

SOAS
EXECUTIVE BOARD
AGENDA

Monday 29 November 2010 at 10am

Room 115

I	Minutes	
	To approve: minutes of meeting held on 22 November 2010	[Attached]
II	Action Taken	
	To receive: updates on action taken	
III	Matters Arising / Matters for Report	
IV	Faculty Boards Update	
	To receive: oral updates from 3 Deans of Faculty	[Oral]
V	Student Recruitment / Admissions	
	To consider: an update from the Head of Admissions	[Appendix A]
VI	Student Barometer 2010 Summary	
	To consider: a paper from the Director of Academic Development	[Appendix B]
VII	Schools Annual Monitoring Statement for 2010	
	To consider: a paper from the Director of Finance	[Appendix C]
VIII	Circulars	
	To consider: circulars received since the last meeting	[Appendix D]
IV	Any Other Business	

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Monday 29 November 2010

MINUTES

Members: Professor Paul Webley (Chair)
Mr Graeme Appleby
Mr Donald Beaton
Professor Ian Brown
Professor Graham Furniss
Mr Peter Mitchell
Professor Nirmala Rao

Apologies: Professor Matt Craven
Professor Anne Pauwels

93. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2010 were approved subject to an amendment to 90 (iv), which should read "The Pro-Director Learning and Teaching confirmed that this item has now been dealt with and comments can be made available to colleagues if they so wish"

94. Actions Taken

All the actions to be taken are covered in the following minutes.

95. Matters arising / matters for report

(i) Bloomsbury Colleges

The Bloomsbury College meeting took place on Friday 26 November. The two main issues discussed were (a) the Bloomsbury Learning Environment and (b) the LIDC

BLE – In the light of the end of the current Blackboard licencing term, the BLE steering group has been considering future options. These have been narrowed down to two (i) to remain with a hosted Blackboard platform for 3-5 years, upgrading to the latest version or (ii) move to Moodle (hosted at ULCC) in 2012-13, remaining with the current Blackboard version for one more year. The Moodle option is significantly cheaper over the 5 year period, but requires considerable up-front expenditure in year 1. It has been agreed to consider the available options further and in particular to press Blackboard on producing a better contract offer

LIDC - The meeting received a positive report on recent activities, but it was noted that fewer grants than expected were attracting FEC. It was agreed that the consortium needed a report on the apportionment of costs between the colleges, given that the HEFCE funding would soon be ending. The LIDC will submit its 6 monthly report by 1 December 2010 to the Heads of Finance.

EB **agreed** that the Director of Finance would give close scrutiny of these when they were available.

The need to raise the profile of LIDC was mentioned, and the possibility of submitting it for a Queens Anniversary Prize was considered. The Bloomsbury secretariat will check what individual colleges are doing in respect of QAP, and see if this is possible. It was felt that if possible, any nomination should be through LSHTM, as this has been the lead college for this activity.

(ii) City University of Hong Kong

The Director and Dean (Languages and Cultures) had met Gregory Lee (SOAS alumnus) Professor of Chinese and Transcultural Studies and Dean of the University's College of Humanities and Social Sciences. EB **agreed** that the Dean should explore the feasibility of developing 1 + 2 or 2 + 2 degrees with CUHK. Progress would depend on how well the different academic structures would articulate and on an assessment of likely demand.

(iii) Cambridge Education Group (CEG)

The Director had met a representative of CEG to discuss a possible progression agreement from them to SOAS. EB noted this and **agreed** that the Pro Director (Learning and Teaching) would consider how best to take these discussions forward.

(iv) Lobbying

The Director had met David Willetts and discussed with him the funding of languages. He indicated that the government expected to provide a 'distinct' level of funding for languages – and also referred to the letter that the School has written to Vince Cable. The Director pressed the importance of an appropriate sentence about languages being included in the letter from the Secretary of State to HEFCE.

The impact of the plans for HE had been discussed with Gareth Thomas (Shadow Minister for Universities).

96. Faculty Boards Update

EB received oral reports on meetings of the Faculty Boards as follows:

Faculty of Languages and Cultures – No major issues had been discussed but the topics covered included:

- underperformance of research student recruitment,
- the need to put into place better school-wide publicity around languages entitlement and about various opportunities for students to build in language study as part of degree programmes
- the replacement of the joint Birkbeck management + language programmes with internal programmes SOAS (International Management + Language) programmes

The Dean noted that attendance of members was affected by timetabling difficulties for this year's meetings. EB noted that the days when Faculty Boards met was rotated deliberately to help ensure that some staff were unable to attend any meetings because teaching was timetabled when the Boards met.

Faculty of Arts and Humanities – there had been helpful discussions about what should be the purpose of the Faculty Board and also about the nature of the SOAS culture and the degree to which this was now felt to inhibit desirable progress. There was a view that a greater degree of performance management across the School would be beneficial.

97. Student Recruitment/Admissions

Following poor undergraduate recruitment this year EB had asked for an investigation of the reasons why so many home undergraduate students withdrew from the School in the weeks immediately before enrolment. EB noted the results of a review carried out by the Head of Admissions and Recruitment from which it was apparent that in total 39 candidates has asked to defer their entry this year in comparison with 10 in 2009 and 11 in 2008. The analysis of the reasons for each withdrawal indicated that there was no single factor that lay behind these deferrals. Given the likely changes in funding arrangements from 2012 it was unlikely that this level of deferrals would be repeated this year.

98. Student Barometer 2010 Summary

EB received and noted results of the 2010 Student Barometer. Concern was expressed that in a range of categories the School's performance was not as strong as should be the case. The areas of student dissatisfaction covered a range of issues including to access to academic staff, facilities (especially IT), and services (such as Registry and Catering). EB was concerned to note that these areas had been identified by students as being unsatisfactory in previous Student Barometer surveys and were also highlighted as unsatisfactory in other surveys. It appeared from the trend analysis that no significant progress has been made in improving matters. EB **agreed** that this could not continue and that the Pro Director (Learning and Teaching) and Registrar and Secretary should coordinate their efforts with colleagues to put in place a clear plan of actions designed to improve the School's performance in the areas identified in the Student Barometer Report.

99. Annual Monitoring Statement

EB received the draft Annual Monitoring Statement which will be submitted to HEFCE. The draft was approved, however, EB noted with concern that there was currently an under-spend in the Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme. It was agreed that the Pro Director (Research and Enterprise) would review the current arrangements for managing these awards.

100. Any Other Business

There was no other business.