



The Crito Project Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Report of the trustees for the year ending 01 June 2020

The trustees of the Crito Project charity present an annual report for the year ended 01 June 2020 and confirm they comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the charity's constitution, and the Charities SORP (FRS 102).

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Our Aims

The Crito Project proceeds from two key beliefs:

- 1) That education is the most cost-effective and successful mode of reform available to our society.
- 2) That universities have a civic duty to seek out students in unconventional settings, especially those whose lives stand at critical junctures, and who can benefit the most from higher education.

In light of these beliefs, our primary aim is to provide access to higher education to inmates serving their sentence in the east of England.

Second, we advocate for, and work to bring about, the provision of accreditation for those students, in association with strategic partners including the University of East Anglia, the US-based Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison, prison governors, education companies working in the sector, and affiliated charities.

Third, we analyse and audit our work in order to add to the collective knowledge and understanding of the impact that such study has upon the wellbeing, life chances, behaviour and decisions of the Charity's students. We also assess our activity in order to improve the provision of our tutors and the efficacy of our courses.

We confirm that we as the charity's trustees have complied with our duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the commission in exercising our powers.

Our Objectives

In this, its first year as an Incorporated Charitable Organisation, the Crito Project set itself a series of objectives that were institutionally modest yet operationally ambitious. The charity's financial future, its capacity for fundraising, and its administrative structure are all predicated upon it achieving accreditation for its education provision. Without it there are very real limits to what can be achieved, the impact it can have upon its imprisoned students' lives, and available paths to institutional partnerships. Hence we conceive of the charity in the medium-term as existing in one of two distinct conditions:

- **Firstly** preparation and negotiation of accreditation with the University of East Anglia (UEA), whilst forming strong partnerships with the prison education company for the east of England, People Plus, and a suitable prison, its education team and its governors.

- **Secondly** (post accreditation) the delivery of higher education in the prison setting; the growth of the charity to include paid tutoring and a part-time administrator; closer affiliation with the UEA; fundraising to support our accredited modules; and entering into mentoring relationships with the American college-in-prison schemes that are more operationally and educationally advanced than us.

Hence our objectives for the year were clear: advocate for the project's aims within the UEA; seek a contract for accredited teaching with People Plus; and find a prison to partner with, where we could begin forming a student community and cohort that was ready for the step up to higher education.

However our objectives for the year – and our plans for the next – were curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic and the beginning of the UK lockdown on 23rd March 2020. Before these events we had successfully begun a new partnership and were

preparing to move into the second stage of our education provision: the UK's first fully accredited university/prison partnership, between the University of East Anglia (UEA) and HMP Wayland. This was and remains our central objective.

Review of Achievements & Performance

Until the cessation of all teaching in March, this year brought many achievements and excellent signs for future development. These can be divided into three broad categories:

I. Accreditation

Whilst we are proud of what we've achieved in the past, we have always been limited in scope by what educational outcomes we can actually offer our students. To unlock the kind of transformational university/prison partnership success we've witnessed in the United States over the past 20 years, we have been missing a key characteristic: offering fully accredited higher education.

In April 2019 key members of the UEA's Executive Faculty for the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communications (PPL) met with Ben Walker (Crito Course Director) and Tom Greaves (Crito Trustee) to map out what accreditation would look like. Following that meeting, the UEA committed to providing accreditation to the Crito Project's modules, aiming to commence in September 2020. As part of this process our modules will now be delivered in a manner as close as possible to that found in the Philosophy Department's First-Year Curriculum, will use UEA tutors, and demand the same level of written- and exam-based assessments. The process of accreditation is a long one, and one silver lining of the cessation of teaching is that it will give us time to meet the administrative and executive prerequisites that are part of that process.

We believe this to be the only arrangement of its kind in the UK, and we cannot wait to recommence teaching so that we can begin to realise the potential of American programmes such as Bard College Prison Initiative¹, here in the east of England.

¹ See <https://bpi.bard.edu/> for more information on their pioneering work. For statistics concerning the scale of their work and its success, see <https://bpi.bard.edu/by-the-numbers/>

II. Partnership with HMP Wayland & People Plus

With this sea-change comes a necessary shift in strategy. This year HMPS Wayland, under the leadership of Governor Sonia Walsh, became the sole partner for the Crito Project. In the past the Crito Project has taught at up to three prisons simultaneously, but for accredited provision to work, we needed to commit wholly to one site to develop a student body and a university classroom within the prison. We began unaccredited teaching at Wayland in September 2019, one year before accredited modules were hoped to commence. This allowed us to develop and educate a group of 20 or so students in readiness for the demands that accredited higher education brings, and we are proud of the achievements and changes that this group achieved between September 2019 and March 2020.

People Plus have been our partners for nearly seven years, but this is the first time they have agreed in writing to provide a contract to pay for our education provision, and we see this as a vital commitment to the future and viability of the charity's plan. In October 2019 we began their due diligence process for provision partners, passing in January 2020, as a precondition for any contractual arrangement. The contract will cover expenses related to the costs of paying our tutors, of travel, of stocking a small library and providing study materials, totalling £8400 per term, paid directly to the charity for a two-year period, upon confirmation of accreditation. Sonia Walsh, the prison's governor, has personally committed to supporting the charity's work at Wayland, and sees an important role for the Crito Project as part of her efforts to establish a culture of reform at the prison. Sheirra Matthewson, People Plus' Regional Manager, remains a committed ally to the charity's aims & purposes.

III. Education Provision

Considering the charity operated this year without any form of income, and with no financial assets, the Crito Project can be proud of its work.

We are settled on our partners and we are approaching the point at which we can award degree credits to our students, and so naturally the methods of our education delivery have also changed as part of this process. Chief among these changes is the creation of a series of preparatory modules that will prepare our students for the demands

of higher education. These 'close reading' modules are designed around the act that is paramount to higher education, that of studying a primary text. Each module picks one such philosophical text and, over a twelve-week period, expands the focus outwards, introducing new secondary texts with which to comprehend, contextualise and critique. Students develop key skills in academic reading, annotation and note taking, research and referencing, and the task of responding to a philosophical question in essay form. Each week a small writing task is set, rarely more than 200 words in length; collated and anonymised they are returned to the class for critique the following week. This ongoing task familiarises our students with writing to an audience, turning writing from something that is often daunting to something that can be deeply rewarding and empowering for our students. At the end of each term they complete a 2,000 word essay for assessment, and this will help determine whether our academic panel admit the student to the Crito Project's second stream of accredited modules. Just as important as their new-found familiarity with academia, our students begin their discovery of the world of philosophy, whether through Hellenistic ethics, literature and politics or the nature of mind.

Once a student has successfully passed two of our three 12-week Close Reading modules, they are invited for interview to see whether they are ready to upgrade onto our accredited module stream. This stream represents fully accredited higher education that mirrors the delivery found on the UEA's main campus. To the best of our abilities, the course structure and assessment approaches that found on campus, and access to texts is provided through a small onsite library of key texts.

This year Crito classes were delivered twice a week, for a total of 6 hours contact time per cohort, per module, and we ran two separate cohorts for a total of 24 students in our first term, and 21 in our second. This new and intensive approach was garnering obvious pedagogical benefits before we closed: the second class in our weekly schedule is now a writing and reading workshop, where students develop an easiness and familiarity with writing to set purposes, and with the close reading skills necessary to study at more advanced levels. Our tutors felt that this was having a significant impact on our students' abilities to read and write at degree level.

Finally, with the Crito Project welcoming Jack Manzi, a UEA associate tutor, onto its teaching team, the charity has moved over to a two-tutor system. There are certain issues with acclimatising to HE in prison for some of our students, and that can be sometimes be seen in terms of attention and self-belief. With two tutors the class has a good baseline of conversation and debate, and students naturally feel more inclined to contribute to a conversation already underway. Perhaps most importantly, it helps in

terms of establishing the norms that a class takes up: we want discussions to be charitable, respectful, inquisitive and critical, and we can establish those norms in our interactions, which students are then more likely to adopt and accept. Lastly having two tutors present in class allows us to spend more time talking with students, paying more attention to each individual's educational needs. For more information on our course structure and provision, please visit our website, www.thecritoproject.org.

Future Plans

The interruption to our teaching in March 2020 came at an inopportune time, ending a very promising term of study for our students. It also suspended the accreditation process with the UEA and contract negotiations with People Plus, as both parties scrambled to respond to the crisis and its drastic impact upon their capacity to educate. This understandable reprioritising left us needing to radically alter our plans for the following year and beyond.

The Crito Project is a small charity with three trustees, a course director and a tutor composing the totality of its staff, and furthermore the charity specialises solely in face-to-face higher education provision. Combined with the fact that internet connection is disallowed in UK prison classrooms, it seems that we will not be able to recommence teaching until we can once again do so face to face. In light of these facts, we have decided to focus on the following:

- I. Pursuing accreditation as the foremost priority for the charity, so that when we can recommence we can do so with the full provision of higher education in prison, and everything that means for our students' wellbeing and future.
- II. Conclude and formalise our contract with People Plus, and secure our ongoing good relationship with the company. This may prove problematic due to the undoubted changes that will occur to contracting in the sector under the emerging coronavirus crisis.
- III. Develop and finalise our complete curriculum for recommencement. The Crito Project's full curriculum will total 68 weeks of classes, for a total of 408 hours of class teaching per cohort. This is a not inconsiderable quantity of provision, and we can use this period to improve our lesson plans, lectures and workshop events.
- IV. Provide philosophy resources to people in HMP Wayland. While we cannot run our modules face to face or via video connection, we may still be able to use HMP Wayland's intranet to give access to a limited amount of philosophy resources.

V. Reach out to other bodies and build alliances in the interim. During this period of enforced absence from the classroom, it makes sense for our small charity to turn its attention to building alliances with other bodies including the Prisoners Education Trust here in the UK, the Consortium for Liberal Arts in the US, and the inspiration (and proof of concept) for the Crito Project, Bard College Prison Initiative.

Financial Review

Financially the charity is still in its infancy, with no costs or income for the period 22/07/2019–01/06/2020, and so our balance sheet remained blank for this period. The charity has no current or fixed assets nor liabilities to date. It holds no reserves. Therefore, whilst the charity technically runs a receipts & payments system of accounts, it has no receipts, payments, purchases, funds, assets or liabilities to declare.

Because it has no dedicated offices and no contracts, the charity has no fixed costs. Its variable costs for volunteer travel and teaching materials were, as of March 2020, being paid privately by the charity's volunteer Course Director, Dr Ben Walker. This is clearly an unsustainable arrangement and one we will cease once contracted accredited teaching can commence.

Hence the Crito Project's financial wellbeing and development are tied to the process of accreditation that is ongoing with the University of East Anglia. With accreditation comes a change in the charity's financial status: we will be contracted by People Plus to deliver our course when it recommences, for which we will receive approximately £4200 per module per cohort, with our provision being for two full cohorts at the time of the 2020 national lockdown's interruption.

Once we have reached this milestone we will begin with our planned fundraising initiative. We intend to submit a series of applications to small grants and funds who are either geographically local to the east of England or who specialise in supporting education and rehabilitation. Examples of the first group include such bodies as: the Bernard Matthews Fund, the John Jarrold Trust, the Targetfollow Fund, and the Pennycross Trust. Examples of potential funds from the second group include: Ernest Hecht Charitable Foundation, the Swire Charitable Trust, the QBE Foundation and the Cole Charitable Trust. Our applications will be tied to exact measures for particular modules, such as investment in the Crito Project's on-site library and its IT resources. Thanks to our qualitative analysis of student experiences on the course (conducted by our researcher and interview Dr Robert Lock) we can demonstrably tie grants directly to not only the efficacy of our teaching and the positive outcomes invariably described by our students, but the awarding of degree credits to our students and their graduation from our programme. Once we have established a track record of small grant awards the charity can consider making larger applications in support of, amongst other things, staff wages for our priority hire, a part-time project administrator.

Structure and Governance

The charity was incorporated with a trustee board of three, and with one volunteer, its course director, Dr Ben Walker. This year we took on board a second volunteer tutor, Jack Manzi. The board of trustees meets at least twice a year to assess the charity's work, discuss and direct its governance, and to hear reports from its volunteer tutor team.

Due to the coronavirus crisis, and its direct impact upon the charity's delivery of education, we do not foresee the need for additional trustees in the near future.

Trustees

Chair

Professor Liam Dolan, *Sherardian Professor of Botany, Magdalen College, Oxford*

Trustees

- Dr Tom Greaves, *Head of Philosophy Department, UEA*
- Georgie Oatley

Core Teaching Staff

Tutors

- Dr Ben Walker, *Crito Project Course Director, UEA*
- Jack Manzi, *Postgraduate Researcher, UEA*

Research

Head Researcher

Dr Rob Lock