

# SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

## GOVERNING BODY

Friday 10 June 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*
Dr K 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)

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

The Chair gave his thanks to student and Academic Board representatives who were attending their last meeting

#### 92. Minutes

Subject to a minor amendment to Minute 81.14, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2005 were **APPROVED** and signed

#### 93. Matters Arising

i) *Minute 80 – Student Retention*

This item relates to concerns about the operation of the School's personal tutoring system. As a consequence of this concern, a working party had been set up and proposals brought forward as it was clear that the current system was not working as well as it should. It was hoped to improve the interaction of students with personal tutors using e-learning techniques and this was to be piloted by the Faculty of Law and Social Science in the autumn. Offset against these concerns, was the high level of student satisfaction expressed in course reviews. In addition, good progress had been made by the Learning and Teaching Unit (LTU) which had used external funding to provide significantly improved learning support to students. It was thought that the work of the LTU over the last three years had played a significant role in the improvement in the School's retention rates. A further report will be made in twelve months' time.

ii) *Minute 86 – The Percival David Foundation*

The Director & Principal reported that the PDF remains a complex problem relating to finance and governance. At issue was the question of the original agreement between the University of London, the University Grants Committee and the Percival David family. The certainty of a reduction in funding to 50% from the AHRB from 2006 and to 0% two years later has caused a crisis. This was partly as a consequence of the Protection Nominees (who are appointed to represent the interests of the Percival David family), who have threatened legal action, to sell some of the collection and even the possibility of withdrawing the collection from the University. All of these possibilities were to be discussed at a special meeting of the PDF Council scheduled for 20 June 2005.

In discussion, it was suggested that an alternative strategy would be to fundraise to maintain the collection at the School. In this context, it was suggested that an approach should be made to the Heritage Fund. It was also proposed that consideration be given to the creation of a travelling exhibition which would raise the profile of the collection and generate income.

On balance, it was **AGREED** that the collection should be retained by the School, if possible, but not at any price. It was also **AGREED** that the option of fundraising should be pursued, including an application to the Heritage Fund; but this should not detract from the School's other fundraising priorities.

iii) *Minute 89 – Honorary President of the Students' Union*

It was reported that the proposed meeting between the Students' Union (SU) and the Clerk to Governing Body to discuss the way forward with regard to the Honorary Presidency and the SU Constitution had not taken place. In addition, it was reported that the School's solicitors had flagged the issue of likely changes to charity legislation which would result in universities and their Students' Unions needing to register with the Charity Commission. At present, universities are exempt from registration. Meetings were to take place

over the summer with the Students' Union to see whether registration with the Charity Commission should form part of the new Students' Union constitution.

iv) *Minute 81.7*

It was reported that HEFCE was reviewing both the funding methodology for teaching and the funding of minority scholarship. In this context, it was noted that Charles Clarke had written to HEFCE about the need to protect languages of strategic importance. In this context, it was noted that the School had made a preliminary bid for 45 undergraduate funded student numbers in Chinese, Japanese and Arabic.

#### **94. Director & Principal's Report**

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

Arising from the report:

- i) Subject to all the usual caveats, student numbers appeared to be on target.
- ii) In response to the Vice-Chancellor's decision to discuss the future of the University of London, and in the light of the Provost of UCL's pronouncement on the University, a letter had been drafted to be signed by the Heads of thirteen colleges of the University of London, including all the small Bloomsbury colleges. A draft of the letter will be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.
- iii) With reference to the Bloomsbury Consortium, a meeting was to take place between the Heads of Colleges and the Heads of Administration with a view to progressing the identified initiatives and making a substantial proposal to the HEFCE Strategic Development Fund.
- iv) It was reported that the School's development activities had been reinforced by two new appointments to the posts of Director of Development and Communications Manager. As a consequence, there had been a very good meeting of the Development Committee which would result in members of the International Advisory Board being approached to see how they can help the School.

In this context, it was reported that David Brewer was to be the next Lord Mayor, with much of his time devoted to acting as the City's "ambassador". The theme for his mayorship was to be "Asia Year" and he would be spending 75-80 days travelling in the region. In addition, he would be hosting many receptions.

It was noted that Lady Judge, the Vice-Principal, and David Brewer would be holding discussions about how SOAS could be involved in some of these activities.

- v) The Director & Principal congratulated Jonathan Taylor for the award of his CBE.
- vi) Governing Body expressed its gratitude to the Chair of the International Advisory Board, Sir Mark Moody-Stuart, who had made a significant donation to the School.
- vii) It was noted that a number of adverse media reports had focused on Jewish issues at SOAS. The reports had the capacity to do reputational damage to the School, although the coverage was largely inaccurate and unfair. In addition, a letter of complaint had been received from the Board of Deputies of British Jews, who had also forwarded the letter and a dossier of information to the Secretary of State.

The media coverage and the subsequent complaints arose in the context of several specific issues, all of which involved the SOAS Students' Union and Student Societies. These were:

- At a Student Society book launch, remarks were made by some external speakers which were sufficiently offensive to be reported to the police.
- An article in the SOAS Spirit concerning Israel was offensive and was a clear breach of the School's Policy of Freedom of Expression. As a consequence, both the Students' Union and the School reprimanded the author and subsequently, both the author and the editor had apologised.

*Addition to original minute:*

*'Following a formal grievance lodged by the student against the former Director and Principal Professor Colin Bundy it was admitted by Professor Bundy that no 'reprimand' had been issued by him or by the Students' Union since no disciplinary proceedings had been taken against the student. Further, no formal apology had been issued by the student. However, the article was found by many in the School to be objectionable and Professor Bundy had placed his disapproval of the article on record.'* [Addition to the original minute approved by the Chair of Governing Body following the meeting of Governing Body on 15 December 2006].

- A video with a strong anti-Semitic content was broadcast in the Students' Union. No one is aware who turned on the video, but it had not been booked through the Students' Union administration and the Students' Union administrator had it stopped and removed as soon as he became aware of it.

- Remarks made at a Students' Union meeting, at which the Students' Union sought to appoint an Honorary President, were deemed to be offensive by students present.
- The Students' Union had attempted to block a meeting at which an Israeli Embassy official was to speak at the School. This was in clear contravention of the School's Code of Conduct for the Holding of Meetings and Freedom of Expression. School Officers had intervened and the meeting went ahead as planned.

It was noted that although some of these events date back to late 2004, and the Director & Principal had received a number of letters and emails, a formal complaint to the Students' Union had only recently been received and as a consequence a formal hearing had been convened at the same time as this meeting. The Director & Principal reported that he had offered to meet with the Board of Deputies and he had made sure that the website clearly publicised School policies. In addition, a number of workshops had been organised in conjunction with Professor Chan, Professor Abdel Haleem, Dr Schindler and the Students' Union. The new SU Executive had also agreed to attend a special induction in respect of School policies.

In discussion, it was noted that a number of students felt that Islamophobia also existed in the School and it was **AGREED** that in these sensitive times, the Students' Union needed to encourage harmony. It was suggested that a Unity evening should be organised to which the Press should be invited, as to date, the School has been unsuccessful in persuading the Press to print our comments on the damaging allegations. A Unity evening would provide an opportunity for SOAS to show what a considerable profile of activity it had relating to the Middle East and would also stress that this profile was balanced, highlighted by activities such as Jewish music and Jewish studies.

Governing Body reaffirmed its support of the School's policies and procedures and supported Colin Bundy in all his efforts to diffuse the situation. The responsible and constructive contribution of the current Students' Union leadership was also commended.

## 95. **Governing Body Membership**

The Vice Chair reported on the meeting of Governing Body Membership Committee which had taken place immediately prior to this meeting. She reported that the Chair of Swires, James Hughes-Hallet, should be asked to be a member in succession to Sir Joseph Hotung. This was **AGREED**.

It was also **AGREED** that Abdul Bhanji's term of office should be renewed for a further five years and that Michael Knibb's and David Brewer's terms

would be similarly extended on the nomination of the British Academy and the City of London.

The Chair reported that the Vice Chair's term of office was scheduled to come to an end on 31 July 2005. However, with Ruth Finnegan chairing the Search Committee for both the replacement of Chair of Governing Body and the Director & Principal, he recommended that her term of office as Vice Chair be extended for a further year. This was **AGREED**.

## 96. Finance

- i) It was reported that there would be no significant revision to the forecast outturn for the financial year 2004/5 reported to the last meeting. The overall deficit after full depreciation will be £330,000.
- ii) Consideration was given to a report and recommendations concerning the budget for 2005/6 [Appendix B]. It was noted that the budget scoping report in the spring showed a deficit of £136,000 after depreciation of land and buildings at the higher of cost or revaluation. As a consequence of the budget review process, this deficit has been reduced so that a balanced budget has been prepared for 2005/6. However, there were some £580,000 of bids for additional funding which had not been included within the budget. Although this was in part offset by a forecast increase of £200,000 in income which will now be allocated against priorities set by Executive Board. There was some discussion as to whether or not the School should revert to a target of breaking even at the historical cost level allowing further funds to be allocated. However, on balance it was **AGREED** that the budget as presented should be endorsed and that no further decisions should be made until there was some certainty about student numbers in the autumn, particularly since the budget assumed a significant contribution of £250,000 from fundraising.

It was suggested that Governing Body should be presented at a future meeting with a profile of the likely cash demands over the next three to five years to see what injection of capital funds are necessary. It was noted that in this context, the five-year forecasts submitted to HEFCE in July were not sufficient for this purpose. Some sensitivity analysis and capital adequacy calculations should be included.

- iii) The School's Income & Expenditure Model was tabled [Appendix C]. The Model has not yet been considered by Executive Board and would need to be taken account of in the further development of Faculty Plans. A more detailed discussion of the Model would be held at the next meeting.

- iv) It was noted that the Treasurer and Michael Knibb would work with the School in preparing the financial forecasts that would be circulated to members of Governing Body in mid-July.

#### **97. Estate Matters**

Consideration was given to a report and recommendations on estate matters [Appendix D].

Arising from the report:

- It was noted that discussions concerning the acquisition of 21/22 Russell Square from the University of London were well advanced. On the basis that a sensible purchase price could be negotiated, it was **AGREED** that the Treasurer be authorised to act on behalf of Governing Body to authorise the purchase. This would see the School acquiring 66 2/3% of the premises and the School of Pharmacy 33 1/3%.
- It was noted that the immediate plans for creating more space at Vernon and Russell Square, as set out in the proposed Estate Strategy, would require significant injection of capital funds, particularly for the West Block. This had significant implications for the Development Office and the Development Committee.
- The proposed Estate Strategy for submission to the Funding Council was **AGREED**.

#### **98. Risk Management**

Consideration was given to the Annual Report on Risk Management [Appendix E]. It was noted that since the last report, many of the risk issues relating to the Human Resources Department had been overcome. In addition, the market share issues affecting Distance Learning and IFCELS were being addressed.

It was reported that major companies were taking active steps to manage the process of compliance with HR and related legislation as it was a growing area of concern. It was vital that induction/training programmes address this issue for staff at all levels.

#### **99. Student Grievance and Disciplinary Codes of Practice**

Minor amendments to the Student Grievance and Disciplinary Codes of Practice to take effect from September 2005 were **APPROVED** [Appendix F].

#### **100. Equality Policies**

The new and revised policies on diversity and equality were **APPROVED** [Appendix G].

**101. Governance**

Consideration was given to a report on governance and the effectiveness of Governing Body [Appendix H]. It was noted that the Clerk to Governing Body would be issuing a questionnaire to all external governors over the summer 2005 and that a short list of key performance indicators should be agreed by the next meeting.

**102. No Smoking Policy**

The proposed No Smoking Policy was **AGREED** for implementation with effect from 1 September 2005 subject to consultation with the Students' Union and recognised Trades Unions [Appendix I].

**103. RAE**

The progress of work towards the RAE was noted [Appendix J].

**104. Annual Operating Statement and Financial Forecasts**

It was reported that the School's annual return to HEFCE would be made in July 2005 and it was **AGREED** that a working group, including Michael Knibb and Michael French, should help the Director of Finance and Administration in the preparation of the School's financial forecasts. Copies of the annual return would be circulated to governors in due course.

**105. Standing Orders**

Consideration was given to the amendments of the Annexes of the Standing Orders on the recommendation of Finance & General Purposes Committee and to amendments to the Annexes of Standing Orders on the recommendation of Academic Board [Appendices K and L].

**RESOLVED:**

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

**106. Media and Film Studies**

It was **AGREED** to endorse the proposal that a Centre for Media and Film Studies be created [Appendix M].

**107. School of Law**

The proposal to change the name of the Law Department to the School of Law was **APPROVED** [Appendix N].

**108. Amendments to the University Statutes**

A report was received from the Council of the University of London detailing the approved amendments to the Statutes and asking for Governing Body's consent to these amendments [Appendix O]. These amendments were **AGREED.**

**RESOLVED:**

**that this Governing Body, being the governing body of the School of Oriental and African Studies, hereby consents to the making of new Statutes by the Council of the University of London as proposed by the Council and as set out in the document headed 'Amendments to the University Statutes'.**

**109. The Minutes of the Meeting of Academic Board**

The Minutes of the meeting of Academic Board held on 25 May 2005 were received [Appendix P].

**110. The Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Minutes of the meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 24 May 2005 were received [Appendix Q]. In discussion, it was noted that there was to be harmonisation of course fees in the Department for Finance and Management and International Relations and Diplomacy. In some cases, this would result in a major increase in fees. It was noted that this was in line with general policy on fees agreed twelve months earlier.

**111. Dates of Meetings Next Session**

The dates of meetings next session have been scheduled as follows:

Friday 9 December 2005

Friday 24 March 2006

Friday 16 June 2006