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SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

GOVERNING BODY

Friday 14 December 2007

MINUTES

Lady Barbara Thomas Judge (Chair)*
Professor M A Knibb (Vice-Chair)
Mr M French (Honorary Treasurer)
Professor P Webley (Director & Principal)
Professor S Bassnett Mr A Lloyd
Mr A Bhanji Dr D Martinez
Sir D Brewer Mr A Parker*
Professor M Craven Ms A Puhlman
Professor Sir I Crewe* Professor P Robb
Dr B Fortna Professor A Saad Filho
Mr J Griffith-Jones Ms C Solomon
Dr R Harrison Professor S Subedi
Mr J Hughes-Hallett Ms E Wright
Professor M Hutt
Mr K Kutay*
Mr D Latchman*
Mr P Lea-Wilson

In attendance: Mr G Appleby (Director of Finance)
 Professor I Brown (Dean, Faculty of Arts & Humanities)
 Ms S Page (Registrar)
 Ms J Halliday* (Deputy Secretary)
 Mrs S Read (Minute Secretary)

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

In the unavoidable absence of Lady Judge, the meeting was chaired by Professor Knibb.

As this was the first meeting of Governing Body since the death of Professor Lisa Croll, the Chair proposed that the Committee should honour Lisa's memory and her enormous contribution to the School by holding a minute's silence.

Ms Elizabeth Wright told the Committee that Lisa had wanted her to publicly thank Professor Webley for being extremely kind and thoughtful during Lisa's illness and for visiting her both in the hospital and in the hospice.

The Chair welcomed the new members of the Committee: Professor Ian Brown, Professor Matthew Craven, Dr Ben Fortna, Mr John Griffith-Jones, Dr Rachel Harrison, Ms Aileen Puhlman, Professor Alfredo Saad Filho and Professor Surya Subedi.

1. Membership and Terms of Reference

The membership and terms of reference of Governing Body [Appendix A] were received and noted.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2007 were **approved** and signed.

3. Matters arising

Minute 40: Governing Body

Disappointment was expressed by some members of Governing Body that the effectiveness review had been postponed to the session 2008/9. It was reported that due to the many very important changes that were being undertaken in the School, especially within the administration, it was necessary to deal with these properly before the effectiveness review could be taken forward.

4. Director & Principal's Report

Governing Body received a report from the Director and Principal [Appendix B] and the following additional comments were noted:

- i) *Financial outturn for 2006-7*
The School had made a surplus of £386,000 for the 2006/7 financial year which was the first time in ten years that this had been achieved. The improvement was due to additional income and operating efficiencies. Although the result was encouraging, the School needed to ensure that the surplus continued to increase in line with the Financial Strategy.
- ii) *Admissions and financial projections 2007-8*
Overall recruitment figures were very good and the target had been exceeded, although recruitment figures had fallen for Masters programmes in the Faculties of Arts & Humanities and Languages & Cultures. However, the financial forecast for 2007-8 had improved and there was a projected surplus of £155,000.
- iii) *RAE 2008*
The SOAS submission for the Research Assessment exercise was made at the end of November and the outcome would be published in December 2008. It was hard to predict what the outcome would be, but it would impact on SOAS' funding for 2009-10 and future years.

- iv) *HEFCE: Withdrawal of funding for equivalent or lower qualifications(ELQs)*
The Government had asked HEFCE to withdraw funding for students who were studying for a qualification equivalent to, or lower than, a qualification that they had already been awarded and this process would start in 2008-09. HEFCE would be making a number of exemptions to this policy some of which would be beneficial to SOAS. However, it would still have a serious impact on the School as about 5% of SOAS' teaching grant was based on students studying for ELQs.
- v) *HEFCE: Review of research libraries special funding*
A report had gone to HEFCE on 22 November 2007 regarding their review of research library special funding but the School had not yet had a response from HEFCE. The review would determine the level of funding SOAS would receive from 2008-09 for the following 5 years.
- vi) *HEFCE: Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF 4)*
It had been suggested that SOAS' current allocation of HEIF funding of £280,000 per year may increase to £350,000 next year.
- vii) *The PDF*
It was reported that the main issues with the British Museum had been resolved and it was possible that a resolution would soon be forthcoming.
- viii) *Wye*
An agreement was reached with Imperial College in August 2007 over Wye and staff from Wye College were now working in the SOAS Centre for Development, Environment and Policy. They had expressed pleasure at being part of the SOAS community.
- ix) *The Framework Agreement*
Progress was being made on the Framework Agreement but because of the work involved, the timetable had been amended and completion date of the project was anticipated to be the end of April 2008.
- x) *Visits*
The Director & Principal had undertaken several visits to East Asia during the autumn. He had been invited by the Indian High Commission to visit India in January 2008.

5. Finance

- i) Governing Body received the audited Annual Accounts for 2006/7 [Appendix C] which showed the School being in surplus for the first time in ten years. The accounts had been presented to Audit Committee and Resources & Planning Committee and they were **approved** by Governing Body.

- ii) The Budget Validation for 2007/8 was considered [Appendix D]. It was reported that the previously agreed deficit of £398,820 had moved to a surplus of £155,000 and Governing Body **approved** the revised budget.
- iii) The Capital Budget for 2007/8 was received [Appendix E]. It was reported that £500,000 had been ear-marked for addressing the backlog of long-term maintenance and this would be raised to £1 million in the coming years as the premises needed money to be invested in them. The budget was **approved**.
- iv) Governing Body was asked to approve the re-appointment of Deloitte as the School's external Auditors [Appendix F] and this recommendation was **approved**. A market testing exercise of external audit services would be undertaken and completed in the session 2007/8.
- v) The Committee received the reports of Cash Flow Projection, Capital & Debt Statement and Short Term Deposits [Appendix G].

6. Strategic Planning

- i) Governing Body received an overview of the sub-strategies [Appendix H]. The sub-strategies had been progressed and developed over the last year and they now had action plans which set out in detail what needed to be done and how best to achieve the School's aims. Governing Body would not see these documents again until a year's time when a comprehensive report would be received setting out what had been undertaken and what had been achieved.
- ii) Governing Body was asked to approve the following sub-strategies: Academic Strategy, Research Strategy, Student Experience, Estates & Infrastructure Strategy, External Relations Strategy, Human Resources Strategy, Information & Internal Communications Strategy [Appendix I].

Academic and Research Strategies: it was considered that SOAS should do more to develop the curriculum offered by the School and also the range of languages which was an area where SOAS could lead.

External Relations Strategy: there were opportunities for the School to be more pro-active and spread the name of SOAS throughout the UK and the world in order to maximise the number of students who wanted to study at SOAS. There was general agreement that encouraging the development of language teaching was very important.

Student Experience Strategy: it was pointed out that although SOAS spent more money per student than similar institutions, there was significantly lower student satisfaction in respect of academic support

and other services. Student survey feedback showed that those students who were satisfied with the teaching and teaching support they received, tended to also be satisfied with facilities and professional support. It was suggested that Heads of Departments should be made aware of this and encouraged to be as responsive as possible to student feedback.

Estates & Infrastructure Strategy: the Centenary Masterplan which set out the plans for the remodelling and development of SOAS' space had been presented to Governing Body at its previous meeting. The plan was designed to put forward ideas for the School to take forward, but did not propose priorities. The Masterplan was available on the SOAS website and it could be made available on CD-Rom if members wished to receive it. The School aimed to implement the Masterplan in several phases and Phase One was the development of the Russell Square terraces. SOAS was in negotiations with the University of London to acquire a plot of land, No 20 Russell Square, which would facilitate the development. However, the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies had also expressed an interest in the land which meant that the acquisition process would take slightly longer than had been hoped.

HR Strategy: Governing Body's attention was drawn to the statement in the HR strategy under Equality and Diversity issues which highlighted the apparent culture of bullying in the School. It was stressed that this situation was inexcusable and should not be allowed to continue. There was a strong need for this matter to be addressed.

7. **Standing Orders**

Governing Body was asked to approve amendments to Standing Orders and its Annexes [Appendix J]. The Standing Order relating to the President of SOAS proposed that this role would be for a term of five years with the possibility of a second term. As the current President, Baroness Helena Kennedy, had held the post for six years, she was now deemed to be in her second term; she had been advised about the amendments relating to her post and was happy with them. The amendments to the Standing Orders were **approved**.

8. **Proposed new University Statutes**

Governing Body considered the proposed new University Statutes [Appendix K].

Governing Body consented to the making of the new Statutes by the Council of the University of London as proposed by the Council and set out in the document headed 'Proposed new University Statutes'.

Governing Body also agreed that it would be appropriate for the following to be strongly recommended to Council:

1. The terms (not length) of SOAS leases should be absolutely consistent with those in force between the University of London and other colleges. Governing Body expressed concern that the University of London might resolve some of its property issues by granting more favourable lease terms to some colleges and felt that if this were the case, all colleges should benefit from improved terms.
2. Student Representatives should be allowed as observers on the Board of Trustees.

9. QAA Institutional Audit 2007

Governing Body received a progress report on the QAA Institutional Audit 2007 [Appendix L]. It was reported that progress on carrying out the recommendations would be checked through regular monitoring and reporting. Reports so far showed improved compliance, but this needed to be improved further. Better systems, including electronic systems, were being developed.

10. Estates Matters

Governing Body received an Estates & Infrastructure report [Appendix M].

Governing Body **endorsed** the Centenary Masterplan.

Governing Body **approved** Phase One of the development of the Russell Square campus.

Capital Campaign: It was reported that the School had a new Development Office based on a structure previously approved by Governing Body. A new Director of Development would be appointed shortly and at the beginning of the New Year the School would be ready to embark on the Capital Campaign which would provide funds for the development of the Masterplan.

Review of Outsourced Contracts: Litmus Partnership had been employed by the School to carry out a review of outsourced contracts, including cleaning. They were also looking at issues such as the London living wage and ethical procurement. Governing Body would be informed of the result of the review when it became available and the School would decide on how best to proceed in the future, based on the options and recommendations made in the final report of the review.

11. Internal Audit

- (i) Governing Body received the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2006/7 [Appendix N]. It was reported that the School had a new service provider which had carried out a very thorough review of the Schools processes and systems. Steps would be put in place to action the recommendations made by the Internal Auditors.

- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of Audit Committee held on 12.1.2007 were received [Appendix O].

12. Student Grievance and Disciplinary Matters

Governing Body received a summary of Student Grievance and Disciplinary matters [Appendix P].

13. Students' Union

- i) Governing Body received the Annual Report 2006/7 of the SOAS Students' Union. [Appendix Q].
- ii) Governing Body received the Financial Statements of the SOAS Students' Union for the year ended 31.7.2007 [Appendix R]. The substantial reserves held by the Students' Union were noted and they were advised to explore ways of making good use of spending some of these reserves.

14. HEFCE

- i) The HEFCE Financial Forecasts 2007 which had been approved by Chair's action were noted [Appendix S].
- ii) The Corporate Planning Statement 2007 which had been approved by Chair's action was noted [Appendix T].

15. Governing Body Membership

The new lay membership of committees 2007/08 was noted [Appendix U].

16. Honorary Degrees and Fellowships

The procedures for nomination of Honorary Degrees and Fellowships were noted [Appendix V].

17. Health & Safety Committee

Governing Body received a report from the Health & Safety Committee [Appendix W].

18. Academic Board

Governing Body received the minutes of the meetings of Academic Board held on 31 October 2007 and 21 November 2007 [Appendix X].

19. Resources and Planning Committee

Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of Planning and Resources Committee held on 20 November 2007 [Appendix Y].

20. Any other business

There was no other business.

21. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Governing Body would be held on Friday 14 March 2008 starting at 11.00am followed by lunch.