

**SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES**  
**GOVERNING BODY**

Friday 1 October 2010 from 11.15 am – 2pm

Room 116

**A G E N D A**

*Please note: There will be a short meeting of the Governors from 11 to 11.15am. The full Governing Body will convene at 11.15am.*

**PART 1**

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- I Membership, terms of reference, procedures for the conduct of meetings, annual plan of work**  
To note: Membership, terms of reference, procedures for the conduct of meetings, and annual plan of work [Appendix A]
- II Minutes**  
To approve: The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2010 [Attached]
- III Matters Arising**  
***Minute 37 (i): Degree Awarding Powers***  
To receive: An oral report from the Pro-Director (Learning and Teaching) [Oral report]  
***Minute 43: Risk Register***  
To note: Director circulated a note to GB regarding Risk 002. Revisions to Register format will be presented to Audit Committee on 5 Oct 2010.
- IV Director's Report**  
To consider: A report from the Director [Appendix B]
- V London Middle East Institute**  
To receive: The annual report [Appendix C]
- VI Key Performance Indicators**  
To consider: A review of Key Performance Indicators [Appendix D]
- VII HEFCE**  
To note: HEFCE's new Model Financial Memorandum (2010/19) [Appendix E]  
To receive: Letter dated 13/7/10 from HEFCE re the Assurance Review in spring 2011 & update from Registrar & Secretary [Appendix F]
- VIII Board Effectiveness**  
To approve: A paper from the Chair [Appendix G]
- IX SOAS 2016: A Vision and Strategy for the Centennial**  
To approve: The revised version of SOAS 2016 : A Vision and Strategy for the Centennial (revised April 2010) [Appendix H]  
To consider: A paper from the Director & Principal [Appendix I]

**PART 2**

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- X No other items**
- XI Any other business**
- XII Date of next meeting**  
To note: Next meeting of Governing Body is on Friday 3 December 2010, starting at 11am followed by lunch at approximately 1pm.

*\* Starred items are formal business only. If members wish to discuss issues arising from these reports or wish to raise items of any other business,, they must inform the Interim Deputy Secretary, Liz Lynxwiler ([ll20@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ll20@soas.ac.uk)), by noon on Thursday 30 September 2010. The Director is hosting lunch from 1-2pm. Please let Jan Mortier know (020 7898 4015 or email [ll20@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ll20@soas.ac.uk)) whether or not you are able to attend the lunch.*

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 1 October 2010**

### **OPEN MINUTES**

Dr T Miller (Chairman)  
Ms E Wright (Vice-Chair)  
Professor P Webley (Director)

Dr F Adamson	Mr S Lillo
Professor Sir Ivor Crewe	Ms R Mortuza
Sir Graham Fry	Dr J Parker
Professor G Furniss	Professor N Rao
Professor B Harriss-White	Mr J Robinson
Mr C Ilako	Mr S Uribe
Mr J Kain	Ms Z Weaver
Mr N Lerner	

In attendance: Mr G Appleby (Director of Finance & Planning)  
Mr D Beaton (Registrar & Secretary)  
Professor I Brown (Dean of Arts & Humanities)  
Professor M Craven (Dean of Law & Social Sciences)  
Mr G Dalal (member Audit Committee)  
Professor A Pauwels (Dean of Languages & Cultures)  
Ms L Lynxwiler (Minute Secretary)

Apologies: Mr M French (Honorary Treasurer)  
Mr J Griffith-Jones  
Mr K Kutay  
Professor S Subedi

## **PART 1**

### **1. Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed the Governors to the new academic year at SOAS. He extended a warm welcome to Gautam Dalal, a new member of the Audit Committee, who was sitting in attendance of the meeting. He noted the changes that had occurred over the summer, including redecoration and the refurbishment of the Student Union (SU). Governors were invited to undertake a short tour of the new SU on the way to lunch. Apologies were heard.

The Chairman advised those who had not attend the Reserved Agenda meeting, that it was agreed the Director's term of office had been extended by a further seven years, ending in July 2018. The Chairman commended the outstanding contribution the Director has made to the academic performance and management of the School. The Chairman also noted that the Director will be given the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 as research leave and in his absence Professor Nirmala Rao (Pro-Director, Learning & Teaching) will become Acting Director.

## **2. Membership, terms of reference, procedures for the conduct of meetings, annual plan of work**

Governing Body **noted** these items.

## **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2010 were approved and signed, as a true record.

## **4. Matters arising**

### **(i) Minute 37 (i) Degree Awarding Powers**

The Pro-Director (Learning & Teaching) reported that the QAA assessors had now completed their assessment and presented the report to the QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree-Awarding Powers (ACDAP) meeting on 30 September. The Pro-Director expected to learn the result of that meeting soon. The report raised a number of issues and the Pro-Director highlighted 3 issues in particular. First, the report portrays the School as an institution in transition and the assessors were favourably impressed by changes made by the School, especially with recent changes made to Governing Body. However they would like to see that the changes are embedded and Governors and fully and properly engaged. Secondly, the School is seen as slow to engage fully with the national agenda and slow to change. It appeared that considerable inter-departmental operational variability continues to exist. The assessors view the culture differences across the School as based more on custom and tradition than the objective academic needs of different disciplines. Lastly, the assessors were concerned with the financial sustainability of the School and its ability to meet its financial targets through research and enterprise and student recruitment. They refer to the 2009 HEFCE Assurance Review and suggest that the ACDAP await the outcome of the 8 February 2011 HEFCE Assurance Review before passing final judgement.

### **(ii) Minute 43: Risk Register**

The Director highlighted that a note had not been circulated as the UUK is in consultation with the Government on potential changes to the UK's immigration policy and it was decided to wait to learn the outcome of that consultation before issuing a note to GB on the matter.

## **5. Director's Report**

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

### **(i) Funding and HE policy issues**

The School is facing much uncertainty as it awaits the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Browne Review on Higher Education Funding and Student Finance. It will not be known until spring 2011 how the cuts will be distributed. The Director noted cuts might be focused on T-funding and specifically band D funding (which covered the majority of the School home undergraduate students) would be greatly reduced or taken completely away. The School are carrying out planning on this basis as the most likely scenario, whilst also contingency planning for the wide range of other alternatives that may materialise.

(ii) Pensions

*The consultation over proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) with staff launches on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October and will carry on for 64 days. The University and College Union (UCU) has written to all its members who are also members of USS asking them to vote on the proposals.*

5. Director's report, continued

(iii) Pay

The 2010 pay claim has yet to be finally settled and ACAS facilitating talks have taken place between the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and the trades unions. Much of the discussion focussed on job security. Another round of talks will take place in the next few weeks.

(iv) Recruitment 2010-11

The registration process has run much more smoothly this year. Undergraduate figures for home were on target and overseas figures were above projections by 6-10%. Postgraduate taught had more no shows than previous years but were close to the target for home students and overseas numbers down by around 30-40 students. Postgraduate research numbers are low against target but are on financial targets because the financial projections were adjusted earlier in the year. The Director pointed out that there were still 15 days of enrolment remaining, and as a result the numbers may increase in the next two weeks.

Sir Graham Fry enquired as to whether there was evidence that Visa difficulties had reduced the number of overseas students. The Director said that it caused difficulties for late applicants to the School but has not had a big impact on students who apply early. Professor Barbara Harriss-White enquired as to whether student debt was deterring PGT home students. The Director stated the School has not seen evidence of that but this could be more relevant for research students who self-fund for 3-4 years and then face an uncertain future. In terms of 'no-shows' it appears that people have applied for a Masters degree course as a failsafe because the job market has contracted.

(v) HEFCE Assurance Review

This was covered by the Registrar under Minute 8.

(vi) Language Centre Review

The Pro-Director (Learning & Teaching) reported that there is one outstanding redeployment that will be concluded week commencing 4 October, bringing the cost savings to a total of £220,000 for 2010/11.

(v) League tables

The Director reported that SOAS had not featured in the Times Higher World Ranking Table, which was not good for the School, given that overseas students pay a great deal of attention to League Tables. Ms Rosa Mortuza asked if the School had any plans in place to get back into the League Tables. The Director replied that last year he and the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise) wrote to the Times but this had not resulted in any changes in the methodology to the way the league tables were prepared which tended to favour science-based institutions. The Director suggested he could do so again this year but was not optimistic about a letter achieving anything, given the various weightings the Tables use. Ms Mortuza asked how the School communicates to potential students why SOAS is not included in the League Tables. The Director stated that UK undergraduates don't tend to look at world rankings although of course they did look at other UK-based league tables. However, he pointed out that there is a wider reputational issue for staff and postgraduate students. The Vice-Chairman pointed out that the School might be a slight disadvantage as it is based in the centre of London rather than in a smaller town so the student experience is very different, which may also impact on the rankings.

## *5. Director's report, continued*

Charles Ilako asked if the School was engaged with the media and the Director said the School does have a proactive approach to the media and often works with the media to get positive stories about the School issued. Neil Lerner enquired as to whether the School had analysed all the elements of the various League Tables to see where we can influence change and suggested that someone in the School might have responsibility for improving the School's position on the Tables. The Director said that some effort had been made but not enough. Each league table compiler uses different criteria but it is possible to do some analysis and SOAS has more variability than other institutions so small changes could have a big impact.

### (vi) University of London news

The School of Pharmacy is seriously considering a merger with a neighbouring institution and the Director expects that similar mergers will become more prevalent in the next few years.

### (vii) Personalia

Governing Body expressed their congratulations to Baroness Helena Kennedy in the light of her election as Principal of Mansfield College Oxford and thanked her for her hard work over the years at SOAS.

## **6. London Middle East Institute (LMEI)**

The Director introduced the LMEI annual report [Appendix C]. This is the first annual report since the status of the LMEI changed. Up until 18 months ago it was a separate charity and quite detached from SOAS. Eighteen months ago, SOAS became the sole member of the charity and provides the bulk of support to LMEI. LMEI has a new, energetic Director who has worked hard to create a relationship with SOAS and reach into the Middle East to fundraise. He is taking fundraising very seriously, even holding an Alumni event in the Gulf before he'd started working at LMEI. The Director passed around the Middle East in London magazine. The Director pointed out there was a drop in both income and expenditure between 2008 and 2009 on page 14 of the report (financial statement) and this was due to there being a hiatus between Directors. Neil Lerner asked whether the LMEI was consolidated into the School's financial reporting. The Director (Finance & Planning) stated it is not consolidated on the grounds of immateriality.

Mr Seb Lillo asked how the position of the London International Development Centre (LIDC) differed to that of LMEI. The Director explained that LMEI had been part of SOAS, became independent and was now part of SOAS again. LIDC is a co-operative exercise with other Bloomsbury Colleges which has enabled the School to undertake academic work which would otherwise not have been possible. The Director (Finance & Planning) pointed out that the School's membership to the LIDC was mainly funding by HEFCE. Mr Jasper Kain asked about the relationship between the Iranian Centre and the School. The Director explained that the Iranian Centre is part of LMEI and said that these types of single country centres are very helpful in fundraising activities.

Mr Gautam Dalal enquired as to what was the advantage of funding the LMEI and how the branding links up with the School's own brand. The Director explained that it is part of the School's mission to provide support to all of the School's regional centres. The regional centres provide a focus for fundraising and research activities. SOAS provides more support for the LMEI because it is bigger than other regional centres.. With regard to the branding, the Director did agree that it was important for the School and the LMEI to be closely linked.

## 7. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Governing Body **received** and **considered** a report on KPIs [Appendix D] from the Director (Finance & Planning). At the 9 July 2010 meeting, the Governing Body had asked Executive Board to review composition, definition and presentation of the School's KPIs and Appendix D incorporates those changes. The Director (Finance & Planning) suggested GB consider the proposed changes line by line.

The first proposed change was to remove League Tables from the KPIs and to report and monitor them separately. The Governing Body had a detailed debate as to the pros and cons of this proposal. Mr Neil Lerner pointed out that if consideration of League Tables were removed from KPIs it might be a case of out of sight, out of mind. He also suggested that if League Tables are removed as a KPI, then consideration of 'Reputation' might be lost from the Board's review of these measures. Dr Fiona Adamson echoed this sentiment and questioned if there were any other KPIs behind the 'Reputation' category. The Director pointed out that the National Student Survey underpins the 'Reputation' category. Ms Weaver said that it seemed incongruent to remove League Tables from KPIs as it is part of the School's overall Strategy.

Professor Sir Ivor Crewe suggested that the removal of Tables was not the issue because there is a wide variety of reasons for the results but rather that the frequency of monitoring and analysis was too low and this should be adjusted. Sir Graham Fry pointed out that KPIs measure what can be measured and rather than using Tables, perhaps the School should focus on the issues that underpin the Tables, for example the quality of teaching. The Director agreed and said that if those issues were addressed, the School would naturally improve in the League Tables. Professor Barbara Harriss-White countered this by saying that KPIs were a primary window for Lay Governors to see into the activities of the School and the School's position in the Tables was one way of understanding how the School was performing.

The Registrar and the Director (Finance & Planning) both explained that the proposal was not to ignore League Tables but rather to remove them as a KPI and report on them separately. The Chairman pointed out there could be a danger of League Tables swamping any discussion the Governing Body has on KPIs and that reporting them separately might be a better way forward.

GB **approved** the removal of League Tables from KPIs as long as they are formally reported annually to GB with appropriate opportunity to discuss the results.

The second proposed change was to report on the KPIs on an annual basis. Professor Barbara Harriss-White pointed out that the April meeting is not the final meeting of the academic year. Rather the July meeting is the final meeting but that may be too late to make any use of the KPI report. The Director (Finance & Planning) explained that the Governing Body had asked for there to be only 1 reporting date a year. The Chairman suggested that April is an appropriate time to receive the KPI report so that action could then be taken for the following academic year beginning each September. GB **approved** the timetable as proposed in the report (page 2).

The third proposed change was to introduce KPI Action Plans in the event of non-satisfactory performance and assign an owner of that action plan and this was **approved** by GB without discussion.

## 7. KPIs, continued

The fourth point was to review targets and benchmarks/benchmark groups of existing KPIs. Mr Seb Lilo pointed out that as the Student Union does not have a representative on Executive Board, it may mean that the SU would not be involved in setting the target for the Student Experience KPI. Therefore it would make sense to have a SU representative on EB. The Director explained that there are a range of Committees that report into EB and the Student Experience Committee is one such body. Any student experience issues would be raised to EB via the Student Experience Committee on which student representatives sat. This would provide students with an opportunity to provide comments. This change was **approved** by GB.

The fifth proposal was to adjust the Student Number Profile to:

- provide a graphic which provides the information regarding the overall size and composition of the student body;
- include information regarding distance learning enrolments/registrations; and
- include projected/actual student recruitment figures against target at key points in the year.

This change was **approved** by GB.

The sixth change was to introduce a staff-based KPI which is independent of the SOAS Staff Survey. Ms Rosa Mortuza asked for an explanation behind this change. The Registrar & Secretary explained that the staff survey was a measure of staff satisfaction but that it would be useful to get a sense of staffing matters by means other than the staff survey. Professor Barbara Harriss-White stated that it was important for GB to know what this new KPI would look like. The Chairman suggested that this proposal be passed back to the HR Committee for a proposed new KPI. HR Committee to **construct** a new KPI and report back to GB.

The seventh proposal was to include further measures regarding the student experience. It was **agreed** that the Student Experience Committee should put forward a new KPI to GB.

The eighth change was a question as to whether the School should keep the percentage of UG Degree students who study a language as a KPI. It was **agreed** that this should remain a KPI.

The final proposed change was to review the relationship between the GB KPIs and the sub-strategy PIs and this was **approved** by GB.

Generally, Mr Ilako suggested that there should be a KPI around Alumni relations. It was **agreed** that this would be taken up with External Relations .

## 8. HEFCE

The Registrar & Secretary outlined the new Financial Memorandum [Appendix E]. The amendments included in this latest edition were in part influenced by lessons learnt from the difficulties encountered in London Metropolitan University. He pointed out that all Governors should be familiar with the guidelines, particularly page 6, paragraph 15 which outlines the responsibilities of the members of a Governing Body; and page 8, paragraph 25, which gives HEFCE powers to ask a Governing Body to appoint a new accountable officer for the School. The Chairman pointed out that this was a different level of involvement than in the past and the School must be absolutely compliant, as there is now a greater expectation of the School from the funding body. Governing Body **noted** this paper.

## 8. HEFCE, continued

The Registrar & Secretary then introduced the Assurance Review letter from HEFCE [Appendix F], which outlined HEFCE's expectations for the Review. The Register gave background on the previous review, conducted in 2009, wherein the School received the 2nd highest level of assurance. There were 2 formal recommendations issued in 2009. An additional 28 informal comments were identified by the Registrar. These have now been put into a timetable, assigned a RAG status and an owner, with a view to completing all recommendations by the end of the calendar year. Ms Zoe Weaver asked what sanctions the School faced should assurance not be given on the 8th of February. The Register explained the School could be given an 'At Risk' status, which would have a negative impact on the School's reputation. Mr Dalal enquired as to whether GB might see the paper. The Register **agreed** to circulate the paper to GB. The Chairman **asked** the Register to update the Governors at the 3 December 2010 meeting. Governing Body **noted** this paper.

## 9. Board Effectiveness

The Chairman introduced the paper on Board Effectiveness [Appendix G] and invited them to approve the introduction from this year, a system for regular reviews of GB's effectiveness. The Chairman pointed out that the ideal timescale would be to introduce the new system in the summer but has brought forward the timetable to coincide with the HEFCE Assurance Review in February 2011. The process is not meant to be heavily bureaucratic but rather should serve to help Governors feel sufficiently informed about the School and have an opportunity to more fully contribute to the work of the Governing Body. GB **endorsed** the proposals. The Registrar & Secretary will take forward the proposals.

## 10. SOAS 2016: A Vision and Strategy for the Centennial

Governing Body **received** a report from the Director on the School's vision and strategy [Appendices H & I]. Mr Seb Lillo asked how the School plans to achieve the staff to student ratio objective on page 13. While the Director acknowledged there was an imbalance he pointed out that it would not be sustainable to have a very small ratio. The Pro-Director (Learning & Teaching) pointed out that the School is better than the sector average of 18 to 1.

The Governing Body **approved** the updated Strategy [Appendix H] provided the following changes to the text were made:

- Page 11, paragraph 2 – change the order of the issues so that they are grouped together by faculty
- Page 18 – update the membership of the Governing Body.

The Director then moved on to Appendix I, which he had hoped would prove to be a springboard for discussion amongst the Governors. Governing Body **agreed** that the issues raised by the Director would benefit from detailed debate and that this might be better conducted at a special meeting to be held after the publication of the Browne Review and the government's announcement about the Comprehensive Spending Review. It was also agreed that the full Executive Board should take part in this discussion. It was **agreed** that the Secretary would make the necessary arrangements for this meeting at a date before the Governing Body's meeting on 3 December 2010.

## **PART 2**

### **11. Other Items**

There were no other items in part 2.

### **12. Any other business**

There was no other business to discuss.

### **13. Date of next meeting**

It was **noted** that the date of the next meeting of Governing Body is on Friday 3 December 2010, starting at 11.00am followed by lunch at approximately 1pm.