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SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

GOVERNING BODY

Friday 24 March 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	Sir David John*
The Lord Bagri	Professor D N Khalili
Professor S Bassnett	Mr S Khan*
Mr J Bevan	Professor M A Knibb
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

In attendance: Mr F L Dabell (Clerk to the Governing Body)
Mr A Keeble (Director of Finance & Administration)
Professor S Chan (Dean of Law & Social Sciences)
Dr M A Humphreys (Learning and Teaching Services Manager) [minute secretary]

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

20 Welcome

Governing Body welcomed the incoming Chair, Lady Barbara Thomas Judge. The Chair thanked members of Governing Body for their support during her first few months in post, and stressed the need to build on the School's past successes, particularly through further outreach activities.

21 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 December 2005 were **APPROVED** and signed, following confirmation of the following:

22.1 Internal Auditor's report (minute 9.3)

It was confirmed that the Internal Auditor's report on HR procedures with reference to the Library had been attached to the minutes of the last meeting.

22.2 Standing Orders (minute 15)

In response to a suggestion from a student representative that the deadline of items for inclusion on the agenda of meetings might be shortened, the problem of allowing adequate reading time, particularly for lay members of committees, made this unrealistic.

The minuting style of Governing Body meetings was discussed, in response to a query highlighting their lack of discursive detail. It was noted that the style of minutes used by Governing Body was usual for this type of committee, and further noted that a method of communication from Governing Body to the wider School community, perhaps in the form of a newsletter, might be helpful.

22 Matters Arising

22.1 ACAS Process for the codification and introduction of HR Policies and Procedures (minute 93[ii])

Governing Body noted the lack of progress in agreeing HR policies and procedures with the trades unions and stressed the importance of informal discussions in getting the trades unions back around the table.

It was suggested that the Bloomsbury Consortium might provide a useful source of documentation on policies and procedures in this area. It was confirmed that the School had drawn heavily on the documentation of other institutions, reflecting best practice in the sector.

The ongoing national pay dispute between the AUT and universities was a further difficulty, and the suggestion was made that further informal meetings between representatives and the School's management might be useful. It was confirmed that these were, in fact, already taking place.

23 Director & Principal's Report

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

23.1 Applications

Undergraduate applications were buoyant, and those from postgraduates stable. The School's challenge now was to translate the offers into registrations.

23.2 Library Terraces

The Library Terraces building project had been completed within budget and ahead of time.

23.3 Extended Library Opening Hours

During the month of May, the Library and some computing facilities would open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The data arising from this pilot study will inform plans for any future extended access to the Library and computer rooms.

23.4 Bloomsbury Consortium – Centre for International Development

The Bloomsbury Consortium had, thus far, concentrated on administrative collaboration, providing efficiency gains in several areas. The Centre for International Development would be an academic collaboration, reflecting the complementary academic skills of each institution. The proposal had been enthusiastically received by DfID and DfES.

24.4 Director of Finance and Administration

The Director and Principal formally, and warmly, thanked the Director of Finance and Administration for his work at SOAS, and wished him well in his future work at Queen Mary College where he would commence on 1 May 2006.

It was **AGREED** that a further report from the Director, or the Chair of the QAAC, on the QAA Institutional Audit be brought to the next meeting of Governing Body.

Concern was raised about the impact on students of the national pay dispute which had resulted in industrial action, including a threatened boycott of assessments. It was noted that no immediate action was necessary, and numerous factors were unclear at both a national and local level. It was confirmed that the Deans had held discussions with academic staff regarding the matter.

Concern was also raised about the decline in overseas postgraduate research student applications. The Director commented that this was a sector-wide long-term decline, which was particularly noticeable in arts and humanities.

24 Governing Body Membership

Governing Body noted that the Vice-Chair's period of office comes to an end this summer. Governing Body Membership Committee had unanimously recommended Professor Michael Knibb to Governing Body as their next Vice-Chair wef 1 August 2006. Governing Body **APPROVED** this recommendation.

It was further noted that a new ordinary member of Governing Body was required, following Lady Barbara Judge's appointment as Chair. It was **AGREED** to authorise the Chair to make an appointment if a suitable candidate could be identified.

Concern was raised that there were many members of Governing Body whose terms came to an end in 2007. Suggestions for new members were welcomed, and information would be placed on the SOAS website.

25 Finance

25.1 Revised budget for 2005/06

Governing Body received the revised budget for 2005/06 [Appendix B], and noted that owing to a favourable adjustment, the annual deficit had been reduced to £375,000.

25.2 *Budget Scoping Exercise 2007/07*

Governing Body received a report on the Budget Scoping Exercise for 2006/07 [Appendix C]. There was a significant change in this process: in the past, student growth targets had formed the basis of projected fee income, but now a more conservative estimate, of steady student numbers, were to be used. It was noted that additional fee income from “high fees” was more than written off by increases in staffing costs resulting from both inflationary increases and the job evaluation exercise. The requirement for academic staff positions to be filled in the lead-up to the RAE was noted. However, the target of achieving no deficit at the operating level remained.

26 Planning Process

The incoming Director and Principal, together with the new Chair of Governing Body, would lead the development of the School’s next strategic plan. HEFCE were keen on a wider poll of opinion being taken by universities, so a twelve month timescale should be expected. In the meantime, the School’s strategic plan would be extended by a further year with minor modifications.

27 Estates Matters

Governing Body received a report and recommendations concerning estates matters [Appendix E]. It was again noted that the Library Terraces project had been completed ahead of time and under budget. Governing Body warmly congratulated all those involved in the project. Activity to pursue 21-22 Russell Square was reconfirmed.

28 Equality Committee

The paper at Appendix F was withdrawn, pending further work by the Equality Committee in consultation with the unions.

29 Booking and Conduct of Meetings

Governing Body received the revised guidelines for the booking and conduct of meetings (Appendix G). Most of the changes were merely of nomenclature, but it was noted that section 3e (ii) should include trades unions as recognised bodies. With this minor change, the guidelines were **APPROVED**.

30 Students’ Union Constitution

Governing Body received the revised constitution for the Students’ Union (Appendix G), and expressed its thanks to Robert Pick, Jo Halliday, Peter Baran, and the union officers who had been involved in the revision. The revised constitution was **APPROVED**.

31 Honorary Fellowships / Degrees Committee

31.1 Remit of Honorary Fellowships / Degrees Committee

Governing Body noted the amendments to the remit of the Honorary Fellowships / Degrees Committee (Appendix G), which had been approved by Chair's Action. It was noted that the order of criteria by which Honorary Fellowships would be awarded should change as follows:

- a) an internationally recognised scholarly reputation;
- b) a significant contribution to the School's mission;
- c) having played a significant role in the School's regions;
- d) previous significant donations to the School;
- e) retired Directors and Principals of SOAS.

The restriction of Honorary Fellowships to former Directors and Principals of the School, and not to any other former staff, was discussed. It was noted that there was a wide range of other honours available to recognise former members of staff, and that the Pro-Director would report back to Governing Body on their current and future use.

31.2 Honorary Fellowship Recommendation

Governing Body **APPROVED** the recommendation from the Honorary Fellowships/Degrees Committee that an Honorary Fellowship should be awarded to Michael Palin. It was noted, however, that Mr Palin was unable to attend the graduation ceremony this year, so the fellowship would not be awarded until 2007.

32 Standing Orders

32.1 Information relating to extraordinary meetings

Governing Body **APPROVED** the recommendation of Finance and General Purposes Committee that revised Procedures for the Conduct of Meetings (Standing Orders Annex I.i) be adopted to set down guidelines for the rules of Extraordinary meetings.

32.2 Amendments to committee membership in relation to changes in posts

Governing Body **APPROVED** the minor changes in committee membership caused by the remodelling of the post of Director of Finance and Administration into a Registrar and a Director of Finance.

33 Library Strategy Review Group

Governing Body received an interim progress report on the activities of the Library Strategy Review Group [Appendix M]. It was noted that a final report would be submitted via Academic Board to the next meeting of Governing Body. Governing Body was pleased to note that the quality and quantity of engagement had been substantial.

34 Academic Board

Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 8 March 2006 [Appendix N].

35 Finance and General Purposes Committee

Governing Body received the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 March 2006 [Appendix O].

36 Any Other Business

36.1 Bengali at SOAS

A paper raising concerns about the provision of Bengali Language tuition at SOAS was presented by the Students' Union. The Dean of Languages and Cultures indicated that the paper did not accurately reflect actuality, and tabled a brief response outlining the past, present, and future of Bengali provision at SOAS.

36.2 Development work

The Chair of Governing Body stressed the importance of upcoming development and fundraising activities, and pledged to work closely with the business community, and the British Olympic Committee, in the lead up to the Beijing Olympics of 2008. Future priorities included funding additional scholarships, further capital projects, the possible relocation of the PDF, and the 'Treasures of SOAS' project.

37 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Governing Body would be held on Friday 16 June 2006 starting at 11.00am, followed by lunch.