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SOAS

ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES

22 March 2017 at 2.00pm, Conference Suite, Paul Webley Wing

Dr R Alexander	Dr Nadjie Al-Ali
Baroness Valerie Amos	Professor R Bachmann
Dr B Bhandar*	Professor R Black
Professor C Bramall	Dr J Caron
Professor M W Charney*	Professor A Contadini
Professor C Cramer	Ms R Everitt
Ms N Farzad	Mr M Gaskin*
Mr A Habib*	Dr S Hawthorne*
Dr G Heathcote*	Professor M Hutt
Dr E Hunter	Dr M Jennings
Dr D Johnston	Dr T Kaiser*
Dr G Kirsch	Dr M Laffey
Dr K Latham	Dr Angus Lockyer
Dr Lutz Marten	Dr B Murtagh
Dr M Nelson	Dr A Newsham
Professor I Nikolaeva	Dr S Pett
Ms N Phillips*	Dr B Pizziconi
Professor R Reid	Professor A Saad Filho*
Dr M Sabaratnum	Dr M Sadan
Ms P Sanderson*	Professor G Singh
Dr S Sperl	Professor C Tan
Mr M Taha	Dr U Volz

*denotes apologies

In attendance:

Graeme Appleby	Mr P Baran
Ms S Blohm	Mr P Doyle
Mr C Ince	Mr R Ivermee
Ms AM O'Mullane (minutes)	Mr I Pickup

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Item 1

Academic Board (AB) was reminded of the decisions it made at its meeting on the 9th February 2017. Each Working Group Chair or nominated presenter was invited to provide a verbal update on work undertaken by their respective Working Group. This was intended to accompany the reports that had been circulated to AB in advance of the meeting. AB members were invited to make points of clarification and comments on the reports following each update.

Working Group No. 1 Resource Allocation Model

Dr Meera Sabaratnam provided an update on the key proposals contained within the report. Particular attention was drawn to the work on the development of planning

principles/reserves policy for units and the development of principles for rewarding over performance and addressing underperformance. The proposal around the transfer to reserves as a cost item in the RAM was also highlighted. The Working Group proposed that the RAM could show that a 5% operating surplus on income was an institutional performance target but excluded a 5% transfer to reserves as a cost item when the performance of individual schools was assessed. The performance tracking of academic units would be based on tailored agreed targets which could differ from the overall institutional target. The Working Group considered that the proposals would give greater transparency to how the RAM operated.

Summary of points of clarification/comments

It was noted that the recommendation for treatment of exchange students would have implications for particular departments. Academic Board agreed that further work should take place to identify the impact of the change as there may be an imbalance between outgoing and incoming students which could lead to an unfair distribution of income.

The administration for Japanese and Korean exchange students was undertaken by academic staff. It was queried whether any administrative support could be allocated.

Outcome of discussion

The proposals contained in the Working Group Report were accepted by AB.

Working Group No. 2 Cross Subsidy

Dr Chris Cramer outlined the key proposals of Working Group No. 2 Cross Subsidy. All units in the new structure should contribute to cross subsidy based on staff FTE, excluding research only staff. This would support twenty languages as outlined in the Working Group Report. Over the next three years the cross subsidy would be reduced in line with receipt of external funding to support the subsidised languages. This would not take place until the end of 2019/20

Summary of points of clarification/comments

A question was raised on the per-head cost of the cross subsidy. The Working Group operated on the assumption of a cost of £2,100 per member of staff and £750 per student.

Outcome of discussion

The proposals contained in the Working Group Report were accepted by AB.

Working Group No. 3 The role of the Head of School/Department

Key proposals

Professor Anna Contadini outlined the key proposals from Working Group No. 3 The Role of the Head of School/Department. The Working Group developed a revised Head of Department job description. The Working Group proposed that each new Department should include a Research Coordinator and a Learning and Teaching Coordinator. An indication of what their role should cover was included in the Working Group Report. The wider structure of School Management Teams should be at the discretion of Heads of School.

Summary of points of clarification/comments

It was noted that the terms of reference of the Working Group did not cover the appointment processes. It was noted that it would be important for department staff to be co-located.

It was confirmed that the Director of HR would be available to work with Heads of School to draft job descriptions for positions of Research Coordinator and Learning and Teaching Coordinator. It was raised that no one person could fulfil all the duties of the Learning and Teaching Coordinator and Research Coordinator. It was expected that their roles would be to coordinate and delegate tasks as required.

Academic Board agreed that the job description should include a responsibility that the Head of Department maintain a positive and collegial working culture.

An explanation of how the dotted line between the Departmental Manager to the Head of School was requested. It was confirmed that while the Departmental Manager would report to Professional Services, they would have a dotted line relationship to the Head of School.

Class room teaching was not explicitly included in the job description of Head of Department in order to make the job description as flexible as possible. It was confirmed that it would be a matter for EB on how to approach the resourcing of teaching when a Head of Department was appointed.

Outcome of discussion

The proposals contained in the Working Group Report were accepted by AB.

Working Group No 4. SOAS-wide academic leadership roles

Key proposals

Dr Griseldis Kirsch outlined the key proposals of Working Group No. 4 SOAS-wide academic leadership roles. The Working Group recommended the creation of four Associate Director roles with learning and teaching remit. These roles would be appointable for four years; renewable for two years. It was noted that the role of Senior Tutor would be integrated into the role of the Associate Director for Student Welfare. The working group recommended the creation of three Associate Directors with a research remit. Anthropology would be included under the remit of Associate Director of Research (Humanities and Languages) with the acknowledgement that Anthropology PhD students could apply for studentships to either Arts and Humanities Research Council or Economic and Social Research Council. The reasoning for inclusion of Anthropology under the remit of the Associate Director of Research (Humanities and Languages) was primarily to ensure balance in student caseload work.

It was felt the four year term was necessary as it takes time to learn the cycle of business.

The role of the Associate Director of Learning Environment and Student Outcomes was welcomed. Some fine-tuning was required on how this role would articulate with committee structures and engage with estates.

Outcome of discussion

The proposals contained in the Working Group Report were accepted by AB.

Working Group No. 5 Governance Structures

Key proposals

Dr Matthew Nelson outlined the key proposals of Working Group No. 5 Governance Structures. The main proposals covered the relocation of faculty level committee roles to other committees and flattening of the committee structure reporting to AB. Recommendations were made about membership of Human Resources Committee and Resources & Planning Committee. The Group was unable to reach agreement on whether a Pro-Director or another AB member should Chair committees that report to AB and asked AB for input. The Working Group considered that interim arrangements would be required for mitigating circumstances, special assessments and special assessment panels. The Working Group recommended that more guidance was required in the standing orders around the creation and standing down of limited life working groups.

Summary of clarification/comments

A query was raised about the implications for the consideration of the student experience in estates and student accommodation matters if the Student Experience Committee was discontinued. It was confirmed that the revised Estates and Infrastructure Committee would be expected to take into consideration the student experience when making decisions.

It was requested that the Doctoral School Management Group include all Associate Directors for Research.

It was requested that the Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Sub-Committee include a library representative.

The recommendation relating to a SOAS-wide research investment fund was queried as it does not yet exist.

It was recognised that the Chairing of a large committee had a heavy workload. It was felt that chairing a committee was a role that fell within the Pro-Directors' remit. There were concerns raised about the remuneration of those who chaired committees as it could become an industry in itself.

It was requested that the name of Research Committee be amended to include Enterprise. This should include the third pro-director in the membership.

Outcome of discussion

AB agreed to the direction of travel of the Working Group. AB further agreed that the Working Group or subset of the Working Group would need to meet further to clarify and finesse further details.

Working Group No. 6 Administrative support for new Schools

Key proposals

Mr Paul Doyle, Director of HR, updated AB on the key proposals of Working Group No. 6 Administrative support for new Schools. These proposals sit within a wider professional services restructure. The proposals set out that there should be clear reporting structures for Department/School Managers. Department/School Managers would report directly into the professional services structure but were appointed to support Heads of Department. Departments would be supported by one Student Support Officer and at least one Academic

Support Officer, depending on the size of the Department. Support arrangements currently in place for the departments in the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences would be maintained throughout the transition year.

Points of clarification/comments

It was confirmed that professional services would be responsible for the recruitment of administrative staff, however, Heads of Department would be part of the recruitment decision for Department/School Managers.

Department/School Managers would be expected to manage the tensions that could arise as a result of the dotted relationship to the Head of Department and hard-line report to Professional Services.

A query was raised on the numbers that would be involved in re-deployment. It was confirmed that the process of consultation around this matter was due to begin imminently.

Outcome of discussion

The proposals contained in the Working Group Report were accepted by AB.

Working Group No. 7 Workload Planning

Key proposals

Dr Michael Jennings updated AB on the key proposals from Working Group No. 7 Workload Planning. The Working Group recommended the adoption of a Workload Planning Model. There was no recommendation to adopt a particular model. The Working Group recommended that the model should operate at the SOAS and department levels, but a decision would need to be made about the level of detail at the School level. The Working Group developed a set of principles to assist with the development of a workload model. The Working Group examined other models when developing the principals.

Points of clarification/comments

It was noted that there did not exist a robust method for recording workload at the moment. This made it difficult for tracking and identifying teaching patterns. AB noted that there were two steps to this process – accurately recording workload and agreeing the principles on what would constitute the workload model.

AB members reminded AB of previous attempts to introduce a school wide workload model. It was felt that there should not be an onerous data collection exercise.

It was raised that an external system need not necessarily be purchased.

Outcome of discussion

The proposals contained in the Working Group Report were accepted by AB.

Working Group No. 8 Interdisciplinary Working

Key proposals

Professor Nadje Al-Ali updated AB on the key proposals from Working Group No. 8 Interdisciplinary Working. The main proposals included that an eleventh interdisciplinary department should be created accommodating CISD, CGS, CEDEP (should they agree to

inclusion) and Media. Interdisciplinarity should be added to the portfolio of the new Pro-Director. An interdisciplinary fund should be created that was SOAS-wide and ring-fenced to incentivise and support interdisciplinary activity. In the short term it would be drawn from the surplus in CISD and SIS.

Points of clarification/comments

Queries were raised on whether the School would operate similarly to other departments. It was confirmed that for governance and accountability purposes, the department would act like a department. However, it might not badge itself as a department externally as it would like to promote the distinct centres.

It was noted that Interdisciplinary Studies would not be a big department. Concerns were raised on managing representation on committees. The possibility of having a rotating headship was raised. A query was raised on whether the department planned to grow. It was confirmed that the department intended to grow.

There was a discussion on how many individuals would like to leave the particular academic units that would form Interdisciplinary Studies.

It was agreed that there should be a strategy developed around Interdisciplinarity. It was agreed that Anthropology would be included in discussions on the development of strategy for Interdisciplinarity.

There were discussions about the placement of Media Studies and Film Studies. It was noted that it would be important to have strategies for these areas. It was agreed that this matter would be taken off line and progress would be reported to the next Academic Board.

It was agreed that further work would need to be undertaken around the concept of an interdisciplinary fund and how it would be funded and operated.

Outcome of vote

Academic Board voted on the creation of an eleventh school, an interdisciplinary school which would contain CISD, CGS and CEDEP. Other areas would be clarified at a later date.

22 – for the creation of the eleventh school

3 – against the creation of the eleventh school

7 – abstentions

Discussion of next steps:

Academic Board agreed that should a unit lose staff due to a transfer to a different department, the staff member who was moving department would need keep their commitment to teaching for the original unit during the transition year.

A number of wordings were provided for the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics. It was agreed that this matter would be taken offline and a name would be developed that came as close as possible to consensus.

Academic Board agreed that the positioning of Islamic Studies required further discussion as there needed to be consultation with the Heads of History, Religions & Philosophies, and Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, once they are appointed.

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Item 2

Academic Board agreed to recommend a new academic structure to the Board of Trustees.