



CoLRiC 2020 Survey: Executive Summary

In February 2020 CoLRiC launched a new annual survey for members. It replaced our previous performance indicator survey and was designed to inform operational and strategic planning and reflect considerable change across the Further Education and Sixth Form College sector. It comprised two questionnaires - one for staff and one for students. However, the COVID-19 pandemic intervened...

CoLRiC Executive Committee member Helen Crowther (Library Manager, Blackpool Sixth Form College) reflects on the impact of the subsequent lockdown on the survey results. 'There were significant issues with data collection. The first lockdown was announced after the survey had been launched. This meant that responses included both pre-and post-lockdown data which distorted the results. Obviously, student views, requirements and feedback during the lockdown were dramatically different from feedback collected before.'

Regardless, some interesting broad-based themes arose from the survey. 'There were lots of good news stories we extracted from the survey data; a wealth of compliments students made about their library and learning resource services. They very much value learning resources and services and the support of library staff. There was also universal praise for outreach activities, collaboration with curriculum teams and college leadership, alongside our significant contribution to e-learning.'

Here are the highlights:

I honestly think the best part of my college experience has been the library because of the lovely staff members and wealth of resources.'

'The library is amazing, and I love working here.'

82 % of the students who responded rated library services highly. They particularly valued the provision of quiet learning and study spaces and the warm welcome they received from library staff. There were also many positive comments about the diversity and wealth of books and resources.

It will come as no surprise to CoLRiC colleagues that there were comments about resourcing and infrastructure deficiencies, most notably a demand for more study spaces and flexible access to additional IT facilities. In essence, the more PCs and laptops, the better.

It will be interesting to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on the student experience. Lockdown measures have impacted on student study and learning behaviour and raised their expectations of remote access to high quality and relevant digital resources and services. It is likely that a 'bring your

own device' culture will influence the configuration of learning spaces and IT provision in the future if it has not done so already.

Staff responses to the survey focused on the library and learning resource service contribution to curriculum development and integration and collaboration with College management and leadership teams.

Only 50% of service heads were members of College leadership teams; a role crucial to ensure service relevance and visibility across the organisation but also to ensure adequate resource allocation and to influence at a strategic policy level. Future CoLRiC surveys will monitor this issue and explore the variability in library and learning resource service representation at a senior College level.

Reassuringly, many staff commented on the diverse range of services contributing to the wider learning agenda: library, information and digital literacy, research, referencing and study skills. This correlates with the overwhelmingly positive student experience responses.

The ratio of qualified versus non-qualified library staff varies across organisations. Future CoLRiC surveys will also explore this issue, and the impact it may have on service delivery and quality. Similarly, library and learning resource service collaboration and contribution to faculty and curriculum development varies across organisations.

- 64% of respondents were required to publish a Self-Assessment Report (SAR), a key tool to ensure accountability and integration with College strategy
- 55% of respondents were involved in faculty meetings
- 36% were involved in curriculum development

Budgets continue to be a significant concern:

- 53% of respondents reported a decrease in their budgets
- 44% reported a steady state, which is, in essence, a reduction when you consider information resource inflation
- Only 3% reported a budgetary uplift

Future CoLRiC research will explore the handling strategies for resource and service delivery within this financial context, the impact on collection development and management policies; but also explore if the lack of representation at a senior leadership level may impact on resource allocation.

When it comes to collaboration with external partners, 64% of respondents indicated that they collaborated extensively with external stakeholders and organisations, including public libraries and partner schools. It will be interesting to monitor this over time as the development of innovative shared services may be the way forward for library services in this challenging time of austerity.

These general survey outcomes present an overall landscape of flexible, adaptable, highly valued services delivering a diverse portfolio of resources and support despite budgetary and staffing challenges. The outcomes will help inform future CoLRiC research and membership surveys. We are particularly keen to explore in more depth how CoLRiC members engage the entire organisation, how you raise your visibility with senior college management, evidence return on investment and demonstrate the value and impact of your services in support of the wider teaching and learning agenda.

The CoLRiC Executive committee has decided that a 2021 survey will be postponed for now, as it would be premature to launch one during such an unstable time when staff are working hard to resume normal services in response to the relaxation of this third lockdown. We will keep you posted on any developments and look forward to your support with any future CoLRiC consultations and surveys.