

**SOAS****EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

Friday 1 March 2013, Room 116, 1.15pm - 3.15pm

**AGENDA**

- I **Minutes**  
To approve: minutes of the ERC meeting held on 19 October 2012 Attached
- II **Matters Arising**
- III **External Relations Strategy 2011-14** Appendix A  
To note: Update on External Relations Strategy 2012-15 - Director of External Relations and Development
- IV **Development and Alumni Relations** Appendix B  
To receive: Update on major gifts and alumni relations activities  
- Deputy Head of Development and Alumni Relations
- V **Marketing and Student Recruitment**  
To receive: Oral update on merged Marketing and Student Recruitment team and Recruitment and Admissions Strategy – Chair
- To receive: Update on Reputation and Identity project and School Events – Projects and Events Manager Appendix C
- VI **Internal Communications/Media Relations** Appendix D  
To receive: Update on progress to date and upcoming plans for the Internal Communications action plan and timeline - Communications Manager
- To receive: Oral update on SOAS web and online improvement project ('WebFirst') - Director of Library and Information Services
- VII **Brunei Gallery Advisory Panel (BGAP)** Attached  
To note: Minutes of BGAP Meeting 28 November 2012  
To receive: Oral update on Brunei Gallery activities – Galleries and Exhibitions and Manager
- VIII **Dates of next meetings 2013**  
To note: Friday 17 May 2013 Room 116 at 1.15pm  
To note: Friday 18 October 2013 Room 116 at 1.15pm

**EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE****MINUTES**

Friday 1 March 2013 - 1.15pm in Room 116

**Chair:** Mr Donald Beaton

**Members:** Professor Nadjie Al Ali  
Mr David Christmas\*  
Professor Graham Furniss  
Dr Christopher Gerteis  
Mr Evan Hancock  
Mr John Hollingworth  
Mr Harrison Lanigan-Coyte  
Dr Friederike Lüpke  
Dr Dina Matar  
Ms Fiona McWilliams  
Professor Anne Pauwels\*  
Mr John Robinson  
Lord Michael Williams\*

**In attendance:** Mr Paulo Gomes\*  
Mr Giles Lesser  
Ms Katie Nugent  
Ms Katie Price  
Ms Clare Rhodes  
Ms Zeba Salman\*

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

**1. ERCC Minutes**

It was noted that the Director of Library and Information Services (LIS) did in fact attend the 19 October 2012 meeting but the minutes of that meeting did not show him in attendance.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2012 were **approved**.

**2. Matters Arising**

The Director of LIS gave an update on the SOAS Alumni "email for life". Decisions need to be made on the following questions:-

- whether the email address was a SOAS address or an SOAS alumni address; and
- whether the email system covering the email addresses for life was hosted by SOAS, (which had resource implications) or whether the emails were hosted under a forwarding arrangement.

The final proposal would only need to be approved by Executive Board if there were resource implications.

The Director of LIS is to take this forward with input from Alumni Relations and will give an update report at the next meeting (**action**).

Hard copies of the refreshed Vision and Strategy for the 2016 Centennial and Beyond were distributed to members.

There were no other matters arising.

### 3. External Relations Strategy 2012-15

The Director of External Relations and Development (ERD) presented the External Relations and Development Strategy 2012-15 (ERS) which sets out the six key objectives for the next three years.

An Action Plan including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) was attached to the strategy which sets out the practical steps to be completed to fulfil the objectives. For example, a Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) institutional KPI is to increase the percentage of contactable alumni from 48% to 52%. This figure is currently at 54% so the target has already been exceeded.

The Chair asked if such measurement of performance and comparators could be incorporated within a report to be brought to the next meeting so the Committee can track where ERD are with regard to achieving the ERS objectives (**action**).

It was agreed that it was very important to keep SOAS' online presence under review in particular in relation to student recruitment and marketing.

### 4. Development and Alumni Relations

The Director of ERD spoke to the report at Appendix B on behalf of the Head of DAR and highlighted the following:-

- Significant gifts including the £1.5million donation from the Mo Ibrahim Foundation to extend the Governance for Development in Africa initiative to fund various scholarships and an annual residential school in Africa;
- Alumni and Friends Fund Telephone campaign in April/May; and
- American Friends of SOAS (AFSOAS) – major academic event in New York, May 2013

The proposed dates for the Alumni Weekend were 28 and 29 June 2013. Members were encouraged to contact the Deputy Head of DAR with ideas for events or activities.

Dr Lüpke mentioned a possible student made documentary film on multilingualism in Senegal which could be a great opportunity for a session at the Alumni Weekend. The Director of ERD will ask the Deputy Head of DAR to get in touch with Dr Lüpke (**action**).

The Galleries and Exhibitions Manager noted that the Brunei Gallery is closed on 28 and 29 June 2013 for the exhibitions change over. The Committee agreed that the Director of ERD would investigate whether it would be feasible to change the dates of the event so that alumni could visit the Brunei Gallery (**action**).

It was noted that the new weekly Staff Bulletin would feature a piece on the Alumni Weekend and the Head of Careers reported that recent alumni are increasingly involved in the life of the School via Alumni Networking events. In conjunction with Alumni Relations, Careers has already offered a number of events.

It was noted that DAR were currently looking at involving former members of staff in the alumni community in addition to former students. The definition of SOAS Alumni which was approved at the May 2012 meeting included former members of staff.

Members also mentioned development opportunities arising from former staff and the Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) reported that the trustees of the Simon Digby Trust have created a fellowship for work to be carried out on the manuscripts left to SOAS by Simon Digby.

## 5. Marketing and Student Recruitment

The Chair reported that the merger of Marketing and Student Recruitment (M&SR) had been completed following consultation in December 2012 /January 2013. The departments were now consolidated within ERD. It was noted that the Head of M&SR was working on the new Student Recruitment Strategy.

A number of initiatives to maximise the 2013 intake are being considered including a clearing strategy. The Committee also commended the idea of offering 'scholarships' as an incentive for alumni to study for Masters degrees at SOAS.

It was noted that there was an enormous amount of work to be done with regard to student recruitment and prioritising the most important activities first was crucial. An ambitious programme of visits by second year students to their former schools for recruitment purposes is planned for 2013/14.

Communication with offer holders is being reviewed to streamline timings and ensure that offer holders are kept properly informed in the period between accepting the offer and starting at SOAS. Some departments ran schemes where their students personally contacted offer holders to see if they had any queries. It was agreed that although this was a good initiative (which would undoubtedly have positively influenced offer holders' decisions to come to SOAS) any student volunteers should be properly trained. It was suggested that these volunteer students should be paid and trained in the same way as current Student Ambassadors were for events. The Head of M&SR is to take these initiatives forward (**action**).

Funding for postgraduate students was discussed and whether SOAS could be more proactive in making funding information more readily available. The Head of Careers informed members that he has been working with the Doctoral School with regard to the information provided and available to research students.

The Projects and Events Manager spoke to the report at Appendix C and gave an update on Insight Day (to be held on Monday 18 March). The aim is to build on last year's successful inaugural Insight Day and at present 320 offer holders and 270 parents have signed up which is an increase on the numbers at this stage last year. This year specific sessions would be put on for parents and members agreed that any marketing and visual materials would need to be more mainstream than if marketing to students alone. SOAS' high percentage of BME academics would also be clearly advertised.

Members discussed the potential visuals presented at the meeting which showcase the School's regional expertise and gave feedback.

An audit of Campus Signage had been carried out by an external wayfinding company (taking into account plans for the North Block of Senate House) to help SOAS improve and streamline its campus signage and it was agreed that there must be a structure in place to ensure that campus signage was reviewed on an on-going basis so that any necessary changes would be dealt with regularly.

The Chair commented that a great deal of work had gone into the new visual identity and thanked all those involved.

A discussion about SOAS' central and student recruitment Marketing functions took place. It was agreed that it was important for events organised by the student body not to become too

'corporate' and the level of support and advice would be discussed by the Students' Union and ERD (**action**).

## 6. Internal Communications/Media Relations

The Communications Manager spoke to the report at Appendix D and highlighted internal communications issues including the SOAS News Bulletin which was introduced in February 2013 (and averages 1000 visits to the website per month), Staff Q&As and the upcoming staff questionnaire relating to the plans for the North Block of Senate House (SOAS into Senate House).

It was agreed that media coaching for academic staff is a very welcome initiative and the Communications Manager would investigate how this could be most effectively provided with information/invitations to training sessions to be included in future SOAS News Bulletins (**action**).

Members agreed that reaction to the SOAS News Bulletin in particular and other communications initiatives was very positive and they had been well received.

The Students' Union Co-President for Finance and Communications reported that SOAS had won a place on University Challenge. This information is confidential.

The Director of LIS gave an update on the WebFirst project. Executive Board have approved the WebFirst initiative and a defined project plan is now being put together. This will include time limited staff positions to enhance and support existing resource.

The project's aims include the introduction of a user friendly intranet and improving the public facing website so that it is engaging and easy to navigate. SOAS' information architecture will be improved and there will be a move away from paper copies.

A WebFirst project board will be set up and will be part of the governance structure for a significant programme of systems and process improvements.

## 7. Update on Brunei Gallery activities from the Galleries and Exhibitions Manager and Brunei Gallery Advisory Panel (BGAP) Minutes

The minutes of the BGAP meetings held in November 2012 were **noted**.

The Galleries and Exhibitions Manager reported that recent visitor numbers were over 100,000 for the past three years comparing favourably with other university galleries. The Gallery's current exhibitions ('World Eco-Fiber and Textile Art' and 'Sacred London') had received favourable press reviews and the upcoming exhibitions '1000 Years of the Japanese Books: Treasures from the Tenri Central Library and 'Colours of Change' both open on 18 April. The UK Punjabi Heritage Association had approached SOAS with a view to partnering to tour the Golden Temple exhibition internationally but these plans have been put on hold for SOAS to concentrate on the exhibition for the centenary of the first world war in 2014 – 'Empire Faith and Kingship'.

## 8. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee **noted** that the date of the next meeting is 17 May 2013.