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## **SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES**

### **GOVERNING BODY**

**Friday 16 June 2006**

### **MINUTES**

Lady Barbara Thomas Judge (Chair)	
Professor R Finnegan (Vice-Chair)	
Mr M French (Honorary Treasurer)	
Professor C J Bundy (Director and Principal)	
Mr M Ahmad	Professor D N Khalili*
The Lord Bagri	Mr S Khan
Professor S Bassnett*	Professor M A Knibb
Mr J Bevan*	Mr K Kutay
Mr A Bhanji	Professor D Latchman*
Mr D W Brewer *	Mr P Lea-Wilson
Professor J Brown*	Dr D Martinez
Professor C Clunas	Mr R Pick
Professor E J Croll	Professor P Robb
Mr J Hughes-Hallett	Professor B R Tomlinson
Professor M Hutt	Dr L Welchman*
Professor B Ingham*	Ms E Wright
Sir David John	

In attendance: Mr F L Dabell  
(Acting Registrar & Clerk to the Governing Body)  
Professor S Chan (Dean of Law & Social Sciences)  
Mr J F Taylor (for minute 39 only)  
Mr G Appleby (Director of Finance)  
Professor P Webley (Director & Principal designate)  
Ms S Page (Registrar designate)  
Ms J Halliday (Deputy Secretary) [minute secretary]

*\*those marked with an asterisk were unable to be present.*

#### **38 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed the Director & Principal designate, Professor Paul Webley, and the Registrar designate, Ms Sharon Page, and new member Mr Kasim Kutay.

#### **39 Report of the Library Strategic Review Group**

Governing Body received the report from the Library Strategic Review Group (LSRG) and the comments of Academic Board on the report [Appendices D & E]. In introducing the report, Mr Jonathan Taylor (the Chair of the Group) highlighted the wide range of views received from both internal and external sources which had contributed to the report. The process had confirmed the Group's view of the central strategic importance of the Library within the School and had furthered their understanding of the operational challenges faced. Were the report to be criticized for 'lacking teeth', the Chair pointed out that the Group had sought not to pre-empt or close down whatever actions senior management would wish to consider within the School's overall strategic direction and financial situation, in the light of the report's findings and wider feedback from colleagues throughout the School.

Professor Clunas, a member of the Group, drew attention to section 8 of the report – Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations – and the Group's view that 'the

Library tries to do too much with too little', mirroring this apparent tendency in the School as a whole. He also indicated the Group's findings on the high spend of the Library as a percentage of total institutional spend, relative to other comparators. It was noted that other university libraries were also facing strategic challenges. Dr Martinez expressed the view that many academic staff were highly disappointed that the proposed Library Committee could not be approved. Mr Ahmad reiterated the Students' Union's ongoing commitment to campaigning for extending the Library's opening hours. The Chair thanked the Students' Union for their contribution to the debate about the Library.

The spend on the Library and other factors needed to be considered more explicitly if they were to be strategic choices for the School. Professor Knibb reminded Governing Body that a previous working group - the Strategic Priorities Team – had discussed the need for the School to address and decide on strategic choices. The incoming Director and Principal confirmed that the LSRG's report would need to be fed into the School's strategic review process in the forthcoming year and that the choices in relation to the Library were not necessarily in terms of funding but in terms of strategy.

Governing Body **APPROVED** the report, thanked all those involved for their hard work and asked that the report be widely disseminated for discussion within the School. Governing Body asked the School's management to report back this time next year with decisions and clear actions in response to the LSRG's report.

#### **40 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2006 were **APPROVED** and signed.

#### **41 Director & Principal's Report**

Governing Body received a report from the Director and the Principal [Appendix A]. Arising from the report:

- i) Undergraduate and postgraduate application numbers and acceptance rates were noted.
- ii) The unsuccessful outcome of the SOAS (with partner institutions) bids for Area Studies was noted with extreme disappointment.
- iii) Internal preparations for the QAA Institutional Audit taking place from 19-23 March 2006 were well in hand. A steering group had been convened, chaired by the Chair of the Quality Audit and Assurance Committee. Governors wished to receive a more detailed report on actions taken in response to the QAA's 2003 Audit. The Pro-Director and the Deputy Secretary reported that these actions were in any case being updated as part of the preparations for the 2007 Audit on which Governing Body would be kept informed. It was **AGREED** that the relevant officers should consult and prepare a more detailed report for Governing Body's next meeting.
- iv) The acceptance of SOAS into membership of the 1994 Group of universities was noted with pleasure.
- v) The latest situation with regard to governance and funding arrangements for the Percival David Foundation was discussed. It was **AGREED** that legal opinion ought to be sought regarding the School's and the Governing Body's position and that the wording of a press release to be published as soon as possible should be finalised, with input from the Director and Principal designate and the Registrar designate.
- vi) Progress on Bloomsbury Consortium initiatives was noted, and a proposal for funding support for a proposed Centre for International Development would be submitted to HEFCE later this month.

vii) Trades unions would shortly be balloted on the offer in settlement of the national pay dispute. SOAS staff were marking and returning scripts against a slightly revised set of examination board deadlines and graduation ceremonies would proceed as scheduled. Although the situation had been tense, relationships within the School during the dispute had been civil and every attempt had been made to limit as far as possible any adverse effects on students. Colleagues' cooperation was much appreciated.

viii) Governing Body was pleased to note the appointment of Ms Sharon Page, currently Secretary at Goldsmiths College, who would take up office on 1 September.

ix) It was noted that this was the last report from the current Director and Principal who recorded his deep appreciation of the support and counsel received from the lay members of Governing Body over the past five years, in particular from the two successive Chairs.

In addition to the written report:

x) The Director and Principal reported that he had been in continuing discussions with the Director of the LMEI and that a paper on the relationship between the School and the LMEI would be going to a Board meeting of the latter shortly.

## 42 Governing Body Membership

Governing Body received an oral report from the Chair of the Membership Committee. Governing Body confirmed the action of its Chair in appointing Mr Kasim Kutay as a new ordinary member.

It was noted that there would be six vacancies for members of Governing Body whose terms came to an end in 2007. Suggestions for new members were welcomed and information had been placed on the SOAS website, inviting nominations by 15 September 2006. There would then be a meeting of the Membership Committee in October to consider the nominations.

As the new Vice-Chair of Governing Body, Professor Knibb would become an *ex officio* member of relevant sub-committees. The Clerk to Governing Body would be approaching other lay members to fill vacancies on other sub-committees. Governing Body **AGREED** to authorise the Chair to confirm nominations to vacancies on sub-committees.

It was noted that the term of office of the Chair of the Estates Committee would come to an end in 2007. Governing Body **AGREED** to confirm the nomination of Ms Joanna Embling, senior partner at Cushman & Wakefield to become a member of Estates Committee, with a view to becoming its Chair in 2007. She was also to be invited to join Finance and General Purposes Committee.

## 43 Finance

i) Governing Body received the forecast outturn for 2005/06 [Appendix B], and noted that the estimated deficit had now been reduced to £168,000. Governing Body **AGREED** to endorse the recommendations of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, including the proposed forward spend in terms of the Library book fund. This would result in a revised deficit of £293,503.

ii) Governing Body received the draft budget for 2006/07 [Appendix C], noting with extreme concern a projected budget deficit of £800,000. In proposing the paper to Governing Body, the Honorary Treasurer (as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee) asked that this be approved, subject to the School embarking on a sustainable plan of action over the next three years. The School would be undertaking the strategic review over the forthcoming year, with a view to implementation the following year, so that in the third year sustainable results could be in place. Governing Body, given its statutory responsibility, reluctantly

**APPROVED** the draft budget deficit, subject to every effort being made by the School's management to reduce the deficit via a clear action plan to be produced to Governing Body before year end.

iii) After a recent tendering process, Governing Body **APPROVED** the acceptance of new loan facility arrangements and authorised relevant officers to countersign and return the facility letter and deal with related matters.

#### **44 Internal Audit**

Governing Body

i) **APPROVED** the appointment of new internal auditors the Kingston City Group (KCG), being an HE specialist provider, to be secured via the Bloomsbury Consortium, and **AUTHORISED** the Acting Registrar to conclude contractual arrangements [Appendix F];

ii) noted a letter from HEFCE on *Assessment of Institutional Risk* [Appendix G].

#### **45 Strategic Plan**

Governing Body received the interim Strategic Plan for 2006/7 [Appendix H], noting under Strategic Aim 7 that the new Director and Principal was planning to extend the review of the effectiveness of Governing Body to reviewing that of its sub-committees and the overall governance of the School.

#### **46 Estates Matters**

Governing Body received a report on estates matters [Appendix I]. It was noted that since the report had been written it had become apparent that there could need to be significant work done in respect of toilet facilities and electricity in the main Russell Square buildings and the risks and necessary expense to remedy any urgent deficiencies would be kept under review.

#### **47 Governance**

i) Governing Body received a report from the Department for Education and Skills on *De-regulating Higher Education Institutions' Governance Arrangements* and **ENDORSED** the position set out by the Clerk to the Governing Body in his covering paper [Appendix J].

ii) Governing Body received a report from the Clerk to Governing Body, noting potential changes to Charity Law and the impact this might have on universities and Students' Unions [Appendix K].

#### **48 Equality Committee**

Governing Body received and noted a report from the School's Diversity Advisor, briefing members on the recent and forthcoming developments in each area of equality and diversity legislation, and noting that all relevant School policies would be reviewed to ensure requirements were met [Appendix L].

#### **49 Student Grievances**

Governing Body received and noted a summary of student grievances 2002-6 [Appendix M].

**50 Standing Orders**

Governing Body considered a report on some modest changes required to the School's Standing Orders and **APPROVED** the recommendations [Appendix N].

**51 Academic Board**

Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 31 May 2006 [Appendix O].

**52 Finance and General Purposes Committee**

Governing Body received the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 30 May 2006 [Appendix P].

**53 Any Other Business**

*53.1 Annual Accounts 2004/05*

Governing Body noted the published version of the Annual Accounts 2004/5.

*53.2 Valedictions and thanks*

The Chair thanked the student governors for their significant contributions over the year, including their current campaign to fundraise amongst SOAS students, and wished them well for the future.

The student governors extended their best wishes to the Director and Principal for the future. They also expressed thanks to the Deputy Secretary for her help during the year.

Governing Body extended its sincere thanks to the Director and Principal and good wishes for the future and noted that there would be a separate occasion the following week to mark this.

**54 Date of meetings next session**

These had been scheduled as follows:

Friday 15 December 2006

Friday 23 March 2007

Friday 15 June 2007.