadership' and 'Living in Love & Faith' forward to an earlier point in students' training for ordination. Black Theology will now be formally assessed as a Common Awards module and 'Leadership' will both be offered as an assessed Common Awards module and drawn more systematically into modules on Theological Reflection.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that teaching staff explore the potential of online learning tools in order to facilitate collaborative and independent learning outside of contact time.

Response: Accepted & implementation has begun.

The College is small, intimate and students talk with one another extensively. There has, hitherto, been only limited take-up by students of online learning tools. Staff continue to consider when an online tool will enrich students' learning experience within a predominantly face-to-face taught program. Greater use of online teaching tools is likely to evolve more rapidly within the digitally taught modules of the MA in Worship & Liturgical Studies.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that teaching staff review the assessment programme and introduce greater variety of assessment methods.

Response: Accepted: implementation has begun.

There has been scheduled staff discussion of assessment methods and changes have been made e.g. introducing Assessed Conversation and Journaling as assessment methods. We continue to use assessed presentation to assess preaching modules. There will now be an annual review of the assessment method for each module being considered. The T4 has been updated to reflect recent changes.

Recommendation 17

We recommend that the TEI takes active steps to ensure that every student is given sufficient opportunities to develop their personal experience, understanding and respect for the breadth and diversity of belief and practice within the Church of England.

Response: Accepted & implemented.

This recommendation has been implemented (see also the response to Recommendation 19) The College makes every effort to ensure that students experience a breadth of Anglican tradition and are encouraged to appreciate its variety. There is already a programme of Pastoral Placements which enable every student to engage with a wide range of theological traditions and practices. All students engage in placements in contexts different from their own tradition, though it is recognised that the richness of variety may have been diluted during the ‘lockdown’ periods of the Covid19 pandemic.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that the College take steps to ensure peer feedback is constructive and conducted within a framework properly held by the staff.

Response: Accepted & implemented.

The Principal has taken particular care to outlaw inappropriate peer-feedback via ‘common life talks’ given during Induction Weeks. There appears to have been significant improvement and isolated incidents of inappropriate criticism are addressed as they occur. Peer feedback concerning liturgy is now provided in a formal written form and overseen by the Dean of Pastoral Studies.

Recommendation 19

We recommend giving students more timetabled time in parish placements, especially during the week, and extending their attachments in term time, to broaden opportunities for engagement with public worship.

Response: Accepted: implementation has begun.

This has been pursued by the Dean of Pastoral Studies and there has been an increase in the time spent in placement contexts. The recommendation has been taken into account in the drawing up of the academic timetable. Sunday lunch time has been delayed to allow for fuller engagement in post-worship engagement. Students now engage more fully with parishes mid-week as well as on Sundays.

Recommendation 20

We recommended that the College re-examine the in-term commitments it makes on students, and particularly test whether these are unhelpful to those who are married and/or with families.

Response: Accepted: Implementation has begun.

The College has made some adjustments and come to fresh agreements with CR in response to our reduced numbers. There is ongoing dialogue with married students & partners. An adjusted Friday timetable helps mitigate the levels of responsibility. Potential flexibility has been more clearly articulated to married students. The College has mirrored national recommendation for clergy where paternity leave is concerned. The revised Student Handbook offers greater clarity around expectations.

Recommendation 21

We recommend formal teaching on Leadership is expanded beyond its current position as an end-of-term study week, to incorporate and support learning from College roles and responsibilities as well as placement experiences, with formative and summative assessments as a Common Awards reflective practice module.

Response: Accepted: Staff Responsibility with accountability to College Council.

Formal teaching on leadership is not confined to an end of term study week but already features especially within the modules Introduction to Reflective Practice and Preparation for Public Ministry. This appears, primarily, to be a matter of making our teaching more explicit in descriptive material e.g. Module Handbook. We are, however, moving the Leadership theme week to an earlier point in training and exploring how best to maximise integration of leadership roles and our common life with assessed theological reflection. The new assessed module should give the Leadership a greater prominence. Placement experience is already integrated with theological reflection assessment.

Recommendation 22

We recommend the College considers how it offers every student the opportunity to explore the Church's relationships with schools, whether on placement or by other means.

Response: Accepted: Implementation has begun.

Implementation has begun. The Dean of Pastoral Studies aims to provide educational placements (usually within a school) for as many students as possible. There is a Theme Week on Age-Related Ministry where Leeds Diocesan Education Team and School Chaplains will provide input and training that includes SIAMS.

Recommendation 23

We recommend that the College reviews its interim and end-of-training assessment procedures and seeks to develop these in line with best practice at other TEIs and in the wider education sector.

Response: Accepted & implementation begun:

All Colleges are revising their report output in line with new structures. CoR will conform to the revised structures of reporting & is using all the material provided by the national Ministry Development Team in preparation. Reporting is generally appreciated by the bishops for whom reports are written.

In order to further reduce any risk of 'end of year surprises', Tutors have begun a programme of mid-year interviews to review progress and progress.