

Mainstreaming Co-operative Education

Strategic Plan 2012-2014

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Co-operative
Values MAKE A DIFFERENCE



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Vision, Mission, Strategic Objectives

Charitable Object

To promote the education of the public, in particular, but not exclusively, by the provision and conduct of the College for the education of people in a manner consistent with the values and principles of the co-operative movement.

Co-operative College Trust Deed

Vision

To be world leaders in education for co-operation.

Mission

To put education at the heart of co-operation and co-operation at the heart of education.

Strategic Objectives

1. To develop a co-operative learning framework of progression.
2. To build institutional co-operative education capacity within the state education system.
3. To develop strategic partnerships to develop and deliver co-operative education.
4. To develop an infrastructure and sustainable human resource base to take the College forward.
5. To strengthen communication with stakeholders and existing and potential beneficiaries of the College.
6. To ensure that the College is a well governed, financially secure and stable charity.

**International Co-operative Alliance Fifth Principle:
Education, Training and Information**

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

Strategic Plan

It is now approaching a decade since the College introduced its 3-year business planning cycle. In that period it has successfully developed key areas of work in line with the aims of the earlier plans.

This plan builds on the ambitious aim in the 2011 to 2013 plan of *Mainstreaming Co-operative Education* whilst taking account of a challenging economic environment and the opportunities that arise from 2012 as the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives.

It is a high level Strategic Plan to mainstream co-operative education in the context of the impact of the public spending cuts and the contradictions in Government policies to promote new co-operatives and mutuals as part of its public sector reform programme. It also takes account of the continued weak state of the economy, for which the medicine prescribed and taken to date has failed to bring about the recovery of the patient.

The plan presented in 2011 had a clear view of the very changed pattern for co-operative education in the 21st century. It envisaged a distributed model, with the College increasingly becoming a central hub and knowledge centre with a reputation for curriculum and resource development supported by robust quality assurance processes working with a growing range of local providers, including co-operative schools and colleges.

Significant process has been made in the past 12 months towards that aim -

- **To develop a co-operative learning framework of progression.**
The framework is being developed through the design of free-standing co-operative study units with different 'credit' values which can be assessed at different levels and built up in different combinations to provide a range of qualifications including Awards (1-12 credits), Certificates (13–36 credits) and Diplomas (37 credits or more). In this way, the College is developing a flexible curriculum offer which will adapt readily to the diverse needs of client groups including international markets. Additionally, the units will provide 'enhancement' study programmes and adaptation for generic mainstream qualifications including Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships, the latter of which is being developed in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University.
- **To build institutional co-operative education capacity within the state education system.**
There will be over 180 co-operative schools in place by the end of the year, with trusts, a DfE approved co-operative model for converter academies and work underway on a co-operative model for a multi-academy trust. Work has progressed on a co-operative model for the FE sector.

- **To develop strategic partnerships to develop and deliver co-operative education.**

The partnership with the Workers Educational Association has led to a range of initiatives at District and National levels, including joint funding bids. The development of the Schools Co-operative Society as the apex body for that sector has led to a partnership to support the growth and consolidation of co-operative schools. The imaginative partnerships underway by the Co-operative Heritage Trust Outreach team demonstrates the potential of this approach to widen the beneficiaries of the charity's work.

- **To develop an infrastructure and sustainable human resource base to take the College forward.**

The College appraisal process was revised and work is under way on a Performance Management system. Colleague satisfaction rates now consistently exceed the year's target and in the IIP reassessment IIP status was achieved at silver level.

- **To strengthen communication with stakeholders and existing and potential beneficiaries of the College.**

A College marketing and communication strategy has been implemented, together with extensive discussion on the role of co-operative education in the 21st Century under way and commencement of regional seminars with academic partners.

- **To ensure that the College is a well governed, financially secure and stable charity.**

The College has strengthened its financial reporting processes and is implementing actions identified by the Audit Committee to reduce its ongoing cost base. A revised investment strategy has been approved by the Audit Committee and Board for implementation in 2012. Discussions have commenced with the Trustee on a revised constitutional framework and form of incorporation. A decision in principle for core funding has been made by the Co-operative Group.

The Economic Environment

In the 12 months since the previous plan was drafted even the faintest signs of economic recovery have been quickly dashed by news of repeated downgrading of growth forecasts. Meanwhile the impact of the public expenditure cuts is leading to higher job losses in the public sector than predicted, together with major cutbacks in funding programmes.

Whilst the Government intentions to reform public services and use new co-operatives and mutuals in delivery of such services remain in place, it seems more an aspiration than a reality, with progress painfully slow. The strategy remains under-resourced and now threatened by pressures from big business to ensure that such new ventures do not have favourable treatment in procurement.

On the positive side the economic conditions have led more people to explore the co-operative model and, for example, amongst trade unions there are early signs of recognition of the differences between the co-operative model and other forms of outsourcing. The rapid growth of the Co-operative Councils initiative is another example of the opportunities to mainstream co-operative models.

The impact of the financial and economic crisis that flared up in 2007/2008 and consequent economic slowdown in many parts of the world has been particularly severe on employment: the International Labour Organisation (ILO) reported in 2010 an increase of almost 34 million over the number of unemployed in 2007 and stated that youth unemployment in 2009 had reached its highest rate ever, namely 13.1%. The ILO also acknowledged that “the trend towards rising food prices, as observed since 2007, accelerated significantly in the first half of 2008. The resulting global food crisis posed a serious challenge to the efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. The financial bubble has also fed into a dramatic intensification of debt and instability. On the other hand, millions of businesses are expected to face the problem of succession over the next few years, a great part of which will close down for lack of an acquirer. Finally, a few days ago, the new World of Work Report 2011: Making markets work for jobs says that a stalled global economic recovery has begun to dramatically affect labour markets. It notes that in over 45 of the 119 countries examined, the risk of social unrest is rising. The massive wealth and job destruction caused by the crisis has brought back the focus onto the real economy, wealth creation and territorial development in public agendas. On the other hand, over the last 150 years, cooperatives have demonstrated to have a special impact on development, and to be particularly resilient to crises. The International Year of Cooperatives represents an important opportunity to raise public awareness about the significant contribution of cooperative enterprises to development.

Background paper, The Way forward: Cooperatives and Development – ICA General Assembly CICOPA meeting

Young people are being particularly hard hit by the recession and there are real dangers of a generation being economically marginalised as the economy recovers and employers recruit new graduates and school leavers rather than those who have been unemployed or underemployed throughout the recession. There are opportunities to develop youth co-operatives linking curriculum projects focussed on co-operative enterprise skills with the experiences of such co-operatives internationally. We will work with the Schools Co-operative Society, FE Colleges and other partners to develop proposals for funders for pilot programmes to test new co-operative models targeted at young people including graduates. We will explore how apprenticeships can be used as components of such programmes, recognising that successful programmes will need to develop vocational skills, business skills and co-operative skills.

2012

United Nations International Year of Co-operatives with the theme *Co-operative enterprises build a better world* presents a major opportunity to highlight the strengths of the co-operative model and counter past negative images. It presents a unique opportunity to mainstream co-operation and further the College's aim to mainstream co-operative education and to contribute to building a more diverse co-operative sector, confident in challenging established economic orthodoxy and repeated market failures.

For that to happen the College's role in mainstreaming co-operative education is pivotal, helping ensure new generations are inspired by co-operative values and possibilities, understand co-operative structures and organisational forms, and are experienced and engaged in co-operation through learning, and ready to put those ideas into practice in the world of work.

The College's key contributions to 2012 will be

- To work with the Co-operative Heritage Trust to relaunch following development work and make the Rochdale Pioneers Museum a major visitor attraction in 2012 and beyond.
- To promote a successful academic conference, *Mainstreaming co-operation – an alternative for the twenty first century* in Manchester and Rochdale from 3rd to 5th July, 2012.
- To make a significant contribution to the success of the closing week events in Manchester, in particular working on the co-operative education strand involving schools and other co-operative education events.
- To support the year through other activities and publications.

Co-operative Learning and Development

The College will continue to develop the framework of progression and extend the long term strategic partnerships with higher education institutions and other providers. Despite the difficulties caused by the funding pressures on HE and the consequent difficulties in establishing collaborative programmes, the College will continue to work towards co-operative masters programmes with core and optional modules to meet a diverse range of learning needs including co-operative management and leadership, co-operative education leadership and co-operative international development in addition to programmes that utilise the co-operative heritage collections.

The College will continue to assist societies in the provision of a range of learning programmes and development support for members, from entry level to board level. It will continue to extend the range of modules available in distant learning format to meet the needs of learners. The College will seek to extend its innovative Board Skills Audit and Board Development Centre processes to other societies and organisations in the UK and internationally.

At the heart of learning and development work will be a continued commitment to quality assurance and curriculum development. The College will continue to invest in people and systems and build upon the business it has developed providing quality assurance systems for in house provision as well as maintaining the top level ranking by the awarding bodies that accredit College programmes.

The College will support the development of a new co-operative identity mark for the co-operative schools sector, and develop appropriate qualifications to support programmes in Southern Africa.

The College will seek to develop programmes to support newly established co-operatives and mutuals in the public sector, particularly in the areas of member development, co-operative identity and governance.

The Co-operative Learning and Development team will build on the work under the Cabinet Office Pathfinder programme to develop a co-operative model for the FE sector to enable it to support those colleges looking for co-operative and mutual structures in response to the new reforms.

Deregulation of the Further and Higher Education sectors will blur the distinction between universities, FE colleges and private providers and represents both opportunities and threats to the College. It will be important to resist mission drift and carefully assess the risks associated with scaling up provision, compared to partnership working with colleges that adopt co-operative structures that would enable a more distributed system of local support.

As the FE and HE sectors becomes more liberalised and market orientated the College will work with those wishing to adopt a co-operative approach to develop new co-operative governance models for the sector and will assist such colleges in building their capacity to support the learning needs of a growing co-operative education sector and co-operative enterprise development.

The College will develop its links with Co-operative Councils to help raise awareness and understanding of co-operative options, work with them on co-operative strategies within the education sector, and develop partnerships to embed strong co-operative governance in new co-operatives that emerge from Co-operative Councils.

Schools and Young People

The work of the College over the last six years has directly led to one of the fastest growing parts of the UK co-operative sector – co-operative schools in England. Approval by the Department for Education of a co-operative model for academies, with the first in place in autumn 2011 provides the basis to maintain the rapid growth of this sector over the lifetime of this plan. The College has four critical roles to play in this process:

1. Supporting the development of co-operative schools and assisting them through the complex consultative and statutory processes.

2. Assisting schools to make new co-operative structures work in their governance, curriculum and pedagogy.
3. Developing, with appropriate partners, leadership and CPD programmes rooted in co-operative values that help the long term success in the sector.
4. Working with co-operative schools and the Schools Co-operative Society to implement a robust self-assessment led Co-operative Identity Mark.

The College has played a key role in the establishment of the Schools Co-operative Society (SCS) as the apex body and voice of this emerging sector. It will continue to support SCS as it develops its role and builds networks at regional and national level. The College will help SCS deliver value to the growing network through new co-operative and mutual ways of meeting needs on services such as schools improvement and cost savings through joint procurement. It will continue to work closely with the Co-operative Group, without whose support this new co-operative sector would not have developed.

Over the lifetime of this plan the College will aim to mainstream co-operative schools – trust schools, co-operative academies and multi-school co-operative academy trusts, aim to have a minimum of 350 co-operative schools by the end of 2012 and 500 by the end of 2013, and regularly review client feedback to maintain the highest quality standards in the service.

Co-operative schools are a development resulting from structural changes in the education system in England. The College will continue to explore how the models can be adapted for use in the other nations of the United Kingdom.

Co-operative Heritage

The College manages the Rochdale Pioneers Museum and National Co-operative Archive on behalf of the Co-operative Heritage Trust. Work on safeguarding and making accessible the key items of co-operative heritage has led to a rapid growth of research interest in the collections, which represent a unique knowledge base and resource. As work cataloguing the ever growing collections continues, usage and research interest will continue to expand. Central to success has been the achievement of the highest professional standards, reflected by the Designated Collections status for the entire archive collection, together with Accredited Museum status for the Rochdale Pioneers Museum. These in turn have enabled the College and the Co-operative Heritage Trust to access a range of funding streams, anchored by the major award from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the ROCHDALE Project.

Over the lifetime of the Plan the College will:

- Support the Co-operative Heritage Trust in completing the construction and redesign work on the Rochdale Pioneers Museum.
- Work to ensure that the Rochdale Pioneers Museum is a major visitor attraction during 2012, the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives and beyond and that it is widely marketed amongst the UK co-operative movement.
- Continue to work on cataloguing the Archive collections, completing work on the Robert Owen collection and working with the Co-operative Group to

ensure archive materials and historic artefacts are identified for inclusion in the heritage collections during the Group's relocation.

- Continue to support the work of other societies, advising on the safeguarding of their heritage collections.
- Continue to support the Co-operative Heritage Trust in its work to develop a robust, long term sustainable funding base through the development of the New Pioneers major fundraising scheme.
- Ensure that the outputs from the innovative Outreach work are widely disseminated.

International Programmes

In recent years the College has renewed its long-established links with co-operatives in many parts of the developing world and extended its collaboration through a range of European partnerships. This work has contributed significantly to its knowledge-base. Its first hand experience of working with grassroots co-operatives has enabled it to develop a wide range of resources used in all parts of its programmes. The College's contribution to the CoopAfrica programme resulted in strong links with a network of Co-operative Colleges in Eastern and Southern Africa together with links in ministries responsible for co-operative development.

The College will continue to build on the strength of its work in Eastern and Southern Africa and in particular work to extend co-operative education and training facilities with a proposed co-operative academy in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. The College will work with the devolved nations of the UK and with the Co-operative Group to link their development priorities with this strategy.

The College will continue to build its international links in other parts of the developing world, wherever possible aligning them with co-operative businesses. In the longer term the College recognises the potential for significant co-operative development in the Middle East and will continue to explore appropriate partnerships to access this area of work.

The College has assisted the establishment of the International Co-operative Development Fund and will continue to work with it, particularly exploring building educational and training capacity to support co-operative development.

Research

The College research team is making the transition from the DFID funded Co-operatives for Development programmes to broader based research, continuing to develop university partnerships, with growing interest in research and growing demand for collaborative research partnerships such as doctoral students and funding bids. However uncertainties in HE teaching funding is placing limits on teaching partnerships with the College.

The establishment of the research unit marked an important step in building the knowledge base and capacity for the College and for the wider movement. Research

will continue to underpin all of the College's activities and enable the College to continue to play a key role in developing wider research networks in the UK and internationally.

In the lifetime of the plan the College will:

- Sustain and build research partnerships with universities in the UK and internationally including joint proposals to funding agencies
- Continue to develop short term and contract research portfolio including scoping and feasibility studies for future areas of College work.
- Coordinate the College's input to the Mainstreaming Co-operation Conference to be held in July 2012 and lead in the promotion of the book, *The Hidden Alternative*, based on papers from the 2009 conference.
- Maintain the online resource library and continue to supervise the development and publication of College papers as well as resources/publications for other co-operatives.
- Work closely with other teams within the College to ensure that the research team support all areas of activity including curriculum and international programmes.
- Extend the programme of seminars and workshops with HE institutes, building on the successful programmes at the Institute of Education and University College London.

Human Resource Strategy

To develop an infrastructure and sustainable human resource base to take the College forward.

People are at the heart of the Co-operative College. The College recognises that it has a highly skilled and competent team that it wishes to retain. The College will continue to 'grow its own talent' and invest in its core team. As the College has a small core staffing base it will not always be possible for people to develop to their full potential within the College. But as future opportunities arise colleagues may be attracted back having widened their experience.

The values and ethos of the Co-operative movement are held in high regard by the team working at the College, all those interviewed demonstrated a feeling of pride and a strong connection with the organisation and its values. It was an absolute pleasure to witness the dedication and commitment throughout the team and the genuine desire to promote the co-operative movement.

The level of commitment shown by people from across the organisation was outstanding; "I absolutely love my job and the difference that we make" was a frequently made comment. It was obvious that people feel motivated and supported to do their best, there is genuine respect for each other and a high regard for the expertise that exists.

liP assessment report – August 2011

Therefore to ensure that the College continues to attract and retain the right people it will:

- Develop a Reward and Recognition Strategy to will encompass salary banding, job evaluations, and an equitable system for pay settlements.
- Continue to undertake bi-annual Professional Development Reviews from which training and development needs are identified.
- Provide colleagues with access to training and development opportunities that enable them to meet both current and future job roles.
- Ensure succession planning is in place where required and identify future leaders.
- Work towards Investors in People (Gold).
- Maintain staff satisfaction levels of at least 85%.

The College also recognises that it does not have all the required skills within its core team. Therefore it will also continue to invest in its Associate base through Associate recruitment days and provide Associates with access to appropriate CPD.

Marketing & Communications Strategy

Building on the work undertaken in 2010 and 2011, and using the opportunities afforded by the International Year of Co-operatives the College will implement a revised Marketing & Communications Strategy. The College will carry out a number of specific and '*cross-College*' initiatives targeted to the wide variety of College audiences, stakeholders and beneficiaries. These initiatives will include:

- Relaunching the College's monthly electronic newsletter with the aim of driving traffic towards the College's website.
- Strengthening the Colleges wider social networking communications – ie Facebook, Twitter, a College Blog and other new media forms.
- Identifying publications, outside of the normal co-operative arena, particularly the specialist education sector press, where College stories may be of interest.
- Having a presence at key events both internal and external to the movement.

Monitoring Progress

In 2011 the College plan introduced RAG (Red, Amber and Green) rated milestones to monitor progress towards its strategic objectives. This has proved a powerful tool for use by the Leadership Team and the Board and this methodology will be further refined in 2012 and beyond, with milestones and KPIs for 2012 to be approved at the January Board meeting.

In addition to the strengthened quarterly milestones framework the College will test some of the higher level programmes within the PQASSO (Practical Quality

Assurance Systems for Small Organisations) programme, particularly those relating to governance.

Critical Success Factors

- Completion of the College Governance Review and establishment of governance structures fit for purpose in the 21st century that includes strong accountability to the movement and mechanisms that ensure strong partnerships with the Co-operative Group, Co-operatives UK and the wider movement.
- Supporting the Co-operative Heritage Trust in securing completion of the ROCHDALE Project capital works and the successful relaunch and audience development for the Rochdale Pioneers Museum.
- Successful introduction of a revised financial model, with an appropriate balance between donations (core funding), investment income and earned income for the charity.
- The continued widening of the College learning offer and the development of a distributed model of delivery through new partnerships with the growing co-operative education sector.
- The development and implementation of new media and digital technologies to enable the recruitment of learners, delivery of learning programmes and quality assurance processes with a growing range of delivery partners.
- Acceleration of the growth of the institutional co-operative education sector through co-operative schools, co-operative models in further education, other parts of the education sector and education support services.

The College has completed a remarkable transformation during the past decade. Securing new funding model and revised governance arrangements will be key building blocks in its future success and ensure it can provide an effective learning support service to a growing and more diverse co-operative sector.

