

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

GOVERNING BODY

Friday 10 December 2004

MINUTES

Mr J F Taylor (Chair)	
Professor R Finnegan (Vice-Chair)	
Mr M French (Honorary Treasurer)	
Professor C J Bundy (Director and Principal)	
The Lord Bagri*	Sir David John*
Professor S Bassnett*	Lady Barbara Thomas Judge*
Mr J Bevan	Sir David John*
Mr A Bhanji	Dr D N Khalili
Mr D W Brewer	Professor M A Knibb
Professor J Brown	Professor D Latchman
Professor S Chan	Mr P Lea-Wilson
Professor E J Croll	Mr G M Murawski
Dr P Deans*	Mr R Pick
Ms F Hawley	Professor P Robb
Professor M Hockx*	Professor B R Tomlinson
Sir Joseph Hotung*	Dr F Topan
Dr K D Howard*	Ms E Wright

In attendance: Mr F L Dabell (Clerk to the Governing Body)
Mr A Keeble (Director of Finance & Administration)
Ms J Halliday* (Deputy Secretary)
Mrs S Read (Minute Secretary)

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

58 Welcomes, thanks, and valedictions

Governing Body welcomed new members: Dr Farouk Topan (Department of Africa), Ms Frances Hawley and Mr Michail Murawski (student members). It was noted that Mr Philip Lea-Wilson was succeeding Mr Abdul Bhanji as Chair of Audit Committee and the outgoing Chair was warmly thanked for his contributions to the work of Audit Committee. It was noted that Sir Anthony Evans no longer holds the post of Visitor to the School and the Chair extended Governing Body's thanks and appreciation for his work on behalf of the School.

59 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2004 were **APPROVED** and signed subject to the change of *minute 41.8 line 4*, replace *courses* with *programmes*.

The Chair noted the increasing volume of paper required for each meeting of Governing Body. It was suggested that the Secretariat should investigate the extent to which papers, particularly information ones, might be circulated electronically between meetings.

60 Matters Arising

60.1 QAA Institutional Audit (minute 40.1)

Governing Body received a report from Academic Board's Quality Audit and Assurance Committee [Appendix A]. It was noted that the recommended actions had been addressed and that the action plan would be updated on a rolling basis.

60.2 Assumptions to underpin the five-year financial forecasts (minute 43.3)

It was noted that a working group of Governors had assisted the Director of Finance and Administration in the preparation of the financial forecasts submitted to HEFCE in July 2004.

60.3 Amendment to the Charter of Incorporation (minute 44.1), and 60.4 Revised Model Statute (minute 44.2)

It was noted that the amendment to the Charter of Incorporation and the adoption of the Revised Model Statute as Standing Order had been approved by Privy Council [Appendix B].

60.5 Senior Management Responsibilities

Copies of the School's organogram and a list setting out senior management responsibilities were tabled at the meeting [Appendix C].

61. Director & Principal's Report

Governing Body received a report from the Director and the Principal [Appendix D] and the following points were highlighted in discussion:

61.1 Student numbers

The enrolment figures for the academic year were somewhat ambiguous as the total number failed to reveal a shortfall against recruitment targets with regard to international students. The School had recruited around 100 fewer international students than anticipated particularly from China. In order to understand the reason behind the non-acceptance of offered places, the School had written to those international students who did not take up their offers. The Director & Principal had also asked the UUK to undertake a survey among its members to find out the extent of the problem across the HE sector.

61.2 *Bloomsbury Consortium*

It was noted that the report prepared by the HEFCE-funded consultant from the Southern Universities Management Services on the possibilities of cooperation and collaboration between the Bloomsbury colleges had been delivered in August 2004. The report was well received and highlighted several potential areas of cooperation which could be of value to all the institutions concerned. The areas involved in the first instance are: business development; estates; European grants office; health and safety; temporary staff; and VLE. A working group had been set up for each of these areas. It was stressed that it was strategically important for the colleges to work together. The question was raised as to the timetable of the working groups. It was explained that the Heads of Bloomsbury Colleges meet once a month and a check on progress of the working groups was a standing item on the agenda. It was expected that outcomes of the working groups' discussions would be reported by the end of the academic year.

61.3 *Fees for academic year 2006/7*

Governing Body was to be asked to approve the introduction of fees at a flat rate of £3000 from September 2006, which was the fee expected to be charged by all the colleges in the University of London. This proposal was accompanied by arrangements to pay bursaries to all students who qualify for government support. The proposal was APPROVED (see also Minute 67.)

61.4 *League Tables*

The Times Higher Educational Supplement had recently published a table on World University Rankings, in which SOAS appeared in 44th place; in a table of Europe's top 50 universities, SOAS ranked 11th and 7th in the UK. In the latest issue of THES (December 8, 2004), an in-depth article had given a very positive review of the *SOAS History*, published earlier in the year, and this was seen as an excellent advertisement for the School.

The Director & Principal was questioned about the recent announcement by the Secretary of State regarding funding for minority subjects. The outcome had not been as encouraging as had been hoped. The Secretary of State was asking HE institutions to promote the teaching of minority subjects, such as chemistry and languages. However, he had also made it clear that there would be no new funding for this.

In discussion about what could be done to improve the School's situation, it was pointed out that SOAS was in a unique position because of the many special subjects taught, in particular languages and cultures. It was felt that because of this uniqueness, the School ought to retain special funding. It was proposed that ways should be sought to suggest to HEFCE how they might devise a formula for assisting SOAS.

62. Membership

62.1 The current membership of Governing Body

A copy of the Governing Body Committee membership list 2004-2005 was received [Appendix F]. It was noted that there could be a major exodus of members in 2007. The Vice-Chair and the Membership Committee were engaged in considering how best to deal with the implications of this. The intention was to move to a strategy of more transparency in recruiting Governors.

62.2 Membership of Percival David Foundation Council

A report was received setting out the current membership of the Percival David Foundation [Appendix G]. Governing Body **APPROVED** the nomination of Mr Robert Pick as a new Governing Body member on the Percival David Foundation Council.

62.2 The appointment by Chair's action of Mr Philip Lea-V member of Governing Body and Chair of Audit Committee.

This was endorsed.

63. Annual Accounts

63.1 The Annual Accounts for 2003/4

Governing Body received the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2004 [Appendix H]. The Hon. Treasurer reported that there were no unpleasant surprises in the accounts and he was happy to recommend them for adoption. The systems in place were accurate and the position showed that SOAS had a good year. The outgoing Chair of Audit Committee had had meetings with the Auditors and they were happy with the systems in place within the School. The Director of Finance and Administration had done very well in keeping the systems under control. The current Chair of Audit Committee endorsed this view and pointed out that the external auditors had said that their audit of the School's accounts had been one of the smoothest they had undertaken.

Resolved: To approve the accounts for 2003/04.

63.2 Appointment of External Auditors

The Chair of Audit Committee recommended that Deloitte & Touche were re-appointed as External Auditors for 2004/5.

Resolved: To appoint Deloitte & Touche as External Auditors for 2004/05.

64. Audit

64.1 The Annual Report of Audit Committee

Governing Body received the Audit Committee Annual Report for the year 2003/2004 [Appendix I]. The main on going concern was neutral security.

64.2 The Minutes of the Meeting of Audit Committee held on 22.11.2004

Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of Audit Committee held on 22 November 2004 [Appendix J].

65. Finance

65.1 Budget validation for the financial year 2004/5

Governing Body received a budget validation report for the financial year 2004/5 [Appendix K]. The Hon. Treasurer explained that the budget validation exercise had been carried out to decide whether the School should make any changes to planned expenditure. The outcome of the exercise showed an unacceptable level of deficit caused by lower than expected student fee income and a cost cutting operation was undertaken, resulting in £0.5 million of cost reduction. It was not clear whether the current year was a one-off situation and whether student number expectations had been unrealistic. The Faculty business plans had been analysed in detail and they had yielded useful information. It was suggested that the exercise undertaken should enable the School to get back on track financially. On the recommendation of the Hon. Treasurer, Governing Body **APPROVED** the revised budget which will result in an operational surplus but would not meet the original aim of breaking even on the historical cost basis.

65.2 Cash Flow Projection, Capital & Debt Statement, Report on Short-Term Deposits

Governing Body received these financial reports [Appendices, L, M, N]. The cash flow summary projection which included two graphs, indicated that a small cash surplus was forecast in November 2005.

There was a short discussion as to the reason why some departments were in a better financial position than others. It was stressed that a department's RAE score played an important role in attracting funding and thus in its financial success. For example, law was a strong earner: it had good student recruitment, strong research and teaching and a high RAE score.

The Director of Finance and Administration stated that the School was achieving good results from its investments.

65.3 *Output from the School's income and expenditure model*

Governing Body received a report on the School's income and expenditure model [Appendix O].

65.4 *SOAS 2020 – a long term projection of growth for SOAS*

Governing Body received a long term projection of growth for SOAS [Appendix P]

66. Staffing

Governing Body received a report on staffing [Appendix Q]. The proposals had been extensively discussed at Resources Committee and the recommendations recorded in the report had been approved by Finance and General Purposes Committee. Existing academic staff levels would be maintained and in some areas there would be a very selective increase in staff. The post of Head of Recruitment and Admissions was seen as necessary to ensure an improvement in recruitment and to ensure there was an efficient and effective process between applications and admissions. The School had intended for some time to appoint a Director of Development. It was stressed that, after the post had been filled, it would probably take at least three years to reap the benefit of this appointment. It was also pointed out that care had to be taken that the appointment did not bring with it the need to set up and run a large development department with a great number of new staff. The aim was for the School to be 'lean and mean'. The report was endorsed.

67. Fees and Bursaries

Governing Body received a report setting out proposals for student fees and bursaries for 2006 [Appendix R]. This matter had been fully discussed at other relevant Committees. The proposal which the School proposed to put to the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) was that SOAS, in line with most other pre-1992 universities would charge the maximum fee of £3000 for all undergraduate students from September 2006 onwards. SOAS would offer a bursary of £300 p.a. for all students who qualify for the maximum grant; an additional bursary of £500 p.a. for students who receive some element of grant towards their fee costs; additional funding for students in financial difficulty; increased funding for outreach and widening participation activities, especially those targeted towards students from refugee and diaspora communities. It was expected that half of the entrants in 2006 would get some financial support from the School.

A student member raised queries regarding the proposals, suggesting that there needed to be a clearer commitment from the School as to how it would help other disadvantaged students, e.g. disabled students. It was pointed out that OFFA was only interested in what SOAS would do to assist financially disadvantaged students. It was agreed that there should be a separate document for internal use setting out how SOAS would propose to help students with their other needs. The Student Union would be consulted.

The Director & Principal stated that there was a tendency for the government, UUK and other bodies to point out that universities were already well funded. However, if, for example, the School received £1,000,000 in top-up fees, 25% or more would go straight back in bursaries; academic salaries were not catered for out of this figure and there was also a need to address the physical infrastructure of the School.

It was noted that students would not have to pay their fees whilst studying. The fees would be paid for on their behalf by the Student Loan Company with the students receiving an interest-free loan to be repaid once they started earning in excess of £15,000 p.a.

Governing Body **APPROVED** the proposals and agreed that they should be submitted to the Office of Fair Access.

68. Student Retention

Governing Body received a report on student retention [Appendix S]. The student retention rate had improved and this was continuing. However, the rate was not yet in line with the School's benchmark as calculated by HEFCE.

The report highlighted the action being taken to improve the situation. The student skills needs analysis showed quite clearly that many students who entered university were ill prepared. Every effort is being made to try to deal with this problem. The Vice-Chair expressed her approval of the report, especially of the way the issue had been approached and congratulated those concerned. She proposed another angle of approach: teaching and assessment. It was reported that many discussions had taken place within departments with regard to assessment, course-work and re-submission. Procedures were kept constantly under review.

The student members pointed out that there should be more and better pastoral care; many students did not know who their personal tutor was or how to contact them. Other institutions had much better systems of ensuring that each student had access to a personal tutor on a regular basis. It was suggested that the School should move to a mandatory system of personal tutors having to make contact with their students.

Members felt that the report was of great importance and very useful. It was also suggested that it could have been sent electronically in advance of the meeting.

69. Estates Matters

Governing Body received a report on estate matters [Appendix T]. It was noted that, for structural reasons, the proposed roof extension to the College Building was no longer feasible. In the light of concerns about student recruitment, it had also been decided not to pursue securing leasehold premises from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Discussions were ongoing in respect of the proposed student residential spaces at Vernon Square and a planning application for this project would be made in the near future. Short listing tender interviews had taken place in respect of the library terrace project and the contractors selected for this work were Durkan Pudelek Ltd. Construction work would commence at the end of the summer term in June 2005. In respect of the proposed roof project at Vernon Square, Finance and General Purposes Committee had recommended to Governing Body that approval be given for this project to go ahead once details regarding planning and costs were confirmed. This project was related to the recent SOAS/CETL bid and it was stressed that if SOAS were successful with this bid, it would be necessary to go ahead with the Vernon Square roof project. Governing Body gave its **APPROVAL** for the project.

The Clerk to Governing Body reported that for the last five years the School had been interested in acquiring 21/22 Russell Square in its attempt to expand. A few days ago, Senate House had contacted the Clerk stating that SOAS was invited to express a formal interest in the purchase of 21/22 Russell Square by 20 December 2004. The property had been valued at £3.5 million by Senate House. While the Clerk felt this value was far too high, he also felt that this opportunity should not be missed. He proposed that SOAS should respond expressing an interest while stating that the School would take advice on the valuation. Refurbishment costs were estimated at £1.5 million. It was suggested that SOAS should pursue this project but at a sensible price and Governing Body were asked to consider this matter in due course.

70. Governance

A Code of Practice issued by the Committee of University Chairmen was tabled [Appendix U]. Governing Body members were asked to take the document away to read and consider it prior to a more informed debate on the subject at the Governing Body meeting in the spring of 2005.

71. Institute of Musical Studies

Governing Body received a paper setting out a proposal to establish an Institute of Musical Studies within the University of London's School of Advanced Studies [Appendix V]. Governing Body **APPROVED** SOAS's participation in the proposed Institute.

72. Student Recruitment

Governing Body received a report on student recruitment 2003-4 [Appendix W]. It was reported that the recruitment effort was continuing and great emphasis was placed on several key areas. An international recruitment strategy had been developed over the last year to focus on markets of great importance to SOAS. Academics who went abroad often visited recruitment fairs in order to raise the profile of SOAS. Other recruitment tools were summer courses, widening participation and visiting evenings. Provision of accommodation for students was mentioned as a key factor for successful

recruitment and the meeting was reminded of the planning application for student places at Vernon Square.

73. Report of the Equality Committee 2003-4

Governing Body received the Annual Report of the School's Equality Committee on Equality and Diversity [Appendix X]. This was the first annual report of the Committee and its purpose was to ensure the School's compliance with legal requirements, to meet HEFCE standards and to ensure that equality and diversity were addressed throughout the School, especially in view of its multicultural ethos. Members expressed the view that the graphs showed a poor profile in respect of equality and diversity in most areas of the School. It was noted that SOAS' profile mirrored that of the majority of pre-1992 HE institutions. It was agreed that it would take a long time to change attitudes and culture. However, a conscious effort was being made in all areas, including recruitment, and equality issues would be given a high priority.

74. China Strategy

Governing Body received a report on a China Strategy for SOAS [Appendix Y]. Earlier in the year, a working party had been established to formulate a China Strategy in order to strengthen both academic and business links with China. It was suggested that China was becoming a very big and significant market and that there was a distinct niche for SOAS in this market. It was important that SOAS approached the opportunities which were opening up in the right way and without a strategic approach this would be difficult to achieve. It was hoped that a China Strategy would be of benefit in this context. It was suggested that the Bloomsbury Consortium could be a useful tool in sharing the recruitment effort for students from China.

75. Standing Orders

Governing Body received a paper setting out amendments to the Annexes of Standing Orders [Appendix Z]. Governing Body **APPROVED** these amendments as detailed in the paper.

76. Matters to report

76.1 Minutes of the Academic Board

Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 17 November 2004 [Appendix A1].

76.2 Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Governing Body received the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 23 November 2004 [Appendix A2]. [Appendix Y].

77. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Governing Body would be held on Friday 18 March 2005 starting at 11.00am followed by lunch.

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GOVERNING BODY

Friday 10 December 2004

RESERVED MINUTES

R12 Minutes

The reserved minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2004 were **APPROVED** and signed, subject to the following addition under Minute R11:

Dr Tudor Parfitt promoted to Professor of Modern Jewish Studies.

R13 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

R14 Staffing Matters

- (i) Governing Body formally **APPROVED** the conferment of an Honorary Doctorate on HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, and an Honorary Fellowship on Professor Shula Marks [Appendix A Reserved].
- (ii) Governing Body received and noted a report on the Visitor's deliberations on a staff grievance [Appendix B Reserved].

R15 Any Other Business

There was no other business.