



May 2018

Dear Colleagues

Delivering the review recommendations of the AoC Charitable Trust and its Awards

Firstly, I wanted to take this opportunity to personally thank you on behalf of the AoC Charitable Trust Board and its Trustees for your support of the Beacon awards over many years. Without the long-standing support of colleges, the awards would not enjoy the credibility and standing they have.

Thank you also to those colleges and their staff who contributed to the AoC review of the AoC Charitable Trust and awards; many of your points and recommendations have informed the proposed changes discussed with the Trust Board and in summary are:

- Raise the profile of the awards, making better use of the winning case studies
- Increase and maximise the number of colleges applying
- Maintain rigour to ensure that winners are respected and represent best practice
- Utilise the applicants and shortlisted college case studies to share good practice and to promote the breadth and depth of excellence in colleges
- Work more effectively with sponsors, partners and stakeholders
- Reduce costs, simplify internal processes through smarter working, partnerships and integration.

In March 2018 the AoC Charitable Trust and the AoC Board agreed to adopt a range of proposals that we are confident will address the issues identified in the review.

I have summarised the most significant developments and changes below and our Trust Director Ian Munro would be very happy to discuss in more detail with you.

Firstly, we are delighted to have agreed a new partnership with the Tes, a trusted and respected media partner, together we will promote and celebrate the great work and success of colleges and the FE sector. We have developed a range of award categories that are complementary, and although the application and assessment of the AoC Beacon Awards and Tes FE Awards will remain independent, we will jointly announce our respective finalists at the AoC Conference gala dinner in November and announce and celebrate the winners at "Tes FE Awards in association with AoC Beacon Awards" ceremony in February 2019. This new partnership will enable us to increase the media profile of colleges and their positive impact throughout the year with regular features showcasing college best practice. We know through the review this is an area that our award sponsors wished us to improve.

The AoC Beacon Awards application, assessment and shortlisting process has been updated with the aim to encourage and enable more colleges to apply. We want more colleges to be able to tell us about their innovative practice and positive impact on students through an initial stage 1 streamlined application. After assessment and moderation, those colleges meeting the new criteria and threshold, will be invited to submit a full application to stage 2. We want also to recognise and promote those colleges that whilst not proceeding to stage 2 have met the Beacon Standard at stage 1 and will receive commended status. Beacon Awards finalists selected from stage 2 will be announced in November at the AoC Conference and then visited by our independent assessors and following moderation, the winners being announced and presented at the joint Tes and AoC awards dinner in February 2019. Colleges also told us they wanted to see more recognition of colleges who did not become finalists and/or winners.

The winning Beacon Award colleges will be required to host a one-day workshop at their college to share and showcase their best practice; these events will be free for staff to attend from AoC member colleges. The series of workshops will run through the spring and early summer, and associated costs part covered by Beacon Award sponsorship and sponsors will have a key role in these events. AoC and Tes will work together to promote these workshops and the day will also include the local Beacon Award presentation ceremony involving award sponsors local partners, press/media and MPs, AoC staff and Beacon Awards assessors. I am sure you would agree this provides colleges with a fantastic opportunity to share their best practice.

Bringing the "Gold" awards and Student of the Year awards within the Charitable Trust remit required us to reconsider the role of the various groups and panels involved in assessing and approving awards. The Trust Board agreed to the creation of new Charitable Trust Awards Panel (CTAP) that reports to the Charitable Trust Board. It will bring together the process of assessing nominations for the AoC "Gold" awards and Student of the year awards, it will also oversee the process for Beacon Awards on behalf of the Trust Board. The Chief Assessor for the Beacon Awards will work with the Director and Officers of the Trust and report to the Trust Board on progress of the Beacon Awards ensuring that the independent and anonymous process is maintained. The role of sponsor assessors is important and for many sponsors they find this valuable in understanding colleges and their priorities and we welcome sponsors to be part of the process, but it is not essential given our team of highly experienced and independent assessors.

The Gold Awards will continue in 2018 but renamed, for 2018 we will not seek new nominees but reassess the existing 300 nominees that we have already received from colleges over the last 18 months. The Student of the Year awards will continue, and we will invite applications in due course and recognise winners as part of a parliamentary reception with Ministers and MPs in 2019.

Your support and key involvement in the review process and feedback has been hugely valuable in shaping these changes and I hope you agree that they provide us with the opportunity to secure the future of the awards.

I do hope you will be able to consider applying this year and support the Beacon Awards in 2018/19 and be part of these important and exciting changes.

The prospectus of awards and application process will open at the end of May/early June.

On behalf of the AoC Charitable Trust and the AoC Board, AoC staff and member colleges, can I thank you once again for all your help and support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CS', is written over the typed name.

Carole Stott

Chair of AoC Charitable Trust Board

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