

Minutes of a meeting of the UKCLE Advisory Board held at Scarman House, University of Warwick on 20th September, 2010

Present: Sefton Bloxham (British and Irish Law, Education and Technology Association), Alison Bone (University of Brighton), Roger Burrige (University of Warwick), Fiona Cownie (Keele University), Mike Cuthbert (Association of Law Teachers), Nigel Duncan (The City Law School), Penny English (Socio-Legal Studies Association), Mandy Gill (Solicitors Regulation Authority), Ann Holmes (Manchester Metropolitan University), Patricia Leighton (University of Glamorgan), Julian Lonbay (Society of Legal Scholars), Paul Maharg (University of Strathclyde), Elizabeth Mytton (Committee of Heads of University Law Schools), Avrom Sherr (**Chair**, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies), Valerie Shrimplin (Bar Standards Board), William Twining (UKCLE External Evaluator).

UKCLE: Natalie Byrom (Research & Information Assistant), Melanie Hughes (Administrative Assistant), Danielle Lysaght (Centre Manager), Patricia McKellar (Senior Teaching & Learning Advisor), Hansa Surti (Events Co-ordinator), Julian Webb (Director).

Apologies: Jane Buddle (British and Irish Association of Law Librarians), Liz Campbell (Law Society of Scotland), Eileen Fry (Association of LPC Providers), Selina Goulbourne (Commonwealth Legal Education Association), John Hamilton (Faculty of Advocates), Phil Harris (Legal Education Research Group), Alison Hollyer (Institute of Legal Executives), Rebecca Hilsenrath (LawWorks), Kevin Kerrigan (Clinical Legal Education Organisation), Mike Ottley (Consortium for Access to Legal Education), Ashley Wilton (Newcastle University)

Paper 02/10 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair Avrom Sherr welcomed the attendees, with particular mention of the new members: Mandy Gill (Solicitors Regulation Authority), replacing Tim Pearce, and Elizabeth Mytton (Committee of Heads of University Law Schools), replacing Ashley Wilton who was now a co-opted Member.

Paper 03/10 Minutes and action points from meeting on 21st September 2009

Members had no changes to propose and the minutes from the previous year's annual meeting were accepted as a true record. The action points were confirmed as having been completed.

The Chair then confirmed the outline for the rest of the meeting. UKCLE staff would briefly speak to their reporting papers. This would be followed by a breakout session for consultation with Members on three areas of UKCLE's current and future planned work. Finally, the meeting would reconvene for closing business.

Paper 04/10 Director's report

Julian Webb spoke to the Director's report, concentrating mainly on the 'elephant in the room', the restructure of the Higher Education Academy and what it might mean for UKCLE. He advised Members that he knew nothing further than already outlined in his report. Until the Academy

Board's decision was made at their meeting on the 30th September, it was uncertain which model would be adopted of the three proposed: centralised, cluster or dispersed. However Julian confirmed that there was a real possibility that this would be the last year of UKCLE, at least in its current format.

Turning to staff team issues, Julian said that three members recruited to short fixed term contracts, Lauren Goodchild, Paul Cockrell and Paul Swain, had made positive contributions to UKCLE during the year. The Academy delay in funding confirmation for 2010/11 and the uncertain future thereafter was a factor in their moving on at the end of their contracts but UKCLE was delighted that each had secured good permanent positions on the back of their Centre experience. Julian introduced two other new members of staff - Melanie Hughes, Administrative Assistant, and Natalie Byrom, Research and Information Assistant. He then announced that UKCLE's Senior Teaching and Learning Advisor Patricia McKellar would be leaving at the end of October for a new position at the University of London, commenting that she would be sorely missed.

Julian ended by formally expressing his thanks to all team members, who despite the demoralising aspects of the restructure proposals had remained committed throughout the year and shown more goodwill than could reasonably have been expected.

Comments from Members:

- It was queried whether there was any comparative information to inform the Academy's restructure plan in terms of the network, as some subject centres appeared to be low key whereas for example UKCLE was considered to be very active. Julian confirmed that detailed information was submitted to Academy York on an annual basis and he thought Craig Mahoney was aware that some subject centres had higher levels of activity. However, he underlined that subject centres as a whole were widely appreciated with external evaluation evidence of value and it was therefore surprising that none of the proposed models put to the Academy Board would mean retention of virtual status quo for the network. This had been particularly upsetting for network staff. Julian thought that Craig Mahoney had inherited a set of options that he personally might not have endorsed had he been in the Academy from the outset of the change process.
- It was suggested that there was a need to distinguish between the removal of core funding and the institution of UKCLE, that the former need not necessarily mean the end of the latter and a 'Plan B' should focus on other ways of funding the Centre, albeit that any continuation might have to be in a different guise. Julian confirmed that UKCLE had been exploring possible other funding options but that it was a delicate situation to navigate until the Academy's decision was out in the open.
- It was queried whether it would be useful if the Advisory Board expressed a formal view to the Academy Board either in favour of the dispersed model or even that UKCLE should essentially remain in its current format. It was felt by Members that a legal education community had been created and if UKCLE became part of a generic watered down model it would possibly lose its current level of impact and support. The Chair agreed to revisit the matter of a Board formal expression of support in his oral report.

Julian concluded by expressing his gratitude to Members and other colleagues who had already responded to the consultation in support of UKCLE.

Paper 05/10 Annual Report 2009-10

The Centre Manager Danielle Lysaght introduced the annual report, advising that it was the first time UKCLE had published a more formal report, intended to coincide with the 10th anniversary. She went on to speak to the performance report, confirming that the overall level of completion

against the plan was good, with the majority of projects having progressed as planned. A minority of projects had been cancelled, mainly due to academic staff capacity, but ‘amber light’ work that had fallen behind schedule would be completed in 2010/11. Danielle picked out the Annual Conference, the redevelopment of the website, the Simshare OER project and student engagement work as particular highlights of the year. She briefly displayed the new website (at the same address www.ukcle.ac.uk) and asked Members to feedback to UKCLE once they had had a chance to properly explore it.

Patricia McKellar gave Members a brief summary of the successfully completed OER Simshare project and commended them to look at the repository site www.simshare.org.uk.

Danielle concluded with a brief look at the summary budget in the annual report, and explained that UKCLE had successfully ensured the maximum allowable carry forward into 2010/11, given the 15% core funding cut.

The Chair thanked Danielle for the annual report, which he thought presented UKCLE work in a far more accessible way than the somewhat opaque Academy-format reports of the past.

Paper 06/10 2009-10 Plans & Budget

Danielle Lysaght introduced the plans and budget for 2010-11, confirming that the Academy had advised Subject Centres to plan their work within the context of reduced funding. UKCLE had tried to set a realistic operational plan but it still contained some big projects, notably the National Law Student Forum and the NSS project on assessment and feedback. It would be a challenging workload to deliver, particularly given staff changes but UKCLE was nevertheless excited about the year ahead.

Danielle also highlighted that in a change to the approach used in the past, in 2010/11 there would be a formal call for applications for grant from UKCLE’s project development fund. Proposals would be invited that addressed the specific priority areas student engagement and/or education for sustainable development. The new website also incorporated a more formal project module behind the scenes for processing project applications from submission to decision. Julian confirmed that the formal call for this year would be going out before the end of September.

Paper 06/10 Members Consultation

The Chair introduced the breakout session, a new interactive format at this meeting designed for UKCLE to benefit more directly from the wide knowledge and expertise of the Board. Members self-selected which group to join of the three: National Student Forum (chaired by Patricia McKellar), NSS (chaired by Julian Webb), and Vocational Legal Education (chaired by Avrom Sherr).

The discussions were very useful, with all three groups giving valuable advice and suggestions to inform UKCLE’s current and future work. These will be considered in more detail by the UKCLE team over the next few weeks.

Paper 08/10 Chair’s report

The Chair highlighted a couple of examples of his direct engagement with UKCLE during the year - the *Back to the Academic Future* anniversary film, in which he had been an interviewee, and the ICT in legal education event that UKCLE facilitated at University College London each year. He said that his experience of UKCLE had always been very positive, that it played an important role in the legal community and it would be very much missed if it did not continue.

The Chair then returned to the suggestion made by Members earlier in the meeting that the Board should make a formal statement of support for UKCLE to the Higher Education Academy’s Chief Executive and Board. He asked Members to indicate their support for the proposal by show of hands and it was unanimously agreed. The Chair suggested some draft wording and confirmed it would be

circulated for Members to agree the final version on an urgent basis, given that the Academy's Board meeting was on the 30th September.

Any other business

- Roger Burrige suggested through the Chair that once the future was clear, the Board should commit to meeting again to discuss the position. The Chair agreed for this to be arranged.
- The Chair reminded Members of the earlier announcement that Patricia McKellar would be leaving at the end of October to take up a new post at the University of London. He warmly thanked Patricia for her sterling work for UKCLE over the last 5 years and presented her with a card and bouquet of flowers on behalf of the Advisory Board.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting for lunch.