

*These minutes are for information only. Any corrections to the minutes will be recorded in the minutes of the subsequent meeting of the committee.*

## SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

### GOVERNING BODY

Friday 12 June 2009

### MINUTES

Lady Barbara Thomas Judge (Chair)  
Professor M A Knibb (Vice-Chair)  
Mr M French (Honorary Treasurer)  
Professor P Webley (Director & Principal)  
Mr A Bhanji  
Sir David Brewer  
Professor I Brown  
Professor Sir Ivor Crewe  
Dr B Fortna  
Sir Graham Fry  
Professor G Furniss  
Mr J Griffith-Jones  
Dr R Harrison  
Professor B Harriss-White  
Mr J Hughes-Hallett\*  
Professor M Hutt

Mr K Kutay\*  
Professor D Latchman\*  
Mr P Lea-Wilson  
Mr A Parker\*  
Professor N Rao  
Professor A Saad Filho\*  
Mr B Sellers\*  
Professor S Subedi  
Mr N Uddin  
Ms Z Weaver  
Dr H West  
Ms E Wright

In attendance:

Mr G Appleby (Director of Finance)  
Professor M Craven  
(Dean of Faculty of Law & Social Sciences)  
Mr A Smith (Interim Registrar & Secretary)  
Mr Sebilio Lillo (SU Co-President designate)  
Ms J Halliday (Deputy Secretary)  
[minute secretary]

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

### 37 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2009 were **approved** and signed.

### 38 Matters arising

#### *Minute 30: Degree Awarding Powers*

The Vice Principal reported that the School's submission had been considered by the QAA at a meeting on 20 March, which had approved that the process should go forward. A QAA Assistant Director, Professor Robert Harris, had been assigned to coordinate the process with the School. He had visited the School for discussions with School officers. He had indicated that the DAPs process would take the School's action plan from the 2007 Institutional Audit as its starting point. He had confirmed that the School was

considered strong on academic standards but that procedures and systems were likely to be in need of attention. The Vice Principal informed Governing Body that the working party set up to prepare for DAPs was addressing this area. A team of QAA assessors (consisting of three assessors plus an Assessment secretary, plus Professor Harris) had been identified by the QAA and a draft timetable for the first visit on 29 and 30 September and 1 October 2009 had been provided. It indicated that the assessors would want to have discussions with some members of Governing Body and the secretariat would be contacting those concerned shortly.

*Minute 31: IFCELS*

The Vice Principal reported formal consultation with IFCELS staff and their unions had proceeded regarding reductions in staffing with a view to IFCELS breaking even. It was hoped that the reductions could be achieved through voluntary severance.

### **39 Director & Principal's Report**

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

- (i) *USS pensions*  
Governing Body noted the continuing pressures on the scheme and that ways were being explored by USS nationally to make the scheme sustainable.
- (ii) *HEFCE: current cuts and the future*  
It was noted that the funding climate for the next two to three years was going to be extremely tight.
- (iii) *Admissions 2009-10*  
Governing Body was pleased to learn of the encouraging position although it noted that visa issues could affect actual take-up of places.
- (iv) *The PDF*  
Governing Body was pleased to note that the School was close to resolving the remaining issues.
- (v) *University of London*  
Governing Body was pleased to note that the University of London Research Library Services, which included Senate House Library, would continue to be run as a shared central resource but noted also that a usage-based model would have a serious financial impact on SOAS.
- (vi) *The London International Development Centre*  
Governing Body was pleased to note the successes of the LIDC, including the fact that it had reached the shortlist for a Leverhulme grant to establish an Agri-Health centre.
- (vii) *UNISON strike*  
The Director and Principal stated that the campus trade unions were lobbying for the re-instatement of a former member of staff who had been dismissed for gross misconduct. He informed Governing Body that the disciplinary process used was that which had been agreed

with the trade unions; that the dismissed member of staff had been represented throughout by a full-time official; that no complaint had been received from any full-time regional trade union official about trade union victimisation; that UNISON regional office had disassociated itself from some of the more extreme claims being made by the local branch. The dismissal had provoked a one day strike after 31 of the 110 SOAS UNISON members had voted in favour in a secret ballot. The strike had taken place on 28 May 2009 and had had minimal impact on SOAS services. The Director and Principal was not able to comment on the detail of the case which was now the subject of an employment tribunal claim. He informed Governing Body that the School strongly refuted local union branch claims that the dismissal of the member of staff was connected to his race, trade union membership or any part he played in the living wage campaign for cleaners working at SOAS.

(viii) *Visits*

Governing Body noted the forthcoming overseas visits of the Director and Principal.

(ix) *Registrar and Secretary*

Governing Body noted the selection process to date and **authorised** Chair's action to be used should the selection panel wish to recommend an appointment.

(x) *Personalia*

Governing Body was pleased to note the appointment of one of its lay governors, Professor Subedi, as the next UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in Cambodia.

(xi) *UK Border Agency*

The Registrar and Secretary reported that the UKBA officers had visited SOAS in the early hours that day, had carried out some preliminary interviews with members of the cleaning staff employed by the contracted-out cleaning company, and had taken away nine of those staff for further questioning. It was noted that employers were under a legal obligation to co-operate with the UKBA.

## 40 Finance

(i) *Draft revenue and capital budgets for 2009-10*

Governing Body received a paper from the Resources and Planning Committee on the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2009-10 [Appendix B], and **approved**

- the revenue budget for 2009-10
- the capital budget for equipment for 2009-10
- the long-term maintenance capital budget
- the budget envelope for the proposed capital building projects.

Governing Body also **noted** and **supported** the actions agreed by Executive Board, as detailed in paragraph 7 of the paper, including the imminent review of the Financial Strategy, as well as a detailed review of the Faculty plans by a senior executive team.

- (ii) *Cash flow projection; capital and debt statement; Short-term deposits*  
Governing Body received and **noted** reports on the cash flow projection, the capital and debt statement, and short-term deposits [Appendix C].

#### **41 Strategic Planning: KPIs**

Governing Body received an update report on KPIs [Appendix D]. Governors were concerned that the School was dropping down the listings in The Guardian and the Complete University Guide, and **noted** that the School's position in the Times' league table would be dropping to 33<sup>rd</sup>. Concern was also expressed about the School's position with regard to KPIs 7 and 8 (noting that the headings for these in Appendix D should be transposed). Governors **noted** the aforementioned detailed review of the Faculty plans by a senior executive team and asked that this 'drilling down' take place so that issues could be addressed, actions identified and improvements proposed at both Faculty and departmental levels. It was **noted** that, although Faculties operated a staff development review system, a staff appraisal scheme had not yet been agreed with the unions. The Director and Principal **agreed** to clarify and inform Governing Body as to whether appraisal was part of new contracts of employment and whether performance against KPIs 7 and 8 was part of the conditions for promotion. It was **agreed** that the School needed to work towards institutional targets being translated down to individual targets. It was also **agreed** that the School should have a KPI on the estate.

#### **42 Governing Body Effectiveness Review**

Governing Body received and **approved** the final report on the Effectiveness Review [Appendix E]. Governing Body **approved** the Nominations Committee's recommendation that the three members of the Audit Committee should be lay members of Governing Body. Governing Body **agreed** that the drafting of the Audit Committee's terms of reference should make explicit (in term of reference (f)) that committee's responsibility for reviewing the risk register. Governing Body **noted** the actions that would be carried out to take the Effectiveness Review, and the Committee Review, forward.

#### **43 HEFCE Assurance Review**

Governing Body received and **noted** the final interim report from HEFCE of its Assurance Review of SOAS in March 2009 [Appendix F]. It was **noted** that HEFCE would contact the School six months after the issue of this report, ie in November 2009, to request updated information on the recommendations for action, and then a final report would be published. The School would be taking the necessary action to address the recommendations.

#### **44 CUC Guidance**

Governing Body received the new edition (March 2009) of the CUC Guide for Members of Higher Education Governing Bodies in the UK [Appendix G].

#### 45 International partnerships

Governing Body considered a report on international partnerships from the Director and Principal, noting that an earlier draft of the paper had been discussed at Academic Board and their comments incorporated [Appendix H]. Governing Body welcomed the paper and **approved** the recommendations, including not to pursue any proposals to establish a second campus based overseas. Governors warned that the administrative, management and QA costs of international partnerships could be very high, and advised that the School should only pursue international partnerships if having them would promote the values and strategic direction of SOAS. The paper should be revised as an agreed institutional policy document on international partnerships, and would need to be accompanied by a framework document on QA and operational matters, on which work had already begun.

#### 46 Research Strategy

Governing Body received a report from the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise) on progress following the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise [Appendix I]. The paper included the draft Research and Enterprise Strategy 2009-2012, which would be progressed through the relevant internal committees with a view to being finalised and agreed by the end of December 2009. Governors commented that there should be specific targets and actions specified rather than references to 'ongoing' timescales. Governing Body looked forward to receiving the final strategy in due course.

#### 47 Sub-Committees

Governing Body received the draft minutes of the meetings of

- (i) Academic Board held on 27 May 2009 [Appendix J];
- (ii) Resources & Planning Committee held on 26 May 2009 [Appendix K];
- (iii) Audit Committee held on 11 May 2009 [Appendix L].

Governing Body **noted** the changes to committee memberships, from the Nominations Committee [Appendix M].

#### 48 London Middle East Institute

Governing Body received and **noted** the annual report from the LMEI [Appendix N].

#### 49 Standing Orders and Annexes

Governing Body **approved** recommendations from Resources and Planning Committee for amendments to Standing Orders and its Annexes [Appendix O].

**50 Emeritus Status**

Governing Body **noted** with pleasure the award of Emeritus Status to Professor Paul Gifford, Professor Gerald Hawting and Dr Avril Powell.

**51 Meetings schedule 2009/10**

Governing Body **noted** the meetings schedule for Governing Body and committees with lay members for 2009/10 [Appendix P].

**52 Any other business**

*(i) Valedictions*

The Chair thanked those governors who would no longer be members of Governing Body next session, ie

- Professor David Latchman
- Mr Philip Lea-Wilson (outgoing Chair of Audit Committee)
- Mr Alan Parker
- Mr Nizam Uddin

They were warmly thanked for their service and contributions to the work of Governing Body and the School.

**53 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of Governing Body would be held on **Friday 2 October 2009**, starting at 11.00am followed by lunch.