

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

GOVERNING BODY

Friday 18 March 2005

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	Dr D N Khalili*
Mr A Bhanji	Professor M A Knibb*
Mr D W Brewer*	Professor D Latchman
Professor J Brown	Mr P Lea-Wilson
Professor S Chan	Ms K Meelu
Professor E J Croll	Mr R Pick*
Dr P Deans	Professor P Robb
Ms F Hawley	Dr F Topan
Professor M Hockx*	Ms E Wright
Sir Joseph Hotung	
Dr K D Howard	

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

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

78 Apologies, Welcomes, Thanks

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Bassnett, Mr David Brewer, Sir David John, Professor Michel Hockx, Ms Jo Halliday, Dr David Khalili, Professor Michael Knibb and Mr Robert Pick. The Chair extended the Committee's commiserations to Professor Bassnett, whose husband had died very suddenly two days' previously. Sir Joseph Hotung, who was stepping down from Governing Body, was thanked for his wise counsel and great generosity to the School. Ms Kavita Meelu was welcomed as the new Student Union member in place of Michail Murawski.

79. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2004 were **APPROVED** and signed, subject to the following correction in Appendix D, Annex 1, Vernon Square Roof Project. The last two sentences of paragraph three on page one should read: *What members may not be aware of is the intention of the Faculty of Languages and Cultures to create a 'School of Languages', which will organise and manage the delivery of all language competence acquisition teaching at SOAS. The School of Languages will subsume the self-funding non-degree teaching activities of the current Language Centre and the language competence acquisition teaching that is currently delivered through the six regional departments.*

80. Matters Arising

Minute 70 - Governance

It was stated that the Code of Practice published by the Committee of University Chairmen that was circulated to members with the December 2004 agenda was almost identical to the draft previously commented upon by the Clerk. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk should meet with the Director of Finance and Administration, the Hon. Treasurer and the Chair of Audit Committee to discuss the whole issue of efficiency and report back to the next meeting.

Minute 68 – Student Retention

The question was raised as to whether the arrangements whereby personal tutors would make contact with their students had been put into effect. The Pro-Director stated that this has been followed up and an ongoing review was being undertaken. A further report will be made to the next meeting.

Minute 67 – Fees and Bursaries

It was reported that the proposal which SOAS had put to the Office of Fair Access in respect of fees and bursaries to be put into effect from September 2006, had been approved.

Minute 61.3 – League Tables

The Director & Principal reported that HEFCE had set up a 12-people 'sounding board' to review how teaching of specialist subjects was funded. It was expected that HEFCE would be reasonably sympathetic in the case of SOAS, which was in a unique position due to the many specialist subjects taught at the School.

81. Director & Principal's Report

Governing Body received a report from the Director and the Principal [Appendix A] and the following items were highlighted:

81.1 Undergraduate applications and offers for 2005/6

It was reported that there was good news in respect of undergraduate applications and that SOAS was among the top five universities in the UK for undergraduate applications. However, it was stressed that much work would need to be done to turn the increase in applications into an increase in offers.

81.7 HEFCE grant for 2005/6

There had been an increase in R-grant of 18% over the previous year, which meant that there was an overall increase in the HEFCE grant to SOAS of 8% over last year, while the national average increase of HEFCE grant was 3.6%. It was clear that the School's strategy of emphasising research centred activities had been successful.

81.10 CETL award to SOAS and UCL

The CETL bid had been awarded and it was stated that this should be seen as a major recognition of the calibre of language teaching at the School.

81.11 Estates matters

It was reported that a large amount of activity would take place over the summer in upgrading existing facilities and expanding the physical capacity of the School. This would undoubtedly create noise and disruption for staff and students but the work was seen as necessary to improve facilities at the School.

81.14 Development and Fundraising

It was reported that a Director of Development had been appointed and was expected to take up her post at SOAS in April. A further post within the Development Office was being considered, namely that of a Director of Communications. These two posts would significantly increase the School's development and fund raising capacity.

A meeting followed by dinner had been hosted by SOAS' International Advisory Board on 22 February and Lady Judge, in her capacity as Chair of the Development Committee, was thanked for her efforts in this respect and for making the evening such a successful event.

The Director & Principal introduced the subject of 'bad press' in order to give members advance warning of reports about SOAS which they might come across in the media. An extended discussion took place on the subject of some recent events at the School, which had caused reports, adverse to SOAS, to be circulated in the press. The Director & Principal briefly outlined the events that had led to The Times publishing an inaccurate article stating that there was a strong atmosphere of anti-Semitism at SOAS. The article had called for a Home Office investigation into the situation at SOAS. The Director &

Principal had contacted the Home Office to ask that SOAS be allowed to make a formal report about events, however, he had not yet received any acknowledgements to his calls and emails. The Director & Principal reported that he had met with Student Union representatives in order to address the issue of the alleged anti-Semitism. The Student Union had arranged workshops to attempt to come to some agreement about how to deal with persons from outside SOAS infiltrating into the School community. It was felt that journalists had been interfering in this matter and were keen to declare that there was a “rising tide of anti-Semitism” at SOAS. However, it was pointed out that an article by Polly Curtis in The Guardian entitled “Minds Wide Open” contradicted the recent bad press reports and instead praised the mood of free and open debate that existed at the School. The FCO representative of Governing Body stated that the School needed a straight answer from the Home Office to the Director & Principal’s requests and he offered to find out what was happening in this respect. It was proposed that it was most important that the article in The Times should be corrected and the best way of doing this would be for the Director & Principal to write a letter to The Times which should also be signed by the SU President.

82. Comparison of Forecast against Budget: 2004/2005

A report on the Comparison of Forecast against Budget 2004/5 was received [Appendix B]. The Hon. Treasurer reported that the news was good and that the overall forecast against budget was £328,000 better than expected. This was largely due to increased research grants and also greater than expected success in room lettings and catering. It was pointed out that the research grant improvement was only for one year. It was reported that one or two courses had not done as well as expected, especially within IFCELS and DeFiMS. However, the Director of Finance and Administration pointed out that with regard to IFCELS there had been a downturn in income but there had also been savings in staff costs. It was noted that whilst in operational surplus, even taking account of the improvements, the School is still in deficit.

83. Budget Scoping Exercise for 2005/2006

Governing Body received the Budget Scoping Exercise for 2005/2006 [Appendix C]. The Director of Finance and Administration reported that the news was good and that the School was very close to not being in deficit. It was expected that the budget would show a £123,000 deficit which was £500,000 better than originally forecast due to a change in the R-funding mechanism

Meetings with all budget holders were to be held over the next few weeks to examine their budget proposals in detail. It was hoped that this might bring the budget into surplus. However, it was recognised that some investment in the next RAE would be essential.

It was proposed that there should be a standing item on progress of work towards the RAE.

84. Estates Projects 2005/6 – Progress Report and Request for Approval

A report on Estates Projects 2005/6 was received [Appendix D].

(i) Vernon Square Roof

It was reported that this project was an urgent requirement relating to the CETL bid and involved building six new class rooms on the Vernon Square roof. Planning permission had not yet been achieved but it was hoped that this would be dealt with under delegated powers by the Islington Council within the next 1 _ months. It was important that work should start within the next two weeks.

Governing Body was asked to give approval for Finance and General Purposes Committee to authorise the Hon. Treasurer and Chair of Estates Committee to take this work forward. This was **AGREED**.

(ii) Student Accommodation at Vernon Square

It was reported that the contractors for this project was the same firm that had carried out the work on the Brunei Gallery and at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The construction method proposed was to use study bedroom pods that were built in the factory and then installed direct on site ready made and furnished. This arrangement would shorten the construction period from 65 weeks to 45 weeks and, in addition, the cost of the units were lower than for conventional construction. Subject to planning, the project would be finished in September 2006. It was expected that some study bedrooms could successfully be converted into flats for staff if necessary.

Governing Body **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Hon Treasurer and Chair of Estates Committee in relation to contractual matters for this project.

(iii) 21/22 Russell Square

An offer had been made to the University of London for 21/22 Russell Square for less than half of the asking price, a figure which had been backed up by the surveyors acting for the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. SOAS has been joined by the School of Pharmacy through the Bloomsbury Consortium and they will be coming in with SOAS on the lower bid. The Clerk to Governing Body reported that he had that morning received a letter in respect of 21/22 Russell Square from the University inviting SOAS to a meeting.

85. Risk Management

A report on Risk Management was received [Appendix E]. It was stated that an emerging risk for SOAS was that HEFCE would be reviewing the specific research funding that the School receive for the Library.

It was recommended that the Quality Assurance documentation used by SOAS should include specific information about risk.

86. The Percival David Foundation: Relationship with SOAS and Funding Issues

A report was received on the Percival David Foundation [Appendix F]. The Director & Principal reported that there was an impending financial squeeze on the School in relation to the PDF. Since the early 1950s there had been a major shift in expectations about what should be funded out of public money. The Director & Principal would be discussing the matter with Robert Pick who is a member of the PDF Council. One proposal was to sell of a portion of the collection but it was suggested that this would not solve the problem in the long term and it was suggested that breaking up the collection would not be right. It was felt that SOAS needed to seek Counsel's opinion on its legal obligations in the matter.

87. Smoking Policy

Governing Body received a report on smoking policy [Appendix G]. Governing Body was asked to consider whether the Clerk to Governing Body should start negotiations in the School about introducing a no smoking ban at SOAS. This was **AGREED** by Governing Body.

The Students' Union representatives would take the matter to a Students' Union general meeting.

88. Students' Union Financial Statements

The Students' Union Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2004 were received [Appendix H].

89. Students' Union Constitution

At a recent quorate meeting of the Students' Union the students were invited to vote for the post of Honorary President of the Students' Union. The post was approved and an overwhelming majority of the students present voted for Ken Livingstone to be elected to the position. However, the Returning Officer of the SU declared the election null and void as formal approval had not been sought and given by the Governing Body. The meeting discussed whether Governing Body would be willing to agree the election retrospectively and thus over-rule the Returning Officer's decision. The question was also raised as to whether Governing Body was happy for the individual who had been elected to take up this post, considering the current sensitive political issue.

It was **AGREED** to authorise the Clerk to enter into discussion with the Returning Officer.

90. Matters to report

90.1 Minutes of the Academic Board

Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 3 March 2005 [Appendix I].

90.2 Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Governing Body received the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 8 March 2005 [Appendix J].

91. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Governing Body would be held on Friday 10 June 2005 starting at 11.00am followed by lunch.