

**SOAS
ACADEMIC BOARD**

**Wednesday 12 March 2014
2pm in Room 116**

AGENDA

* Items are formal business; if members wish to discuss any issues arising from these reports they must inform the Secretary by noon on Tuesday 11 March 2014.

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|-------------|---|---|
| I | Minutes
To approve: minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2013 | [previously circulated and attached] |
| II | Action Taken
To receive: updates on action taken | |
| III | Matters Arising
Code of Practice on Mitigating Circumstances
To note: Chair's action | [Appendix A] |
| IV | Director's Report
To receive: a report from the Director | [Appendix B] |
| V | Distance Learning
To consider: a report from the Pro-Director (Learning & Teaching) | [Appendix C] |
| VI | REF Submission
To consider: a report from the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise) | [Appendix D] |
| VII | Policy on External Professional Activity
(i) To approve: the policy in principle, and make recommendations for its implementation
(ii) To approve: delegation of final approval to REC | [Appendix E] |
| VIII | Framework for Academic Publications and Policy on Funding Open Access
To approve: the framework and policy | [Appendix F] |
| IX | Effectiveness Review
(i) To consider: a report from the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise)
(ii) To approve: recommendations for approval by Governing Body | [Appendix G] |
| X | Sub-Committees
(i) To receive: termly reports from
(a) Academic Development Committee
(b) Research & Enterprise Committee
(c) Equality & Diversity Committee | [Appendix H]
[Appendix I]
[Appendix J & Annex] |

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

SOAS

ACADEMIC BOARD

MINUTES

Wednesday 12 March 2014

Mr D Beaton*	Professor D Mosse
Professor R Black	Professor I Nikolaeva
Professor M Craven*	Dr E Onyema
Mr D East	Professor C Oughton
Professor R Fardon	Professor A Pauwels
Professor A George	Professor N Rao
Professor A Gerstle	Mr J Robinson
Dr L Hammond	Professor T Screech
Dr R Harris*	Professor G Singh*
Dr D Healy	Professor L Smith
Dr K Hirschler	Professor P Webley (Chair)
Dr A Janku	Mr M Zafar
Mr P Kohler	

Dr C Ince attended at Acting Secretary

In attendance:

Mrs J Airey
Mr P Baran
Dr M Bentham
Mr D Christmas
Dr S Hopgood

*Those whose names are marked with an asterisk were unable to be present.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 November 2013 were **approved** as a true record.

17. Action Taken

Academic Board **noted** that all action points from the last meeting which were due for completion had been completed.

18. Matters Arising

Academic Board **noted** the use of Chair's action (Appendix A) in relation to the Code of Practice on Mitigating Circumstances.

19. Director's Report

Academic Board received the report from the Director at Appendix B. The Director elaborated on several items within the report.

(i) Student Enrolment

This was a key area for the School, as under recruiting against target had a large impact on the School's financial position. In the previous year, income from teaching (tuition fees and the HEFCE teaching grant) had accounted for approximately 75% of the School's total income, so a failure to recruit to target would have a significant effect.

(ii) Student Recruitment

The most recent figures had shown some improvement on the position set out in the Director's report, but recruitment was still under target in all areas. The new undergraduate programmes appeared to be recruiting relatively well, which was important if the programmes were to be sustainable.

(iii) The North Block

It appeared that the tenders which had been received were all within budget. The School was required to provide a covered bicycle shed, and the plan for this was being developed.

(iv) The BIS Grant Letter

It was not possible for the School to gauge the impact of the budgetary changes until it received its own grant letter later in the month. It was likely that the School's share of the £20 million increase in teaching capital would be in the order of £34,000.

The School had been informed that any cuts would be made in the 2014/15 year and that there would not be any in-year cuts. In the past, in-year cuts had been made because the HEFCE financial year did not match with that of Universities.

(v) University of London – Institute of Education

The likely merger of the Institute of Education with UCL was of concern to the School as the IoE was in several partnerships with SOAS including the Bloomsbury Consortium, the London International Development Centre and the ESRC Doctoral Training Centre. The Heads of the four remaining Bloomsbury colleges (SOAS, London of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Birkbeck and the Royal Veterinary College) would be meeting soon to discuss the way forward.

The Director also reported on two items which did not appear in his report.

(vi) Finances of HE Sector

HEFCE's annual report on the financial health of the Higher Education sector had been released during the previous week. The Director highlighted three items within the report.

- a) The sector's operating surplus had fallen from 4.2% to 3.9% over the last few years, and was forecast to be 2.2% in the current year.
- b) Overall, oversee student numbers had grown by 1.2% last year, which was down from the 4.6% growth of the previous year.
- c) There was a new requirement for institutions to include pension scheme liabilities in their figures, and this would have a significant impact on the finances and financial performance of Universities in the future.

(vii) University of London Collegiate Council

The Director reported on several of the items which had been discussed at the last meeting of the Council.

- a) The redevelopment of Garden Halls had been discussed. This would provide 1200 rooms, and was on target to be occupied in autumn 2016.

- b) Decant space would available in the South Block of Senate House from late summer, and the School and one other college had expressed an interest in this.
- c) Brunel University would be changing its name to Brunel University London.
- d) It had been agreed to recommend an increase in investment in the School of Advanced Study of £3.5 million across five years. This would enable SAS to champion interdisciplinary activities, develop digital humanities and to develop public engagement. All of these would be designed to be complimentary to the humanities activities of the Colleges.

Secretary's note:

It had been necessary to move the meeting of Resources & Planning Committee which was due to have taken place on Tuesday 11 March 2014 to Tuesday 18 March 2014. The Director was therefore unable to update Academic Board on what had taken place.

20. Distance Learning

Academic Board considered the report from the Pro-Director (Learning & Teaching) at Appendix C.

In 2013, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London had set up a steering group to explore the strategic, governance and organisational issues and options relating to future development of the University of London International Programmes.

The steering group's report specified various options which the School was currently exploring. Tracks A and B were those which were of relevance to the School, but much would depend on how these options were priced. It would be possible to follow Track A for some programmes and Track B for others, should this prove to be the most advantageous path for the School to take.

During its discussions, Academic Board recognised the importance of determining the School's strategy for the management and development of distance learning in addition to deciding on its relationship with the University of London International Programmes.

21. REF Submission 2014

Academic Board considered the report at Appendix D from the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise), which gave an update on the Research Excellence Framework 2014. A series of REF debrief meetings were taking place to build on the submission, and ensure that the School was well positioned in its preparations for any future exercise. The results from this consultation exercise would be used to inform five-year research plans. A proposed strategy and evolving list of recommendations would be brought to Academic Board for formal approval once all meetings had been completed, and an institutional-level review meeting had taken place.

The Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise) gave a presentation to Academic Board which contrasted the outcome of the 2008 exercise with the hoped-for outcome from the 2014 assessment. The presentation also set out where the School would aspire to be in the medium-term.

The presentation highlighted the general improvement in PhD completion rates which had occurred during the last few years, but showed that overall the School was below the average for benchmarked (top quartile) institutions in terms of research income.

22. Policy on External Professional Activity

Academic Board considered the policy set out in Appendix E.

Evidence suggested that there was a significant volume of unreported external work currently carried out by SOAS academic staff. There were benefits to the School of this work being carried out in accordance with School procedures. As well as the financial benefits (projects might generate surpluses that could be ploughed back into academic priorities, while smaller projects might generate additional core funding from HEFCE's Higher Education Innovation Fund), this would allow risks associated with such work to be managed and minimised. It would also ensure that external professional activity was accurately recorded on REF impact statements, which were an indicator of the School's research reputation in a number of key areas.

The policy was intended to incentivise smaller contracts, up to 30 days in length, being undertaken through the School rather than privately, whilst providing a clearer basis for the development of large-scale consulting contracts.

Members of Academic Board raised a range of issues which included:

- a) the importance of determining who would be involved in decisions about such work, and ensuring that these decisions could be made quickly and easily. The implementation measures would need to address the issue of quality control, whilst making sure that individuals were not asked to make decisions about quality which they did not have the expertise to make;
- b) the need for a more detailed list of exclusions;
- c) the possibility of the policy applying to professional as well as academic staff, as members of professional services staff undertook consultancy work.

It would be essential that the policy, whatever form it took, was workable and fair. Most importantly, it should actually be used by staff. There was no point in producing a policy which was not implemented.

Academic Board **approved the draft policy in principle, and delegated responsibility for approval of the final version of the policy and the implementation measures to Research & Enterprise Committee.**

Academic Board recognised the need for as wide a consultation as possible, and the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise) was asked to circulate a copy of the policy to members of Academic Board and to those Heads of Department who were not members, and to ask them to discuss it with colleagues. Comments should be sent to the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise) as soon as possible.

23. Framework for Academic Publications and Policy on Funding Open Access

Academic Board considered and **approved** the framework and policy set out in Appendix F.

It **noted** that the School was in receipt of a grant which would cover a small number of Article Processing Charges (APCs) for people who held AHRC or ESRC grants. Staff were strongly encouraged to include APCs in research grant bids to those research funders (such as the EU and DFID) who were willing to pay directly for them, and to use the institutional repository.

24. Effectiveness Review

Academic Board considered the report from the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise) at Appendix G, and **agreed** not to make any changes to the membership of Academic Board at the current time.

25. Sub-Committee Reports

Academic Board **received** the termly reports from Academic Development Committee (Appendix H), Research & Enterprise Committee (Appendix I) and Equality & Diversity Committee (Appendix J and its Annex).

In the latter Appendix, Academic Board's attention was drawn to the fact that the School had started work on two new initiatives – the Gender Equality Charter Mark (GEM) and Model Employer for Diversity and Equality (MEDE).

26. Centre for Ottoman Studies

Academic Board had received a paper which had arrived too late to be included on the agenda, which had been circulated electronically to members. The Faculty of Law & Social Sciences asked Academic Board to approve the creation of a Centre for Ottoman Studies. Academic Board was concerned to ensure that the Centre met the criteria which had been established by Academic Board in the previous session. It therefore **approved the Centre in principle, but delegated responsibility for final approval to the Chair** once confirmation had been received from the Faculty that these criteria had been met.

Secretary's note:

The Chair received confirmation from the Faculty that the criteria had been met and therefore took Chair's action, on behalf of Academic Board, to approve the creation of the Centre for Ottoman Studies.

There were no reserved items of business.