

EXECUTIVE BOARD
OPEN AGENDA
Monday 25 September 2017 (Committee Room, Paul Webley Wing)

EB 17/18 04 A	Minutes To approve: minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2017	[Attached]
EB 17/18 04 B	Action Points	[Oral Updates]
EB 17/18 04 C	Matters Arising/Matters for Report	[Oral Updates]
EB 17/18 04 D	IT Systems Changes Relating to Academic Restructuring and the Delivery of One Professional Service To approve: A paper from the Pro-Director Research & Enterprise	[Attached]
EB 17/18 04 E	Summary of Research Information System (RIS) Implementation To note: A report from the Pro-Director Research & Enterprise	[Attached]

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

SOAS, University of London

Executive Board

Monday 11 September 2017

OPEN MINUTES

Members: Baroness Valerie Amos (Chair)
Mr Graeme Appleby
Professor Reinhard Bachmann
Professor Richard Black
Professor Chris Bramall
Mr Paul Doyle
Dr Nathan Hill
Professor Stephen Hopgood
Dr Michael Jennings
Professor Deborah Johnston
Dr Mark Laffey
Dr Kevin Latham (by phone)
Dr Ben Murtagh
Professor Richard Reid
Ms Paula Sanderson
Dr Ulrich Volz (by phone)

In attendance: Dr Chris Ince (Minutes)
Dr Ian Pickup

Apologies: Professor Lutz Marten
Professor Carol Tan
Professor Anna Contadini
Professor Nadjie Al- Ali

EB 17/18 03 A. Minutes

The minutes of the minutes of 11 September 2017 were **approved**.

EB 17/18 03 B. Action Points

(i) Minute 16/17 44E – HE Sector bodies
EB **noted** this was included on the agenda.

(ii) Minute 17/18 01 B – HE Act & Fees

EB **discussed** the need to plan for a range of scenarios around future student fee income. The latest news coverage had been around a potential decrease in the home undergraduate fee to £7.5k, which would decrease the School's fee income by over £4m.

The impact of Brexit on EU student numbers was hard to predict and the current assumption in the financial forecasts was that overall EU fee income would remain the same. The price sensitivity of the EU market would also be strongly linked to an institution's brand and this needed to be supported by positive metrics and a strong student experience.

EB **agreed** that it would need to hold a further evidence-based discussion later in the term and consider the latest data from key competitors.

(iii) Minute 17/18 01 C – REF guidance

EB **noted** this would be considered on the reserved agenda.

(iv) Minute 17/18 01 E – TEF Year 3

EB **noted** this would be considered on the reserved agenda.

EB 17/18 03 C. Matters Arising/Matter for Report

(i) Student recruitment activities

The Pro-Director, Learning & Teaching **reported** that finding the space for open and insight days was challenging due to the level of teaching activity on the main campus. The use of large lecture theatres for teaching was also preventing use for postgraduate recruitment events in the evenings.

EB **noted** that there would be a cost to hiring external space and that before this was considered the current usage would be discussed with HoDs to assess what this was and if any other steps could be taken. This would be reported back to EB at the next meeting.

EB 17/18 03 D. Update of Programme Approval Process

EB **considered** the updated programme approval process which was presented by the Pro-Director Learning & Teaching. This had originally been discussed at EB in July and several changes made based on those discussions.

EB **discussed** a range of issues including how open options were included, how to assess the finances of a programme, the need to be clear on where elements were required to meet the QAA HE Code, an improved authorisation process and how to approve minor programme changes.

EB **noted** that changes to programme titles or core modules had a long approval cycle to ensure the School met its obligations under consumer rights legislation. The School had decided these had to be fixed by the point of application. This meant it was important to have core modules that were not reliant on a single member of staff for their delivery.

EB **noted** that the final version of the document was only intended for on-campus programmes at this time. The document would need to be approved before any departments could start the process for approving new programmes.

EB **agreed** that it would consider a paper on the flexibility around language options in a fortnight. It would also consider costing mechanisms for how the success of a programme could be evaluated. These would be based on the RAM and departmental financial forecasts and look at initial costs as well as when the programme was in a steady state. A costing example would also be included in the final document.

EB 17/18 03 E. HE Sector Bodies

EB **noted** the paper on sector bodies from the Secretary. EB **agreed** a few changes that would be incorporated into the revised document.

Departments were free to join discipline-specific bodies or others they wished to within departmental budgets. However, these should be discussed with the relevant Pro-Director to avoid any duplication.

EB 17/18 03 F. Prevent

EB **received** a presentation on the Prevent Agenda from the Secretary. EB asked that the slides to members be emailed to all members.

EB **noted** that the School had several existing policies around Freedom of Speech, the conduct of events and student welfare that supported its legal obligations in relation to the Prevent agenda. The School's approach was legally compliant but there was considerable external pressure to consider the HEFCE guidance as part of an Institution's legal responsibility. The School's approach was supported by the Board of Trustees but, given the Government's continued focus on the counter terrorism and radicalisation agenda there was an increased risk of the School's position being challenged.

EXECUTIVE BOARD: Open Action Points 16/17

Minute	Item	Action 2016/17	Deadline for report to EB	By
EB 16/17 43 D	Horizon Scan	Paper for AB on student support/mentoring mechanisms to share best practice	23/10/17	DJ
EB 16/17 43 D	Horizon Scan	Paper for EB/AB on equality work and departmental data	23/10/17	CI

EXECUTIVE BOARD: Open Action Points 17/18

Minute	Item	Action 2017/18	Deadline for report to EB	By
EB 17/18 01 B	HE Act & fees	Department level fee information for initial scenario planning	25/9/17	GA / HoDs
EB 17/18 01 C	Scholarships	Report on scholarships data	25/9/17	IP
EB 17/18 02 C	Matters arising	Paper for EB on student contracts	30/10/17	IP
EB 17/18 03 B	Fee income	Schedule discussion on fee income scenarios with supporting data	16/10/17	CI / GA
EB 17/18 03 C	Recruitment activities	Report on current teaching usage that impacts on recruitment activities	25/9/17	DJ

EB 17/18 03 D	Programme Approval	Proposals on flexibility for language options	2/10/17	NH / BM
EB 17/18 03 D	Programme Approval	Financial model to cost new programmes	2/10/17	GA
EB 17/18 03 F	Prevent	E-mail presentation to members	25/9/17	CI

IT SYSTEMS CHANGES RELATING TO ACADEMIC RESTRUCTURING AND THE DELIVERY OF ONE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

EB is asked to **approve** the establishment of a Project Board to oversee IT systems changes relating to academic restructuring and the delivery of One Professional Service

Executive Summary

This paper proposes the establishment of a Project Board to oversee the planning and delivery of IT systems changes required as a result of academic restructuring and the delivery of One Professional Service during the 2017-18 session.

Initial scoping has identified the systems that require revision – including UNITE, Agresso, ResourceLink, CMS and Worktribe – and mapped the interdependencies between them. The Project Board will be responsible for agreeing a detailed change plan and supporting its implementation.

EB sponsor: Richard Black

Recommendations & Next Step

It is recommended that EB approves the Project Board terms of reference and membership. Appointments to the Board will then be made and a first meeting scheduled asap.

Financial Impact

The establishment of the Project Board has no direct financial implications. EB will be asked to approve the resource implications agreed by the Board.

Revising and improving information systems will require upfront investment, but has the potential to reduce costs (e.g. in relation to staff time) in the longer term.

Risks

Failure to implement required systems changes during 2017-18 would have major operational consequences for the School, adversely affecting students and staff. To continue beyond summer 2018 with information systems that do not reflect School structures would risk confusion and reputational damage.

Equality implications

None envisaged

IT SYSTEMS CHANGES RELATING TO ACADEMIC RESTRUCTURING AND THE DELIVERY OF ONE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

The implementation of the new academic structure and the delivery of One Professional Service during the 2017-18 session necessitate significant changes to information systems in operation in the School.

In preparation for the transitional year 2017-18, a number of short term modifications were made to key information systems used by HR, Finance, REO and other Professional Services directorates, alongside the introduction of a series of manual 'workarounds', to ensure that data used in School operations reflects as accurately as possible the new academic structure.

More substantial changes are now required to ensure that by the end of the transitional year, information systems across the School are revised to take into account the new academic structure and the delivery of One Professional Service. With this in mind, it is proposed to establish a Project Board with the following terms of reference:

1. To oversee the planning and delivery of IT systems changes required as a result of academic restructuring and the delivery of One Professional Service, including:
 - (i) Agreeing a project plan and the resources required;
 - (ii) Ensuring that consultation on systems changes takes place with relevant stakeholders across the School, including system owners and users;
 - (iii) Ensuring that systems changes take into account internal and external institutional reporting requirements and strategic priorities;
 - (iv) Overseeing the implementation of systems changes, monitoring progress and addressing issues arising;
2. To ensure that Executive Board is informed of the progress of systems changes and consulted on key issues as required.

The suggested membership of the Project Board is:

- Pro-Director (chair)
- Systems Change Project Manager (appointment under discussion)
- Interim Director, IT
- 1 representative of HR
- 1 representative of Finance & Planning
- 1 representative of Registry
- 1 representative of the Research & Enterprise Office
- 1 representative of Marketing, Student Recruitment and Communications
- 2-3 senior academics, ideally a Head of Department, ADR and ADLT
- Possibly a student representative

The Board will meet at least monthly, with an expectation of more frequent meetings at the beginning to finalise the project plan.

Summary of Research Information System (RIS) implementation

EB is asked to **note** the following report which details the aims, objectives and achievements of the implementation of a RIS by the Research Office.

Executive Summary

As a research intensive institution, it is crucial for SOAS to maximise its research income, engage in complex collaborative projects, and utilise staff time efficiently. One of the key priorities of the Research Office is to provide an excellent application support service to academics and to deliver high quality data for stakeholders across the institution and in preparation for REF 2021.

A RIS, which helps manage the full funding application lifecycle and delivers self-service functionality to academics applying for research funding, has become a necessary tool for the Research Office of any research intensive HEI. As SOAS' research income increases and we engage in more complex collaborative projects, Worktribe (the selected RIS, implemented September 2016 – April 2017) has enabled the Research Office to streamline our workflows, modernise our processes and engage more fully with our academic community.

EB Sponsor: Richard Black

Recommendations & Next Steps

EB is ask to note and comment on the Recommendations section of the report.

Financial Impact

Out of the total project budget of £259,000, expenditure as of the end of September 2017 is £218,687 and the remaining available funds are £40,313. The project has been delivered on time and under budget.

Risks

Data quality: Worktribe must be updated in real-time by the Pre-Award Research Funding team as central and authoritative source of information, otherwise disseminated reports will be inaccurate.

Financial (value for money): The RIS implementation has represented a significant investment for SOAS. In order to maximise value for money, the Pre-Award Research Funding team should continue to promote the RIS to the academic body and encourage academic user engagement.

Equality implications

None identified at this time.

Rationale of introducing a RIS (Research Information System)

As a research intensive institution, it is crucial for SOAS to maximise its research income, engage in complex collaborative projects, and utilise staff time efficiently. One of the key priorities of the Research Office is to provide an excellent application support service to academics and to deliver high quality data for stakeholders across the institution and in preparation for REF 2021.

Prior to the procurement of a RIS the research office were not able to provide detailed budgets, easily track ethics, peer review, risks of the project, share relevant documents between the relevant project team members and generate robust reports simply. The budgets rarely reflected the true cost to SOAS and clearly highlighted the implications for departments. As such much time was spent fielding avoidable queries and retrospectively correcting mistakes. There was mistrust between the academics and the RO and hence proposals would get submitted without involvement from the RO or Head of Department/Dean approval; often leading to lengthy delays of project starts and costing the Institution money unnecessarily.

The RIS addresses the above issues and allows the Research Office to effectively manage the full pre-award application lifecycle. Worktribe (the selected RIS) enables accurate budgeting, stores reliable data, and provides academics with a user-friendly, online space to develop and track their funding application. Worktribe is also key to making the REO processes transparent to both academic and professional staff, which will aid in creating a community of trust and cooperation between both parties (see Annex 1 for project original benefits).

Timeline:

November 2015 – February 2016: Tender process

March – July 2016: Procurement process

August 2016: Worktribe purchased

September 2016 – April 2017: Implementation phase

April – July 2017: Research Office starts using Worktribe, phased roll-out to departments

August 2017: Worktribe launched across the institution

Project aims and objectives:

1. Efficiency savings in the planning and use of staff time through easier and timelier access to application data.
2. The capture of accurate application information to support an effective approvals process.
3. Provision of a consistent approach to full costing leading to a better recovery of full economic costs.
4. For all research proposals to receive ethics reviews.
5. Data management tools are available for scrutinising applications and for providing accurate management information.
6. Availability of award/grant financial information.
7. Data collected and held about research activity improving the School's operational and strategic capacity.
8. Increasing the level of research-based income by increasing the number and quality of applications and their success rate.
9. Providing enhanced management information, at lower staff effort, on grant income, pipeline, departmental performance, success rates and other metrics.
10. Adding end user self-service functionality to existing REO service

Achievements:

RIS

A fully configured pre-award research information system (Worktribe) has been implemented across the university within set deadlines and under budget. All relevant members of the REO are using Worktribe daily and have created appropriate new workflows, policies and procedures embedding the system. The Pre-Award team enjoy using Worktribe and see the value of the transparency and accountability of the system. Ensuring that Worktribe is used as a central point of information and kept completely up-to-date by the RFOs is a longer process which has started.

Academic engagement:

Heads of Department, Research Coordinators, ADRs, Pro-Directors and faculty administrators have had at least one individual session on Worktribe and all academic and research staff have been kept fully informed about the implementation through emails, bulletins, team meetings and training sessions. An academic user group was consulted throughout the implementation and the UCU union has been kept informed. Academics are now using available self-service functionality of the system.

Documentation:

A full set of user guides and internal administration guides have been written and publicised, the external website has been updated, and a dedicated Worktribe area on MySOAS aimed at academic staff has been created and populated with guidance, videos and FAQs. The RIS project Sharepoint site has been maintained with financial, configuration and planning documents. Communications plans, a privacy impact assessment and full project documentation is available through the RIS project Sharepoint site.

Reporting solution:

A suitable reporting solution supported by IT (PowerBI) has been implemented and is able to deliver clear and flexible reports on current Worktribe data. Key members of the REO have been trained to use PowerBI and basic reports have been written. The data collected through the system is extremely comprehensive and far beyond any data previously captured by the RO.

Budget:

Out of the total project budget of £259,000, expenditure as of the end of September 2017 is £218,687 and the remaining available funds are £40,313.

Recommendations from the outgoing Project Manager:

- build a set of standard reports for key stakeholder groups and ensure that these are sent out to a regular schedule
- push IT to come up with an easier way to share PowerBI reports
- feature Worktribe highly in relevant training sessions and promote the system through application drop-in sessions
- ensure that full project budgets are transferred across to Agresso with project details
- ensure that the Post-Award team is interacting with Worktribe and that the project handover involves a member of both teams sitting down to look at the project in Worktribe
- improve Post-Award service delivery to academics and departments by investing in and implementing the Worktribe Post-Award module. This would make the grant management for both PIs, Co-Is, REO, Comms, and LIS transparent and could enhance compliance with ethics, data management, Impact, Open access, and financial management of the grants.

- Insure that there is appropriate resource to administrate the system and maintain its smooth operation.

Comparison data for applications submitted:

2014 01.04.14 – 30.09.14 = 52

2015 01.04.15 – 30.09.15 = 76

2016 01.04.16 – 30.09.16 = 60

2017 (WORKTRIBE) 10.04.17 – 19.09.17 = 67 (and 41 bids in development)

The Research Office has put all applications to externally funded research opportunities on Worktribe since April 10th 2017 so I have taken comparison data for equivalent periods in previous years to show the high level of activity on Worktribe.

Annex 1: Original Expected Project Benefits

For the Research and Enterprise Office

Benefit Description	Benefit Measurement Metric	Project Target	Target Benefit Achievement Date	Achieved
All project budgets to include FEC	FEC budgets created for each project	100%	August 2017	Yes
Reduction in time spent by REO staff fulfilling information requests	F.T.E per month	10% per FTE	January 2018	Yes
Increase in the accuracy of application information	Number of REO queries raised during proposal development	- 50%	January 2018	On the right track
All relevant research proposals to receive ethics reviews	Number of relevant proposals receiving reviews	100%	August 2017	Yes
Increased compliance with governance and procedure	Number of applications receiving institutional approval prior to submission	100%	August 2017	Yes although more at 95% currently.

For Principal Investigators and other Faculty Staff

Benefit Description	Benefit Measurement Metric	Project Target	Target Benefit Achievement Date	Achieved
Accurate and timely award/grant financial status information available for PIs	Access to grant information through RIS	100%	March 2018	Yes - this is all readily available through WT.
Clear application information e.g. transparency regarding status of approvals	Accuracy of system derived approval status.	100%	August 2017	Yes
Clarity of costs and resource implications of project	FEC budgets for all grants	100%	August 2017	Yes

For School

Benefit Description	Benefit Measurement Metric	Project Target	Target Benefit Achievement Date	Achieved
All research projects credited to SOAS accurately	Proportion of SOAS staff's projects credited to departments.	100%	January 2018	Yes
Better understanding of research project costs	Percentage of accurate Full Economic Costing calculations performed for every project showing cost and price.	100%	March 2018	Still requiring further training to researchers. But this is on target for March 2018

System should help to enhance support mechanisms e.g. peer review, minimise last minute applications which may lead to an increase in success rates	Percentage of eligible applications peer reviewed prior to submission	100%	January 2018	Yes – Peer review and departmental approval is far more transparent.
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