



The PAS Special

CoLRiC is pleased to turn this newsletter over to the team behind the new peer accreditation scheme and welcomes their thoughts and reflections the body of work that they have undertaken. Members will be familiar with peer accreditation but the need for change to make the scheme more relevant to our needs as LRS Managers now, is both responsive and timely and we hope that the newsletter will answer some of the questions you may have.

The Changes – why they were needed

In our rapidly changing environment it is important to know whether a service is meeting national quality standards. A testament to the quality of the first edition of the CoLRiC peer accreditation scheme is how it has stood the test of time. It was this desire to keep pace, and remain relevant, that led key assessors to share their views that the scheme needed attention. In 2009 a project was agreed with the CoLRiC committee and the PAS task group was initiated.

When the small group of experienced assessors and committee members came together for the first time the brief was simply to update the existing scheme. However, we were fortunate, the PAS task group are highly experienced professionals who share dedication and passion for the role of LRS in colleges. By the end of our first morning together it was clear- we would be rewriting the scheme.

The project became a dialogue, under the careful leadership and co-ordination from the PAS team leader Collette Xavier and with confirmation at each stage from the CoLRiC Executive, we steered the work of its evolution and launch.

We identified that the key strengths of the original scheme were in the range of criteria and the use of trained peer assessors as knowledgeable critical friends. We grouped the criteria grouped into

four themes, which would be easily understood and have recognised currency. They are leadership and management, resources, integration into teaching and learning, and quality assurance. In doing so we ensured that the 2012 scheme remains generic, yet it expresses the issues that LRS managers currently seek to promote and which appear in College self assessments and in inspections. The scheme accommodates both the diversity of organisations in the sector and the changing role of Learning Resource Services supporting teaching and learning.

In recognition that a characteristic of quality might be identified in any service- the PAS group also initiated the creation of an award for a particular aspect of good practice. The Jeff Cooper award will be judged from a field of nominations made by individual assessors over a given year.

As the project continued it became clear that a national quality mark is something that most colleges aspire for many aspects of their work, and the CoLRiC Peer Accreditation assessment is a unique and valued example of this.

Nicola Scott
Hackney College

Peer Accreditation Scheme: What do you get out of the process?

The revised CoLRiC Peer Accreditation Scheme (PAS) can be used in one of two ways: either as a Self Assessment Scheme (SAS) or you can go straight for an Assessment.

The newly revised rewritten PAS allows managers to determine for themselves whether or not they wish to use the scheme as a mechanism to conduct an internal review against a set of 'quality' focused questions. Or the other option is to invite experienced

Library Information peer professionals (Library Consultants, Heads of Service, Library Managers) to conduct a College wide assessment.

Why would anyone do this?

The PAS is a management tool which supports the Library Information professional in developing their service. There are a total of 45 criteria questions based on delivering a quality service.

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The Peer Accreditation Scheme supports the planning process if used as a Self Assessment Scheme. Should a Library manager determine that they wish to have an assessment day this will involve the entire college community – from students to the Principal. Either way it provides an opportunity to:

- ◆ set standards
- ◆ revise process and procedures
- ◆ strengthen links with the curriculum
- ◆ pro-actively steer strategic planning as a Library professional within the context of your own institution but within the context of national standards
- ◆ energise the Library Team, engage with the student population, demonstrate to the senior management team impact
- ◆ If you know that your college is likely to be inspected - this will help you get ready

The CoLRiC Peer Accreditation Scheme provides invaluable feedback from independent assessors who are able to critically assess 'value for money', identify good practice and to give guidance

on possible ways forward.

In light of the fact that few Inspection reports make direct comments on the Library and that many Library Information professionals are leading on student engagement, 'e' learning, the VLE and the learner voice – then the scheme takes on a life of its own.

The assessors spend a day talking to a range of key stake holders in the College: Students, main grade teachers, curriculum leaders, Head of LRS, the Quality Manager, and Principal, and their teams – all of which provide a holistic picture of the context in which a service is functioning.

At the end of an extensive day there is a formal feedback session and a report is provided within 15 working days. The new scheme is 'mean and lean and completely terrifying' but for Library Information professionals, what's new? Bring it on!

Collette Xavier
South Thames College

How long does the process take?

The Peer Assessment itself takes just one day. However, preparation for an assessment is likely to take a significant amount of time – how much time depends on how readily you can assemble the evidence that the Assessors need to see. The objectives for going through the process can be identified as:

- ◆ For experienced peer professionals to externally validate the quality standard of a service and its self evaluation
- ◆ To explore and assess the placement of a service in a college teaching and learning strategy
- ◆ To explore and assess the level of service impact, strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ To assess the resources made available to the service and whether it is fit for purpose
- ◆ To provide evidence that might be used in an Ofsted inspection

There are two stages to having your College Learning Resources Services assessed under CoLRiC's Peer Accreditation Scheme:

In Stage One you register with the Scheme. CoLRiC will send you a list of the criteria for assessment and a checklist of documents you will need to produce as evidence of your Service's performance against the criteria. If you wish, you can use these resources to carry out a self-assessment of your Service and not proceed any further.

A sample of the type of evidence and data required is listed below but this is not exhaustive.

- ◆ Self evaluation report
- ◆ Data related to activity of service
- ◆ Data related to impact of the service, in context of college success rates
- ◆ Learner views as users
- ◆ Curriculum staff views as users
- ◆ College managers understanding and strategy for service

In Stage Two you request a Peer Assessment of your Service. CoLRiC will agree with you a date for your assessment and arrange for at least two trained Assessors to visit your Service on that day. In preparation, you will collect together the required documents, some of which you will send to CoLRiC in advance. Most agree that this is the part of the process that takes the longest time. During the assessment day, the Assessors will view the service in operation, interview staff, students and senior management and study the data and information available to them.

The Assessors will give initial feedback and an assessment grade at the end of the assessment day. Within 15 days CoLRiC will provide a formal report and a certificate of accreditation.

Sue Woolmer
CoLRiC Administrator

The Costs

The cost of the scheme is designed to cover the costs of two assessors, travel and expenses and to continue the development of the scheme. Assessors spend a total of around 5- 8 days on the Assessment process (reading the documentation sent in advance (4 days) , assessment day, (1 day) writing of the report (3 days).

There is an initial cost of £250 which takes into account those services who simply wish to use the criteria as an internal assessment document only. Should a College wish to go further and commission an assessment the initial registration costs will be deducted from

the initial costs if the assessment takes place within 18 months of registration. Further enquiries with regard to costs are welcome.

The costing model is based on the size of the Library and its JISC banding. The costs can be spread over financial years or shared with the quality manager. This is a locally determined decision.



Helen Davies and Andrea Wilson made presentations at the CoLRiC Roadshows this year. Andrea's presentation can be seen in the members section of the CoLRiC website.

What does a typical Assessment Day look like?

This is a real timetable taken from an assessment day with names removed. There will be variations depending on issues such as the geographical spread of the service.

Time	Activity	Staff to be available	Location
8.30 - 8.45am	Assessors arrive and in base room for preliminary discussions between themselves	Meet and greet by Head of Service	College Reception, And base room
9.00 - 9.15am	Brief tour of the LRC; introduction of LRC staff	Deputy or Senior LRC Staff	Designated room
9.15 - 9.45am	Meeting with Manager of Learning Resource Centres	Head of Service	Designated room
9.45 - 10.00am	Time in LRC for Assessors		LRC
10.00 - 10.30am	Meeting with Vice Principal, Resources. Quality Manager	Vice Principal (Resources) Quality Manager	Designated room
10.30 - 11.45am	Visit to LRC for HE students Coffee and informal discussion with teaching staff and students	LRC staff, curriculum staff and students	Designated room Head of Service to transport
12.00 - 12.30pm	Back to the main centre	Meeting with main grade lecturers x8	Designated room
12.30 - 1.00pm	Meeting with curriculum staff x12	Section Heads for all curriculum areas x12	Designated room
1.00 - 1.45pm	Lunch and informal discussion with students	Level 1 – foundation degree students	Designated room
1.45 - 2.30pm	Meeting with staff	E-Services and Systems Librarian, E-Learning Content Developer, Web Master, IT Infrastructure and Operations Analyst, and LRC staff	Designated room
2.30 - 4.30pm	Assessors prepare feedback report and review documentation		Base room
4.30pm	Assessors feedback and allocation of grade	Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of Quality, Head of Library	Senior Management team including the Principal and Vice-Principal - designated room

Why be a CoLRIC assessor?

In November 2010, I embarked on a CoLRIC peer assessment for my service.

The process was enlightening as gathering evidence to meet the assessment criteria resulted in a whole team approach of review, reflection and development.

In order to collate the evidence, I initially met with the team to explain the scheme and plan our time scale of preparation.

Instantly a lovely but very busy team, leapt into action to “prove” their service. Tasks of gathering and reviewing documents were shared and executed with enthusiasm and rigor and meetings became sharply focused on, what we do, why we do it, why it is good and how it could be even better.

The process is, by default, somewhat celebratory, giving you and your team a genuine reason to reflect and acknowledge good practice.

The day of the assessment was nerve racking with everyone keen to ensure the assessors saw, not only what they needed to but what the team wanted to show them. Academic staff and students made time to give their views of the service and were complimentary and enthusiastic. Our results were good, outstanding, obviously an excellent result but it didn't stop there.

The College Senior managers were very pleased; accolades of good practice can be used in many ways. Within weeks of the results we were all talking of plans for new and larger facilities – in fact a College new build has the Learning Centre at the heart of the design.

The Learning Centre team were very pleased with the results; after all it is great to be part of an outstanding service as it reflects on the individual who is obviously part of that service.

Finally, I am pleased with the outcome, I feel the process is rigorous, useful, enlightening and many more adjectives could be applied. Basically, I am convinced and therefore as a professional information practitioner I decided that I wanted to be a CoLRIC assessor. I want to be part of the process that encourages and supports my colleagues within the sector to raise their profile, develop their staff and services and ensure that they are always preparedfor any inspection....any day.

Andrea Wilson
Lancaster and Morecambe College

Foot note:

Current assessors think it is useful that you take your service through an assessment day in your institution before you consider applying to be an assessor.

Doncaster College Pilots New Scheme



Doncaster College kindly agreed to pilot the new scheme and underwent the assessment in March 2012.

Despite the rigorous new format to the assessment the College was judged as outstanding in all areas of the assessment and have received the gold award.

Lorraine Maddock, Manager of the Learning Resource Centres said, "I am delighted with the outcome of the assessment. It was a very rigorous process and teaching staff and students who took part in the meetings were

extremely supportive. The LRC staff are a very enthusiastic and highly motivated team - I am proud of the way in which the LRC service works well with all areas of the curriculum."

Collette Xavier, Vice-Chair of CoLRiC and PAS Assessor said "We were so pleased that Doncaster agreed to become the pilot college for the new scheme and all of the assessors were able to see at first hand, the wonderful service offered at the college and meet with some exceptional staff. We are delighted that Doncaster has received the gold award and hope that they found it a rewarding experience."

Feedback on CoLRiC Peer Accreditation Scheme

Lai Wan Chiu, College Librarian, St Dominics Sixth Form College (May 2009) gives her perspective on the previous scheme.

Q What benefits were there in taking your service through the scheme?

It is a good start that the Senior Management agrees to have the accreditation exercise:

- ◆ recognition of a valuable asset
- ◆ it recognises the LRC as an integral part of the College in the development plans
- ◆ it gives the LRC more 'bargaining' power in terms of funding and staffing
- ◆ it gives the LRC staff the credibility and respect they

Q Was there any aspect of the process you felt did not work?

The process involves too much evidence gathering and paper chasing, therefore time consuming. Perhaps, just have the Mandatory Criteria, with Headings that reflect on the varied services provided.

Q Would you do it again?

Yes, I would do it again.

Q What might you say to another manager considering taking their service through the scheme (by way of encouragement)?

- ◆ Give yourself enough time to prepare
- ◆ It's OK to panic, but most probably we just worry for nothing
- ◆ Involve your staff in the preparation and share the outcome with them
- ◆ Be proud and shout loud of your achievement

Q Any downsides?

CoLRiC is not well-known enough and therefore has little impact on parents/the governing board. People recognise the Kite Mark; if we can promote ourselves along this line, perhaps, it will get more support from College Principals.



For more information

You can find lots more information about the Scheme on CoLRiC's website at: <http://www.colric.org.uk>

CoLRiC's Administrator, **Sue Woolmer**, is also very happy to provide help and advice.

You can email Sue at: colric@colric.org.uk
or telephone her on: **07505 434069**



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