

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

GOVERNING BODY

Friday 19 March 2004

MINUTES

Mr J F Taylor (Chair)	
Professor R Finnegan (Vice-Chair)	
Mr R D A Pick (Honorary Treasurer)	
Professor C J Bundy (Director and Principal)	
Ms S Adamjee	Sir Joseph Hotung
The Lord Bagri	Dr K D Howard
Professor S Bassnett*	Sir David John
Mr A Bhanji*	Mr A Joumaa*
Mr D W Brewer	Lady Judge
Professor J Brown	Dr Nasser D Khalili
Professor S Chan**	Professor M A Knibb
Professor E J Croll	Professor B Pimlott*
Dr P Deans	Professor P Robb
Mr M French	Professor B R Tomlinson
Professor G Furniss	Ms E Wright
Professor M Hockx	

In attendance: Mr F L Dabell (Clerk to the Governing Body)
Mr A Keeble (Director of Finance & Administration)
Ms J Halliday (Minute secretary)

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

***present from minute 30 onwards.*

25 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2003 were **APPROVED** and signed.

26 Matters arising

26.1 QAA Institutional Audit (minute 12.1.2)

The Governing Body received and noted the report of the QAA Institutional Audit of the School which had taken place in April 2003. It was noted that the recommendations and points raised in the report were being followed up and tracked through School committees. The Governing Body asked for a summary report to be presented to its next meeting on progress made in consideration of the nine main recommendations for action (p2 of the report).

26.2 SOAS in the media (minute 12.1.1)

The Governing Body received a tabled final 'Resource Guide' brochure from the Vice-Principal (External Affairs) and noted that it would also be put on the

SOAS website, with a hit counter. The brochure would be updated periodically. The Governing Body also received a tabled draft version of a small booklet called 'Profile', giving SOAS 'facts and figures', and noted this was still subject to some amendment. The Governing Body welcomed the production of both.

26.3 Student retention (minutes 16 & 12.2.1)

The Governing Body received a tabled paper from the Pro-Director, summarising work on student retention being done by the Learning and Teaching Unit in report to the School's Learning and Teaching Policy Committee. The analysis to date and the ongoing pilot investigations in three academic departments were noted, with the recognition that the School now had processes in place designed to investigate the issues. The Governing Body asked for a report at its first meeting next session on the results of the pilots.

26.4 The Bloomsbury Consortium (minute 13(vii))

The Governing Body noted that the Southern Universities Management Services' (SUMS) consultancy (funded by HEFCE) for the small Bloomsbury colleges (including SOAS) of the University of London was underway with various possible collaborations in administration and support services being discussed.

26.5 Revised Model Statute (minute 17.2)

It was noted that the Clerk to the Governing Body was still in discussion with the Privy Council on this matter.

27 Director and Principal's Report

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

27.1 Applications and targets for 2004/5

It was noted that undergraduate applications to the School for 2004 entry showed a real rate of 13% increase over the corresponding figure for the previous year. This compared very favourably with a national rise of 3.4%. It was expected that the 2004 intake would translate into a greater fee income for the School than that for this year. Whilst welcoming this position, the Governing Body recognised the additional pressures increased recruitment could put on academic and support staff and on student facilities. It was noted that the selection panel for the post of Head of Student Recruitment and Admissions had not been able to appoint to the post and the School was taking advice about the job description and considering what interim measures needed to be put in place, pending an appointment. The Governing Body asked that their thanks and appreciation be passed on to the administrative staff in the Student Recruitment Office and to the Dean of Arts and

Humanities (who had been acting as academic lead on student recruitment) for their sterling work in keeping the processes running so effectively and efficiently in the absence of a Head.

It was noted (paragraph 4 of the report) that it would be possible to afford the proposed fee-remission scheme (to be advertised in 2004/5 to take effect the following session) by adding 1% more than usual on to fees.

27.2 Research Assessment Exercise

The Governing Body noted the steps (as previously reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee) being taken by the School to support academic staff's research time in order to maximise research output for the RAE.

27.3 Opening of the Research Centre

The Research Centre would be formally opened by the Chancellor of the University of London, HRH the Princess Royal, on 24 March 2004.

27.4 SOAS artistic and cultural treasures

The Governing Body was pleased to note that the School's artistic and cultural treasures were to be exhibited on a rolling basis in the Brunei Gallery.

27.5 Development and fundraising

The Governing Body was pleased to note that the Development Office had been set up and the Development Committee had been reconstituted, chaired by Lady Thomas Judge, to whom Governors recorded their thanks. The first major event was to be a dinner in the House of Lords, hosted by Lord Howe, on 19 April 2004. It was hoped to secure sufficient funds (raised perhaps by specific support on the part of a donor for development activities) to support the appointment of a Head of Development.

27.6 Honorary degree

It was noted that the School would confer the degree of DLit (honoris causa) on Dr Lisbet Rausing at the postgraduate graduation ceremony on 22 July 2004.

27.7 Director's travel and activities

The Governing Body noted the individual and institutional links with Leiden University. The Director's forthcoming visit to the States was noted.

28 Membership of Governing Body

28.1 *Oral report from the Vice-Chair*

The Vice-Chair reported that the Governing Body Membership Committee (which she chaired) had met earlier that morning. The Governing Body **ENDORSED** the recommendations that the terms of office of the following Governors be extended for a further term of three years:

Professor Judith Brown
Professor Ruth Finnegan
Sir David John.

It was noted that Mr James Bevan, Director of the Africa Department at the Foreign Office, would fill the constituency vacated by Mr Peter Collecott. It was noted that Mr Abdul Bhanji wished to cease to be Chair of the Audit Committee but still remain a member of the Governing Body. It was noted that there was one vacancy on Governing Body and that ideally someone of suitable standing with a financial background was sought. Governors were invited to send any proposed names to the Clerk.

28.2 *Honorary Treasurer*

It was noted that Mr Robert Pick would cease to be Honorary Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee at the end of the session and the Governing Body **CONFIRMED** that Mr Michael French should assume these duties from 1 August 2004.

29 **Standing Orders**

The Governing Body **AGREED** minor amendments to Standing Orders and their Annexes [Appendix B].

The Governing Body **AGREED** the Standing Order which defined which areas of the School's governance the Governing Body wished to reserve to itself to determine [Appendix C], subject to the following corrections and amendments:

- 1 (ix) to include Vice-Principal (External Affairs)
- 1 (xii) having a lead-in clause
- 1 (xii) (d) and (e) starting with a verb ('give approval' or 'approve')
- 1 (xii) (k) to clarify the terminology 'Cadbury and Nolan' [and to note the second (k) should be (l), etc]
- make more explicit reference to the responsibility for staff and student grievance and disciplinary matters.

It was noted that 1 (xii) existing (l) did encompass the Governing Body's responsibility to keep the performance of the senior management team under review.

30 **Finance**

30.1 Budget for 2003/4

The Governing Body **ENDORSED** the summary of the revised budget 2003/4, as reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee [Appendix D].

30.2 Comparison of Forecast against Budget for 2003/4

The Governing Body **RECEIVED** the comparison of forecast against budget 2003/4, noting the restoration by the Finance and General Purposes Committee of expenditure to the Library, given that the forecast showed the School exceeding its target of breaking even at the operating level in the current year [Appendix E]. It was noted that in national league tables the Library was second to Cambridge University (in first place) in terms of spending. It was further noted that fundraising to support the Library was one of the Development Committee's two top priorities. The Governing Body was pleased to note the more positive financial position of the School overall relative to previous years, thanks to increased student recruitment and fee income and the savings and other stringencies put in place last year. It was noted that the cash flow forecasts and detailed reports on other financial matters were regularly reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. It was noted that the sheet 'Analysis by Activity' was a breakdown now required by HEFCE, and showed up some areas which were being further investigated (notably catering). The Governing Body expressed its thanks to the Director of Finance and Administration and his team for the detailed and hard work they had undertaken in monitoring and reporting a more balanced budget, and to all the staff in the School for coping with the past two difficult financial years.

30.3 Budget Scoping Exercise for 2004/5

The Governing Body considered the results of the budget scoping exercise for 2004/5, which for various reasons showed that the School fell short by £248,000 of its target of making sufficient operating surplus to cover historical cost depreciation of buildings [Appendix F]. The £248,000 did not include any additional expenditure which might be needed, such as for the work of the Development Office. The budget scoping would be kept under review.

30.4 HEFCE policy on Minority Subjects

The Governing Body received a report, comprising a letter sent by the Director and Principal to HEFCE and tabled charts from the Director of Finance and Administration, on HEFCE's announced recurrent grant to the School 2004/5 [Appendix G]. The HEFCE provisional funding allocation for 2004/5 was showing up as detrimental because the specialist premium for minority subjects had been cut – without prior warning and with inadequate explanation - to 13% from the 25% previously guaranteed by HEFCE to the School in June 2000. If HEFCE were to maintain their position, the School would lose the extent of its minority funding and a possible outcome might be

that the minority languages would need greater cross-subsidy from other subject areas within the School to survive, thus stretching the funding of other subject areas and putting them at a disadvantage compared to others in the sector. The Governing Body **ENDORSED** in the strongest possible terms the action of the Director in writing to HEFCE pointing out the latter's breach of the five year guarantee in respect of SOAS's minority subject funding and Governors looked forward to notification of the reply. It was noted that a new methodology on minority subject funding was due to be announced by HEFCE this June 2004.

31 Strategic Priorities Team

The Governing Body received a progress report on the implementation of SPT recommendations [Appendix H], noting the work being undertaken at School and Faculty levels on simplification of undergraduate programmes, numbers of courses offered and class sizes.

32 Estates Matters

32.1 200 Pentonville Road

The Governing Body received a report on estates matters [Appendix I]. With regard to the Pentonville Road project, the Clerk reported on progress since he had drafted the paper. On the basis of the update report, the Governing Body **RECOMMENDED** the Clerk to cease negotiations with Generation Estates. It was **AGREED** that discussions should now proceed with the Royal Bank of Scotland/Sanctuary Housing Association. A further report would be made to the next meeting of the Governing Body.

32.2 Science Research Infrastructure Funding (SRIF)

It was noted that HEFCE SRIF 2 funding had made £1.8 million available to SOAS on the basis of a bid submitted to HEFCE to finance mainly building work to enclose the north and east Library terraces. However, these costs were now estimated more realistically at £2.25 million, taking into account the implications of the fact that the Library was a listed building. The Governing Body noted that this matter would be reported to and discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the Estates Committee on 24 March 2004. The School was indicating that it wished to proceed by seeking planning permission and by tendering for the work at the same time. This could cost £60,000 and was a risk if planning permission were not obtained. Alternatively, the School could delay for a year (but bearing in mind the likely inflation costs on the processes mentioned) and the Director of Finance and Administration would ascertain from HEFCE whether or not this were possible. The Governing Body **ENDORSED** the School's action in proceeding with the project, subject to the actions indicated.

33 Academic Board

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 3 March 2004 [Appendix J].

34 Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8 March 2004 [Appendix K].

35 Development Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Development Committee held on 26 February 2004 [Appendix L].

36 Any other business

36.1 Industrial dispute AUT

The Director and Principal reported that the Association of University Teachers (AUT) had taken strike action on 24 and 25 February 2004 in connection with a complex set of structural and pay-related matters. Out of the seven trades unions negotiating with the body (UCEA) representing the employers, the majority had already settled, but the AUT had not. A further part of the AUT's action (sanctioned by a national ballot of members) was the taking of 'action short of a strike' which predominantly involved academic members of staff boycotting the carrying out of student assessment duties. The Governing Body noted the depth of displeasure within universities that the sector's pay had fallen behind other related professions. There were mounting levels of unhappiness in the School community about the boycott of student assessment. The Director and Principal expressed his personal unhappiness against action which jeopardised students individually. It was noted that the School had made contingency plans, were the action to continue into the assessment period next term. However, both UCEA and the AUT had just issued a statement indicating their wish to continue the negotiations currently underway, brokered by the TUC. The text of the basis of an agreement was being put by the AUT to its council on 25 March and by UCEA to its board on 26 March. It was cautiously hoped that this could signal the end of the dispute. The Director of Finance and Administration agreed to look into the tax implications in respect of whether back-pay fell in this or next financial year.

37 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Governing Body would be on Friday 11 June 2004 at 11.00am.