

College Manager

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Keynote speakers' key points

2007/08 pay claim
submitted.
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Delegates at ACM's annual conference in Birmingham, on 8 March, gained valuable insights into current policy and the government's vision for further education. Here, we share the essence of the three keynote presentations delivered by leaders in the field. ►

Annual conference 2007



The key driver is to enable all young people to achieve their potential.



▲ Rob Wye, Director of Strategy and Communications at the LSC

Rob Wye, Director of Strategy and Communications at the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)...

...rehearsed the challenge for colleges: far too great a proportion of the UK's adult population is without a Level 2 qualification and basic literacy and numeracy skills. The policies intended to address this challenge fall into four broad areas:

- young people
- adults and employers
- infrastructure
- improved funding arrangements.

With regard to the first of these, the key driver is to enable all young people to achieve their potential. The new Diplomas and the plan to raise the compulsory participation age in England are intended to address this. The roll-out of Train to Gain, the development of new national skills academies for every sector of the economy, together with the introduction of the new standard for Employer Responsiveness and Vocational Excellence, are aimed at supporting and enhancing colleges' engagement with employers.

A joint LSC/Department for Education and Skills (DfES) consultation about how a demand-led FE system would work in practice closed at the end of March, and individual learning accounts – designed to put purchasing power into the hands of the learner – will be introduced this autumn, following pilots in the East Midlands and the South East.

There is an intention to improve the provision of advice and guidance for adults. With regard to improved funding arrangements, Rob told the conference that although the Framework for Excellence had been endorsed by the DfES and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) it would not be imposed in the first year. Although the improvement strategy cannot be completed until the FE Bill is finalised, minimum levels are in play and notice to improve will be made if these are not met. Everyone hopes that Sir George Sweeney's proposals for colleges' self-regulation will have a positive impact in improving funding arrangements. Secretary of State Alan Johnson, Rob assured conference, is genuinely keen to see further education at the heart of the nation's economic success and progress towards social cohesion.

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Join ACM, the only trade union and professional association devoted exclusively to the professional needs and interests of managers in further education. ACM is a trade union which advocates excellence and professionalism in colleges' services to learners. All members receive top-class employment and professional services. ACM is affiliated to the TUC.

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By telephone 01858 411 541

ACM is a union with a bright future. The debate on a demand-led system must ask: “Whose demand and whose needs?”



Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary at the TUC...

... praised the contribution of the Association for College Management to the TUC since the union became affiliated in 2002. Given the state of the job market, notably the rise in professional jobs, ACM is a union with a bright future.

The Leitch report is top of the policy agenda, but Frances expressed her doubts about the government's faith in an employer-led approach, given the poor record many employers have with regard to workforce training and development. Rather than an *employer-led* approach, Frances suggested that we need an *employment-led* approach focused not just on the skills that employers identify as being in need of development but also on lifelong learning more broadly. The debate on a demand-led system must ask: 'Whose demand and whose needs?'

The current direction of change is towards a learning and skills marketplace but, left to the market, many needs will go unmet. The TUC's vision for further education emphasises the need for investment in the sector to lift salaries to industry standard. At present, FE lecturers are paid 10–12% less than school teachers; college managers are paid 6% less than people in comparable jobs.

The traditional social function of colleges needs to be protected. Almost all government targets concern people aged 30 or younger: this approach overlooks the needs of older people, especially those seeking employment.

Frances joined the chorus that is protesting against the micro-management of further education: too many micro-targets, too much reorganisation of the infrastructure and relationships. She concluded by reminding delegates that education has been close to the TUC's heart since its founding conference and that the education unions continue to play an important role in the organisation.



▲ (above) Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary, TUC

◀ (opposite) Daniel Khan, Principal of Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education, and David Watkins, Principal of Carshalton College

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We will have to suffer intervention until colleges get it right. We need to consider the critical vocational skills of the future.



Ray Dowd offered a personal reflection on his first year as the LSC's champion for the Agenda for Change.

Further education, claimed Ray, is the sector that makes learning real for people; the sector that traditionally has been all things to all people and that is proposed as the nation's solution to the skills challenge. The learning and skills sector is characterised by tensions between the needs of the nation (for the economy), employers (for skilled labour) and learners (who want skills, qualifications and personal development). We need to transform these tensions into a virtuous circle.

The government has devised a range of intervention strategies because, without them, the college sector, based on this view, will not deliver. Those intervention strategies are: competition (or contestability); collaboration; quality; self-regulation; and a demand-led system. We will have to suffer intervention, warned Ray, until colleges get it right. He proposed that the way to get it right is to focus on pedagogy, on the relationship between learner and lecturer, and to not get distracted by the intervention strategies.

We need to consider the critical vocational skills of the future. In Ray's view, these must include training individuals who are responsible, adaptable, autonomous, innovative, resourceful and willing to embrace change. If colleges keep learners at the centre of their sights and get their experience right, then colleges will come right overall.

Ray described two colleges where excellent strategic leadership had created provision worthy of, and appropriate for, their community and local employers. But the sector as a whole is still not getting it quite right with respect to being employer focused. When we do, we can expect the Centre for Excellence in Leadership, the DfES, the QIA, the LSC, the DfES and all the rest to 'get off our backs'.



▲ (above) Ray Dowd, LSC's champion for the Agenda for Change

◀ (opposite) ACM's new president, the first to preside for two years, is Dr Fiona Rawlings, Deputy Director, Coleg Gwent



▲ This year our award for services to the Association was presented to Rosemary Varley, formerly Director of Personnel at Blackpool and The Fylde College and now an independent consultant.

▼ The award for services to the sector was won by David Sherlock, Chief Inspector of the Adult Learning Inspectorate.* The awards were presented by ACM General Secretary Peter Pendle.



*The Adult Learning Inspectorate merged with Ofsted on 1 April 2007.

The end for statutory dispute procedures?

The future of statutory dismissal, disciplinary and grievance procedures is in doubt following a review of their operation. These minimum legal procedures were introduced on 1 October 2004 by the Dispute Resolution Regulations. They set out the steps an employer must take to deal with individual grievances, disciplinary action other than warnings, and dismissals. The aim was to try and reduce the number of complaints that end up at an employment tribunal. However, in operation, many unions and employers say the procedures have proven more of a hindrance than a help.

One area that has proved confusing is the definition of a grievance. ACM's Head of Employment Relations, David Green, explains: 'The courts have taken a very wide view of what amounts to a grievance. Any written form of complaint has been deemed to trigger the procedures, even if it doesn't mention the word grievance or set out any details. So a two-line e-mail saying you aren't particularly happy with something can amount to a grievance under the statutory procedures.'

The effect of this has been a big rise in the number of grievances being dealt with by ACM. 'Colleges are having to treat even the most minor moans as a grievance if they happen to be in writing. The result is more and more ACM officer time being spent on such problems,' says David.

Sadly, the rise in grievance and disciplinary problems has highlighted a serious shortfall in the way some colleges deal with these issues. 'We are witnessing some quite appalling practices. Among the worst are failing to investigate problems properly, fishing for disciplinary problems to pin on particular individuals, and colleges making up procedures as they go along. Frankly, I'm disgusted by the way some colleges behave,' exclaims David.

ACM officers are compiling a list of culprits and bad practices and intend to raise the matter nationally with the Association of Colleges in England and with fforwm in Wales.

The official consultation on the future of the Dispute Resolution Regulations ends on 20 June 2007.

Joint trade union pay claim for 2007/08

The joint trade unions have submitted their pay claim for employees working in English colleges to the Association of Colleges. The claim calls for:

- a significant percentage increase on all pay scales and allowances for all employees, including some element of a flat-rate payment to take account of low pay. This increase should be in excess of the current rate of inflation and achieve full parity with schoolteachers' pay, taking into account the additional allowances awarded to classroom teachers
- starting salaries for management and leadership staff to be at least equivalent to those for leadership posts in schools (£34,938 in September 2007) and colleges in Wales
- an agreed joint strategy to ensure the implementation of modernised pay arrangements in all colleges
- agreement to commence negotiations on a national consensus on workloads and work-life balance
- a maximum 35-hour working week
- a minimum of 30 hours a year paid training entitlement for all staff, provided with release from normal duties to ensure no addition to existing workload.

For details of the full pay claim, please visit www.acm.uk.com

Safety for new and expectant mothers

The Health and Safety Executive has re-launched a section of its website aimed at new and expectant mothers. The site offers guidance to individuals, health professionals and employers, with links to advisers, FAQs and case studies. The site can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/mothers

Wise words?

In recent years 'students' and 'library', two elegant, familiar words, both with an excellent pedigree, have been substituted for 'learners' and 'learning centres'. This is an example of what George Orwell called the tendency of government and the civil service to bureaucratise and impoverish the English language. Do you agree or disagree? E-mail your views to memberfeedback@acm.uk.com or vote on the ACM website at www.acm.uk.com

A joint statement on the Further Education and Training Bill

ACM and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) have produced a joint statement on the Further Education and Training Bill.

Both unions, representing senior leadership staff in the FE sector, welcome the focus that the government is giving to further education and training.

The full text of the ACM/ASCL statement can be accessed at www.acm.uk.com



ACM Council elections 2007–2010

Electoral Reform Services, independent scrutineers, have submitted the following report of voting in the above election dated 19 February 2007 for which nominations closed at 5pm on Friday 24 November 2006. A ballot was required for the manager category and the closing date for the return of ballot papers was 5pm on Friday 16 February 2007.

Dear Mr Pendle

ACM COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2007–2010

Our report of voting in the above election, which closed at 5pm on Friday 16th February 2007, is as follows:

Manager Category (4 vacancies)

Number of ballot papers despatched	3,624
Number of ballot papers returned	545
Number of invalid (blank/spoilt) papers	1
Therefore, number of valid votes counted	544

The system used to conduct the election was the Single Transferable Vote.

The following candidates were elected (in order of election):

1. Christine Gallagher
2. Efreem Jones
3. Trevor Cave
4. Bob Vesey

Honorary Treasurer (1 vacancy):-

Dr David Watkins.....ELECTED UNOPPOSED

Black and Minority Ethnic Managers (2 vacancies):-

Deborah Persaud.....ELECTED UNOPPOSED

Hashim Hashim.....ELECTED UNOPPOSED

The ballot papers will be stored in accordance with the requirements of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 as amended by the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993.

As scrutineers appointed in accordance with Section 49 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (as amended), we are satisfied as to each of the relevant matters specified in subsection 52(2) with regard to the election. The following points should also be noted:

1. The person appointed under section 51A to carry out the storage, and counting of voting papers was Electoral Reform Services Limited.
2. The person appointed under Section 51A to carry out the distribution of voting papers was Electoral Reform Services Limited.
3. A copy of the register of voters (as at the relevant date) was examined in accordance with Section 49(3). The examination took place at our own instance and did not reveal any matter that should be brought to the attention of the trade union.

We would draw your attention to Sections 52(4), 52(5) and 52(6). 52(4) requires that a copy of this report be published and made available to all members of the ACM within a three month period from today. This does not mean that everyone has to be notified individually.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Adams
Consultant

Election update

Since we received the report from the independent scrutineers, two of the successful candidates, Efreem Jones (manager category) and Deborah Persaud (black and minority ethnic manager category) resigned due to changes in their circumstances.

Sandy Young, who was the first runner-up in the manager category, has therefore replaced Efreem on the Council. A vacancy remains in the BME category.



The 'you' brand

What image are you projecting to colleagues, the public and your customers? By being yourself, being consistent and looking the part, you can build that all-important 'you' brand.

The people factor is now becoming the strongest element of a brand, and the branding of service is the next big challenge for business. As business leaders, you can no longer rely on a traditional name or established brand alone to stand out from the crowd consistently. It is becoming increasingly important for the business itself to have a strong personality, and that has to start with the CEO.

In order to be an effective leader, a strong personal brand has to be built on authentic values. This is the basic ingredient of the cocktail for the 'you' brand. These values must then be consistently projected in all communication with all stakeholders, all the time.

Your responsibility to the brand

Because as a CEO your personal brand reputation should reinforce and enhance the corporate brand values, a good place to start is the corporate brand messages and the vision you have for the company.

What do the brand words actually mean when it comes to the people element of the business? For example, if your corporate values are 'progressive', 'responsive' and 'efficient', what are you doing personally to reinforce these values?

What are the rest of the executive team and their management teams doing in this respect? What about the receptionists? They are usually the first point of contact and the first impression people get of the organisation.

Are you encouraging brilliant, customer-facing interaction with an 'on-brand message' or are you leaving it to chance? When you're not responsive, is it just a blip, or part of your brand? You must first analyse how you're going to achieve these corporate values with the most powerful and impactful element of your brand – your people, and that includes you.

It's important to remember that you already have a personal brand image, whether you've consciously cultivated it or not. Your personal brand is a collection of the clear ideas that others have of you when they think of you and your company. You can influence it – positively or negatively.

Is the perception that others have about you really what you think it is, what you want it to be – or is it miles off message?

Find out who you really are

We know that to be sincere and taken seriously in business, our brand must be based on our authentic self. All too often we see people trying to be someone they're not, and the result is that we don't trust them and their image appears superficial. As a leader, it's important that others know who you really are and what you stand for. For others to buy in to you, they need to understand something about you as a person, not just your business style.

What do your brand words actually mean when it comes to the people element of the business?

Through my coaching with many CEOs and senior executives (both male and female) in the UK and internationally, I consistently find that they feel it's appropriate and right to keep their true personal values hidden from stakeholders, that it's not necessary for them to reveal too much.

The perceptions of your brand from the outside, however, may be different from how you think they are. It is worth asking the question: is your brand influenced by what you believe are the expectations of the people around you rather than being completely authentic?

This article was first published on 1 September 2006 in the *CEO journal*. Thanks to Lesley Everett for permission to reproduce this article here.

Be aware of the power and impact of being more transparent with your values.

So how do you, as a CEO, build that all-important 'you' brand? As a very first step, you must decide what your authentic personal brand actually is. Sounds simple enough, yet I find that with senior executives in particular, the brand has become moulded and confused by external influences and forces and many people lack clarity in what their fundamental motivators, drivers and values are.

Perhaps people high up the career ladder become a little too corporate-modelled? Consider your fundamental strengths, your individuality and your personality. Uncover from within what you're outstandingly good at. How would you describe your personality, your style, your principles/values and your talents? What would you include in a commercial about yourself? How good is your personal elevator pitch?

Peer review

When you have gained some clarity on this, it's then essential that you get some feedback from your management and executive teams. Encourage this as a team-building/motivational exercise to get the best results – you don't want people to feel singled out or to hold back.

Ask them how they view you and how you come across in different situations and environments – for example, in presentations, board meetings, social events, after-dinner speeches, media interviews, etc. You need candid views. There is not a great deal of point otherwise. And you should give honest, candid feedback too – with tact, sincerity and diplomacy of course!

You need to then check out the perception gaps – the differences in how you see yourself as opposed to how you come across to others. This will give you valuable feedback in order to focus on the right areas and manage your brand image more consistently and authentically.

Managing your visibility in the office and outside should be a high priority for you if you're serious about building a strong personal brand. It is no longer good enough to leave all the public speaking, media interviews and management meetings to others in the team if you're going to add serious strength to your brand, and personality to your organisation.

Being clear about your values and those of your company, and presenting those with charisma and impact at every opportunity to the outside world is something you should become great at. I find that bringing in analogies and experiences that say something about you personally are a fantastic way for your audiences to buy in to you and your message.

Look the part

'Clothing is the furniture of the mind made visible,' said James Laver. Whether you like it or not, people will judge you on your appearance, so it needs to be right for you and the organisation. And appropriate! This is an important area on which to get honest feedback and advice.

Do you always wear a formal business suit, whatever the occasion, for fear of getting it wrong? Does your business-casual wardrobe resemble your weekend wardrobe?

These are important areas to work on so that your non-verbal image projects and reinforces strong brand values. How good is your 'personal packaging' at marketing you? What does it say behind your back?

Whether you are CEO of a large global organisation or a small business entrepreneur, you need to focus on your unique differentiator to compete and succeed consistently. With so many similar products and services being offered, your only real – but most powerful – differentiators are your people; therefore it makes sense to start with your own personal brand.

Remember that world class means a strong and powerful personality, which is known beyond your actual products and services – make sure you are that personality.

Contact Lesley Everett at Walking Tall:

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ACM members can buy Lesley's book, *Walking tall*, at the special price of £10.00 including postage and packaging (normal price £12.50). Please visit www.acm.uk.com for further purchasing details.



... you already have a personal brand image, whether you've consciously cultivated it or not.





A manager's perspective

Welcome to a new feature in which ACM voices the views of college managers. **Bob Vesey** considers whether the agencies that exist to help colleges improve their performance are rising to the challenge or diverting funding away from the front line.



Without additional money, this complexity simply means that more resources will be shifted from front-line teaching and learning to manage the data and monitoring requirements that each stream generates.



The present government has done more than most to move further education towards the centre of the UK education landscape. The capital investment programme alone, which will see most of the FE estate rebuilt by the middle of the next decade, gives us the capacity to transform our colleges and shift them to the heart of local communities. That investment and the attention further education has secured from the government is welcome. Leaders and managers in the sector relish the opportunity to focus on developing the high-quality colleges and learning spaces of the future that will make further education fit for the 21st century.

Much else that the government is promoting in further education will have long-term positive benefits for young people and adults as they access education. The development of 14–19 partnerships, for example, is bringing institutions and sectors together to ensure that information, advice, guidance and learning opportunities are changing to meet the needs of all in this age group. While there may be arguments about government priorities in some areas of policy, the overall thrust is positive. The challenge to transform the sector is one that most leaders and managers are keen to embrace because there will be strong benefits for our students, staff and local communities.

If this transformation is to be successful, however, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Sir Andrew Foster's 'Galaxy of Stars' that make up the alphabet soup of organisations dominating the sector need to step back and reflect on the barriers that they are erecting that add little value and get in the way.

Conflicting messages that cause confusion

Joined-up government is always a challenge. Staff in government departments and non-departmental agencies, as with any other organisation, often work in their own silos and tend to focus on immediate and sectional concerns rather than the bigger picture. This is a problem for the DfES because of the way it is organised, with directorates that historically have a focus on different sectors making overlap and confusion inevitable. The plethora of non-departmental public bodies that work with the Department and traditions and practices that separated vocational and skills provision from the rest of education, add to the confusion. From the perspective of a college manager, there are just too many conflicting messages emanating from the DfES and sector agencies, and too much time is wasted grappling with the resultant confusion.

If we take funding as an illustration, previous promises pointed to funding simplification. What we are getting, from recent and separate consultations on school and college funding, is just the opposite. Apart from core funding at different rates for adults and young people, there will be distinct streams for 14–19 Diplomas and, in addition to the Train to Gain streams and Personal Community and Development funding, some revenue will now flow through the re-introduction of the individual learning accounts.

Every stream, of course, has its own set of targets and tuition fee requirements that make the system at best confusing and at worst incomprehensible. Without additional money, this complexity simply means that more resources will be shifted from front-line teaching and learning to manage the data and monitoring requirements that each stream generates. So, while the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has made major progress in reducing the direct micro-management of colleges by local officials, that progress is undermined by avoidable funding complexity.

Self-regulation or intervention?

Similarly, in the areas of quality and performance, there is scarcely any match between rhetoric and reality. On the one hand, the DfES wants colleges to become better at self-regulation and self-improvement. There is plenty of evidence from improving success rates and inspection reports that self-improvement is already a reality. At the same time, the Department encourages its agencies, led by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA), to produce a set of performance indicators (Framework for Excellence) and a quality improvement strategy that are heavily interventionist and bureaucratic and which appear to add little to the improvement process.

Looking at improving success rates as an illustration, these, rightly, figure as a key indicator and have been moving in the right direction for the last few years. There is a concern, however, that the pace of improvement is too slow, which is why the LSC has indicated that it will stop funding provision that is below the new Minimum Levels of Performance benchmarks from September 2007. Given the use of such a stick, we might expect the QIA's quality improvement strategy to have clear views on how success rates will improve faster given QIA intervention.

The devil is in the detail and when we look at the associated implementation plan (on the QIA website), we find that all the QIA plans to do to support improving success rates is to:

'Investigate the gaps between achievement rates of different groups of learners...' (*Implementation Plan 1.4.3*). In other words, the QIA has nothing to say about how to move success rates further in the right direction on a timely basis, and any college manager who spent time looking through the strategy for ideas might have been disappointed. Improvement is simply a matter for the colleges to sort for themselves.


Assess the value of the QIA

A further clue as to the value of the QIA to the improvement process is clear from the Balanced Scorecard within the strategy. While colleges have 27 key performance indicators (from the Framework for Excellence), against which they will be measured, there is not a single agreed performance measure relating to the effectiveness of the QIA. If the QIA is able to add any value to the sector, let us have a rigorous set of transparent performance measures that might demonstrate its worth.


Leaders and managers in further education have demonstrated a commitment to work with the government and the LSC to address issues of performance, skills shortages, inclusion and the transformation of the sector. Substantial progress in the direction of self-improvement is being made. This is clear from inspection reports. In addition, Ofsted, which has a strong reputation in the sector for fair and robust judgements, appears to be giving strong support to this drive to self-improvement and regulation.

The challenges are significant; the government could offer more support in helping to meet those challenges by closing down the agencies in the 'Galaxy of Stars' that simply consume resources and add no value. If the resources freed up are moved to the front line, they would have more chance of making a real and measurable difference.

Bob Vesey is Director of Curriculum and Development at Harrow College. He is one of the prime movers in the development of the Harrow 14-19 Partnership, a member of ACM Council and Chair of its Education Committee.



From the perspective of a college manager, there are just too many conflicting messages emanating from the DfES and sector agencies.



Members' views

Members are encouraged to air their views in an article, letter or just a comment for this newsletter. E-mail us at memberfeedback@acm.uk.com



ACM Chief Executive and General Secretary, Peter Pendle

Campaigning: definitely worth the effort

The Association puts in a lot of time and effort campaigning on behalf of colleges and college managers on a wide range of issues. Often this means lobbying ministers, senior civil servants and funding-council chiefs to introduce reforms we advocate and to abandon proposals we oppose. Ministers argue that radical reforms such as contestability are required to encourage public service providers to meet consumer needs and that funding is limited: lobbying organisations, such as ACM, counter by calling on policy-makers to listen to the advice of the professionals. Ministers accuse us of whinging and perhaps they are right.

Sometimes one wonders whether all the effort is worthwhile and whether it has any real impact on people's lives. The campaign on funding provision for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is evidence that it does. ACM, together with other education unions and associations, is working to reverse the funding cuts made to ESOL provision, and I am surprised at the support the campaign has received from unlikely sources. For example, the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU) has expressed its opposition to the government's ESOL funding cuts. In an industry that employs migrant workers from new European Union countries and elsewhere, in jobs that others are often unwilling to do, the BFAWU has worked in partnership with employers, using Learning and Skills Council (LSC) union learning funds, to ensure that its members are encouraged to learn to read and write English. It argues that ESOL provision has been the first step on the learning and education path for many home-based and migrant workers and is invaluable.

So, if ever there was a case where ministers should listen to the professionals, ESOL funding is it. The learners want to learn: it is often a first step to further learning. Unions representing migrant workers believe that ESOL provision is vital and the LSC has funded union learning representatives to encourage members to take it up. Employers need workers to be literate and the initiative clearly meets the government's skills agenda: a fine example of demand-led learning.

So yes, it is worth all the effort, and ministers should listen to the professionals before implementing their policies. Make sure that they do by writing to your MP and asking them to take up the issue of ESOL funding with Bill Rammell.

Quote of the issue
We must become the change we want to see
Mahatma Gandhi

Know a good saying about leadership that applies to work in colleges? Send it to memberfeedback@acm.uk.com



Need legal services? Have you forgotten that ACM provides legal services at discounted rates via Morrish & Co, its appointed solicitors? This is a benefit to ACM members and their families. To take advantage of those services, please contact the ACM helpline on 01858 411 540 or e-mail helpline@acm.uk.com

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