

SOAS
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Open Minutes
Thursday 16 May 2019, 3 – 4pm, SG36

Present:

Marie Staunton (*Chair*)
Valerie Amos
Deborah Johnston
Andrea Cornwall
Tamsyn Barton
Richard Stagg
Martin Harris
Steve Tinton
Andrew Atherton
Helen Pennant
Kersti Börjars
Michael Charney
Youssra Elmagboul
Sophie Bennett
Kofi Adjepong-Boateng
Nizam Uddin
Jenny Greenshields
Andrew Popham

In attendance:

Steve Hopgood
Graeme Appleby
Paula Sanderson
Carol Tan
Michael Jennings
Zena Khan (*Minutes*)

Apologies:

Hugh Bender-Samuel
Geoffrey Robertson
Angus Lockyer
Marloes Janson
Richard Alexander
Shane McDonald
Alfredo Saad-Filho
Tania Kaiser
Deborah Robinson

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Zena Khan, Governance and Risk Manager to her first SOAS BoT meeting.

Declarations of interest

There were none received.

BOT1819 5A Reserved and Open minutes of the 2nd April 2019

The minutes of the Reserved and Open meeting held on the 2nd April 2019 were **approved** as an accurate record following corrections to minor typos within the Open minutes.

BOT1819 5B Actions

The BoT **noted** updates to the actions, and it was further **noted** that a report on both Estates and IT to include cyber security would come to the BoT meeting in September 2019.

Action: To include on the agenda for the BoT September 2019 meeting, Update on Estates IT (cyber security).

BOT1819 5C Matters arising

The Director updated the BoT on a Law Lecturer at the School who will be standing for Germany's far right party AfD in the European elections.

A protest will take place tomorrow with the support of students and staff calling for the Lecturer to be dismissed and for the School to explain its role in 'facilitating his far-right politics'.

The School has put out a statement that although they find the policies of AfD abhorrent and conflict with the fundamental values that SOAS holds as an institution, they are committed to the rights of academic freedom of speech within the law.

The Director will continue to take advice from HR should the Lecturer be elected as this will undoubtedly be a full-time role and will have an impact on his role at the School.

It was **noted** that the BoT supported the school's statement and would welcome an update on the legal issues on this case.

BOT1819 5D Reputation Report

The BoT **noted** a paper on Reputation management presented by the Lead Trustee and Director of External Engagement and Public.

BoT welcomed the report and discussed following areas:

- Understanding the key strengths of SOAS
- Promoting positive statements
- Promoting the quality of SOAS scholarships
- Library
- Student voices
- Staff – sharing key messages

BOT1819 5E Financial Updates

The BoT **noted** updates from the Chief Operating Officer, Deputy Chief Operating Officer and the Pro-Director of Learning and Teaching on the following:

Chief Operating Officer

Internal recruitment has been launched and will be completed by 31 May 2019 to include a transition plan for each department. There are still 40 staff members left to be placed in a role. SOAS had received notice of strike action from the unions but negotiations continued.

Deputy Chief Operating Officer – Office for Students-Financial viability and sustainability

Current projections indicate that academic staff costs savings of £2.3m will be achieved for the forthcoming financial year 2019-20. This has been achieved through acceptance of applications to our voluntary severance scheme and the non-replacement of posts falling vacant. This falls just short of the target £2.4m savings.

Further academic staff cost savings of £0.4m have also been achieved for the financial year 2020-21, leaving a further £1.3m of savings to be secured by 1 August 2020.

In terms of staff numbers, by 1 August 2019 academic staff full time equivalents (fte's) will have fallen by approximately 59 since August 2017. If target staffing savings are to be achieved this will necessitate a further fall of 21 fte by 1 August 2021, with 5 fte already having been secured.

It was **noted** that this level of further reductions in staffing will impact on the subject range SOAS will be able to offer and that all avenues of income generation are being explored to avoid having to implement these further academic staffing reductions.

One Professional Services restructuring is set to achieve the target reduction of £1.6m, with £1.4m of savings secured by 1 August 2019 and a further £0.2m by 1 August 2021.

Pro-Director of Learning and Teaching-Admissions update

The recruitment refers to headline figures only at this stage, as our detailed financial forecasts would only be completed in June.

The headline for UG recruitment was a 20% increase in acceptances compared to the same time last year (20% rise for both for Home and EU and for international). Targets had also increased slightly. While the numbers looked reasonable, there was no room for complacency as there was likely to be fiercer competition in confirmation and clearing, and some of the bottom of the pool were academically weaker. There is also still the possibility of deferrals in the light of the recommendation of the Augar committee for a reduction in fees.

The headline for PGT was a worrying fall by 9% in acceptances compared to this time last year. However, there were concerted efforts to increase application and conversion numbers - and we hoped to make up the shortfall as we are still early in the PGT cycle. There are reasons for caution in both PGT and UG figures.

BOT1819 5F Emeritus Professors have been approved by the Director for Emeritus status

The BoT **noted** the following for Emeritus status:

- Clarence Smith
- Stephen Dodd

Any other business

GNC **approved** the recommendation to amend and substitute Standing Order 1: Board of Trustees with:

“The Board of Trustees will appoint a Clerk to the Board of Trustees, establishing an Appointments Committee for this purpose. Where the role of Clerk to the Board of Trustees is not performed by the Secretary, it will normally be performed by the Director of Legal and Governance”

The BoT **approved** this recommendation.