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

### **GOVERNING BODY**

**Friday 9 December 2005**

### **MINUTES**

Mr J F Taylor (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	Lady Barbara Thomas Judge
Professor S Bassnett*	Professor D N Khalili*
Mr J Bevan*	Mr S Khan
Mr A Bhanji*	Professor M A Knibb*
Mr D W Brewer*	Professor D Latchman
Professor J Brown	Mr P Lea-Wilson
Professor S Chan	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)  
Ms J Halliday (Deputy Secretary) [minute secretary]

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

### **3 Welcome**

Governing Body welcomed the following new members:  
Mr James Hughes-Hallett, Dr Lynn Welchman, Professor Bruce Ingham.

### **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 June and 26 October 2005 were **APPROVED** and signed, subject to the addition of Professor J Brown to the list of those present on 10 June.

## **5 Matters Arising**

### *5.1 The Percival David Foundation (minute 93[ii])*

The PDF Council had discussed matters further at a special meeting on 20 June 2005. The Council had commissioned a feasibility study to consider fund-raising options open to them. The School was considering its position.

### *5.2 Students' Union Constitution (minute 93 [iii])*

It was noted that this was not ready to be approved.

### *5.3 Bloomsbury Consortium's response to the Vice-Chancellor (minute 94[ii])*

The response would be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.

### *5.4 Mr David Brewer (minute 94[iv])*

The Governing Body congratulated Mr David Brewer on his election to Lord Mayor of London and recorded its gratitude to him for his active promotion and support of the School.

### *5.5 Alleged discrimination (minute 94[vii])*

It was noted that the Director and Principal and the Deputy Secretary had met with representatives of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Union of Jewish Students on 18 July 2005 and that that meeting and subsequent correspondence and events in the Students' Union (SU) had been positive and had improved relations with the BDBJ. The Director and Principal extended his thanks to School colleagues, and to the SU Co-Presidents for the active responsibility the latter had demonstrated in these matters.

### *5.6 Governance (minute 101)*

This matter would be taken forward by the new Chair next term.

### *5.7 Annual Operating Statement and Financial Forecasts (minute 104)*

These had been submitted to HEFCE.

### *5.8 Extraordinary Meeting (minute 2.3)*

Arising from the penultimate sentence of that minute, the Governing Body confirmed that it expected all colleagues in the School to strive to work in an atmosphere of mutual respect and that instances of alleged abuse, intimidation or threatening behaviour would be dealt with according to the appropriate procedures.

## **6 Chair of Governing Body**

It was confirmed that Lady Judge had been appointed Chair of Governing Body for a term of five years with effect from 1 January 2006 and the outgoing Chair and the members expressed their best wishes to her in her forthcoming role.

## 7 Director & Principal's Report

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

### *7.1 Student numbers; Finance*

The overall increase in student enrolment figures for 2005, the more detailed shortfalls, the financial implications and the strategies the School was adopting as a result were noted.

### *7.2 The SOAS Library*

With regard to the dispute, it was noted that the School and the AUT had signed an agreement – mediated by ACAS – on 18 November and that its terms were now being progressed.

### *7.3 National Student Survey*

It was noted that the feedback from SOAS students in this survey showed a high overall level of satisfaction, although reservations had been expressed about some aspects of support to students. It was noted that more recent internal feedback had shown some improvement. Governors expressed their views that students would become ever more demanding in their expectations of student support once the new fee regime was introduced in 2006. The student Governors expressed the view that students felt that services and support to students, especially in terms of Library and IT provision and the personal tutor system, were insufficient and inadequate and were not reflected in the School's priorities. The Director and Principal and the Pro-Director stressed that these concerns as expressed by the SU were being taken extremely seriously by the School. The matter of the Library opening hours, including costings, would be considered in the forthcoming Library Strategy Review, due to report in time for the Governing Body's next meeting on 24 March 2006. It was noted that the School's Learning and Teaching Policy Committee was considering the SOAS results of the National Student Survey in detail (including the comment at the end of paragraph 11 in the Director's report) and would report back through the appropriate School structures. It was noted that SOAS had recently been placed 4<sup>th</sup> in The Guardian league tables. By way of a celebratory note, the Governing Body congratulated the SOAS University Challenge team which had won through to the second round of that contest.

### *7.4 The Bloomsbury Consortium*

Progress being made on a number of projects was noted. In addition, a major academic initiative was being explored to create a national centre for International Development Studies across the six specialist colleges comprising the Consortium. The proposal was being positively supported by the University, government department officers and the HEFCE London Regional Officers. It was planned to submit a bid for funding to the HEFCE strategic development fund. Governors welcomed this news but sought – and obtained – reassurance that risk and competition factors had been taken into account.

### *7.5 Chair of Governing Body*

The School had expressed its gratitude the previous evening to Jonathan Taylor whose term of office as Chair of Governing Body was coming to an end with this meeting. The Governing Body as a whole recorded its thanks to Jonathan Taylor for the time, energy, thoughtful consideration and commitment he had given to the School as Chair of Governing Body and in many other ways, some of which were ongoing.

## **8 Annual Accounts**

### *8.1 The Annual Accounts for 2004/5*

The Governing Body received the audited accounts for the year ended 31 July 2005 [Appendix B], as recommended by the Honorary Treasurer for adoption.

**RESOLVED: to approve the accounts for 2004/05.**

### *8.2 Appointment of External Auditors*

It was recommended that Deloitte & Touche be re-appointed as External Auditors for 2005/6.

**RESOLVED: to appoint Deloitte & Touche as External Auditors for 2005/06.**

## **9 Internal Audit**

### *9.1 The Annual Report of the Audit Committee*

The Governing Body received the Audit Committee Annual Report for the year 2004/2005 [Appendix C].

### *9.2 Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on 14.11.2005*

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 14 November 2005 [Appendix D].

### *9.3 Internal Audit Review of HR procedures with reference to the Library*

The Governing Body received an oral report from the Chair of the Audit Committee on the internal audit review of HR procedures with reference to the Library. It had been ascertained that the School had no written procedures for redundancy of non-academic staff and that therefore they had consulted their employment lawyers in this instance and had followed their advice. It was noted that the establishment of internal procedures was now a priority for the School. It was noted that not just the procedures but an examination of the processes which led to the decisions taken about the Library needed to be considered. The Governing Body asked that the internal auditor's written report on the Library be made available to them.

## **10 Finance**

### *10.1 Budget validation for the financial year 2005/6*

The Governing Body received a budget validation report for the financial year 2005/6 [Appendix E]. In view of the student enrolment situation reported above, the Governing Body **APPROVED** a revised budget deficit of £527,790 as recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, subject to the favourable adjustments to be made as a result of 1 December late enrolment figures.

### *10.2 Cash Flow Projection; Capital & Debt Statement; Short-Term Deposits; Capital Programme, Funding and Adequacy Statement; Output from the School's income and expenditure model*

The Governing Body received the financial reports [Appendix F] and the income and expenditure model [Appendix G], noting that the latter was based on a 'bottom-up' financial planning approach, the outcomes of which would be presented in more detail to the Finance and General Purposes Committee in March 2006. The Governing Body noted the start-up costs of the Development Office but the benefits fundraising would bring to the School's financial position.

## **11 Strategic Plan**

The Governing Body received a progress report on the Strategic Plan 2006-2009 [Appendix H], welcoming the prospects for expansion by distance learning and overseas collaboration but lodging the financial and QA risks involved in such a strategy. It was noted that a full report on the Strategic Plan would be made to the next meeting of the Governing Body.

## **12 Student Retention**

The Governing Body received an oral report from the Pro-Director on student retention, noting that matters had improved over the years although the rate had been the same for the past two years at 5.89%. Work was ongoing on the reasons why students withdrew. A working party had recently met to look into the personal tutor system and had made recommendations.

## **13 Estates Matters**

The Governing Body received a report and recommendations concerning estates matters [Appendix I]. It was noted that there was considerable unmet demand for student residences and that proposals regarding new student residences would be discussed within the Bloomsbury Consortium in the New Year. It was noted that residential accommodation for new staff within student residences remained a priority. It was noted that the University of London had now revised its asking price for 21/22 Russell Square down to

£2.5M and it was **AGREED** that the School should now move to close the purchase on this.

#### **14 Report of the Equality Committee 2004-5**

The Governing Body received the annual report of the School's Equality Committee [Appendix J], and thanked the former Diversity Advisor for her contributions to this aspect of the School's work. It was noted that to date the work had centred on getting policies into place and that now the School looked forward to processes of implementation, monitoring and mainstreaming of this work, once the new Diversity Advisor came into post.

#### **15 Standing Orders**

Consideration was given to the amendments to the Annexes of the Standing Orders on the recommendation of the Finance and General Purposes Committee [Appendices K and L]. One of the Students' Union Co-Presidents considered that committees should be consulted on the changes made in Annex 1.i of the Standing Orders. The Chair indicated that the changes proposed were not fundamental but rather for procedural clarification and completeness. It was **AGREED**, therefore, that the changes would be adopted by Governing Body.

**RESOLVED: to approve amendments to the Annexes of the Standing Orders.**

The proposed amended Students' Union Constitution and Code of Practice [Appendix M] were withdrawn from consideration until the next meeting of the Governing Body.

#### **16 Academic Board**

##### *16.1 Minutes of the Academic Board*

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 23 November 2005 [Appendix N].

##### *16.2 Library Strategic Review Working Group*

The Governing Body considered a report and recommendations concerning the Library Strategic Review Working Group [Appendix O]. The Governing Body noted and **AGREED** the expanded terms of reference of the Library Strategic Review Working Group. The importance of financial and economic considerations were emphasised.

One of the student Governors queried the membership of the Group and how it had been decided. The Chair of Governing Body confirmed that it was not for this Body to overturn the decisions of Academic Board. He emphasised that full consultation would be sought and all parties' views heard.

**17 Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Governing Body received the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 22 November 2005 [Appendix P].

**18 Motion from the Students' Union**

The Governing Body noted the contents of a motion agreed at the Students' Union General Meeting held on 11 October 2005 [Appendix Q], noting that these matters had been discussed earlier on this Governing Body's agenda.

**19 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of Governing Body would be held on Friday 24 March 2005 starting at 11.00am followed by lunch.