

The Awards Panel for the Westhill/NASACRE Awards

Who's on the Panel? How does it operate? Why Westhill, anyway? This article seeks to answer these questions

NASACRE's links with Westhill go back to NASACRE's very early years, when Westhill was still an independent college with a Free Church foundation providing Teacher Training. Initially our office base was in the college, with staff member Geoff Teece becoming NASACRE's Secretary after Colin James. Later, the University of Birmingham bought the Westhill Campus, and the sale proceeds became the Westhill Endowment Trust, with a Trust office (The Lodge) on the college site. It is this Trust which funds the Westhill/NASACRE Awards.

Though Westhill College effectively became part of the university, with Geoff and our office base transferring smoothly to the new regime, over time this became unworkable, and our office base had to relocate – that's another story. Meanwhile, our strong personal links with Westhill enabled the setting up in 2005 of the Westhill/NASACRE Awards scheme, which has continued annually down to the present day. NASACRE were in fact approached by the Home Office, who had been prompted to find a way of sustaining the legacy of the inspirational Young People's Faith Forum convened by Prince Charles for the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Happily, Westhill were willing to work with us and be partners in initiating a programme of Awards for innovatory SACRE projects.

The Awards Panel typically contains three or four members nominated by NASACRE's Executive Committee plus a representative of the Endowment's Trustees. The Company Secretary to the Trust is in attendance. Tristram Jenkins and I have been Panel Members from the beginning. An earlier member, Julie Grove, has since become a Trustee, and in a change of role now represents the Trustees. Other current members from NASACRE's Executive are Nasr Moussa Emam and Elizabeth Jenkerson, with Naomi Anstice also in the team when available. Some biographical details are given below.

Immediately after the deadline for submitting Award applications has happened (around the end of March), copies are emailed to each Panel member. The Panel meets a few weeks later, so that its decisions can be announced at NASACRE's AGM in the middle of May. Panel members give an initial rough grading to each application, based on a triple scale: C for applications which fall short in some obvious way (failure to fit with the stated criteria, or poorly conceived or presented); B for those which merit some consideration, and A for those which stand out: non-starters, possibles, and front-runners. This gives the Panel a broad overview of what they are looking at.

Each application is then discussed in turn, in depth, and a firm grade agreed. During this stage, a Panel member withdraws if they have a conflict of interest, i.e. if the member has been involved in submitting the application under discussion. Finally, the Panel reviews the pattern of grades, and makes its decisions regarding the granting of Awards in relation to the amount of funding available – currently up to £20,000 overall each year, with a limit of £4,000 per application. Awards are only given if the Panel is confident that the proposed project meets the criteria, is realistic, and is likely to be managed well and broadly achieve its aims.

Each SACRE submitting an Award application is informed of the Panel's decision as soon as possible after the Panel meeting. Feedback is offered for those SACREs whose bids were

unsuccessful. Each successful SACRE is linked with a nominated Panel member for liaison and support as the project proceeds. An intrinsic part of the Award process is that each successful project shares with the Westhill Endowment its achievements, pictures and materials, via the dedicated Award pages on the Westhill website.

NASACRE is keen to plan for an element of succession within the Awards Panel, and invites SACREs to suggest suitable people to be put forward for consideration.

Michael Metcalf
Awards Panel Convenor

Current Panel Members

Michael Metcalf Awards Panel Convenor; Chair, Staffordshire SACRE (Group B, Church of England); former Director of Education, Lichfield Diocese; co-founder of NASACRE; NASACRE Treasurer since the creation of NASACRE.

Tristram Jenkins Shropshire SACRE (and Worcestershire and Telford & Wrekin SACREs previously) (Group B, Church of England); former Director of Education, Hereford Diocese; co-founder of NASACRE; Executive Committee member for 20+ years.

Elizabeth Jenkerson Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth SACREs (Group A, representing the Baha'i faith); Executive Committee member.

Nasr Moussa Emam Chair, North Yorkshire SACRE (Group A, Islam); Executive Committee member.

Naomi Anstice Primary RE Advisor to Cheshire West SACRE; Specialist Leader in Education; LTLRE North consultant; NATRE Executive; Assistant Headteacher.