

SOAS

EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Friday 17 October 2014, Committee Room (116), 1.15pm - 3.15pm

AGENDA

Theme: Setting Centenary goals

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|------|---|---|
| I | <p>Membership, Terms of Reference and Conduct of Meetings
 To note: Membership and ToR for ERCC
 To note: Procedures for Conduct of Meetings</p> | <p>Appendix A
 Appendix B</p> |
| II | <p>Minutes
 To approve: minutes of the ERCC meeting held on 23 May 2014</p> | <p>Attached</p> |
| III | <p>Matters Arising</p> | |
| IV | <p>Research themes for Centenary
 To receive: Paper outlining five cross-SOAS research themes
 Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise)</p> | <p>Appendix C</p> |
| V | <p>Marketing and Student Recruitment
 To receive: Report – maximising SOAS’ offer to students
 Acting Head, Marketing and Student Recruitment
 Discussion: Improving engagement and conversion communication</p> | <p>Appendix D</p> |
| VI | <p>Development and Alumni Relations
 To receive: Report – Development and Alumni Relations: supporting
 SOAS’ ambitions
 Director of Development and Alumni Relations</p> | <p>Appendix E</p> |
| VII | <p>Communications and Media Relations
 To receive: Report – Communications: raising SOAS’ profile
 Presentation: REF communications
 Interim Head of Communications</p> | <p>Appendix F</p> |
| VIII | <p>External Relations Strategy 2014-17
 Presentation: Developing the External Relations Strategy for the
 Centenary (2014-17)
 Director of External Relations and Development</p> | |
| IX | <p>Brunei Gallery Advisory Panel (BGAP)
 To approve: Membership and ToR for BGAP
 To note: Minutes of BGAP meeting held in August 2014
 To receive: oral update on Brunei Gallery activities and future plans
 Galleries and Exhibitions and Manager</p> | <p>Appendix G
 Appendix H</p> |
| X | <p>Dates of next meetings – 2014/15 session
 To note: Friday 27 February, Committee Room (116) at 1.15pm
 Friday 22 May, Committee Room (116) at 1.15pm</p> | |

SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE****MINUTES**

Friday 17 October 2014 - 1.15pm Committee Room (116)

Chair: Mr Graeme Appleby (acting Chair: apologies received from Chair, Ms Laura Gibbs*)

Members: Professor Nadjie Al Ali*
Professor Somnath Batabyal
Professor Richard Black
Mr David Christmas*
Dr Christopher Gerteis*
Ms Philippa Hewett
Mr John Hollingworth
Mr Kabir Joshi
Ms Fiona McWilliams
Professor Anne Pauwels*
Mr John Robinson
Lord Michael Williams*
Professor Jae Hoon Yeon

In attendance: Ms Marva de la Coudray
Mr Matthew Gorman
Ms Katie Price
Ms Clare Rhodes
Mr Jamie Wells

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

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from David Christmas, Chris Gerteis, Laura Gibbs and Anne Pauwels.

2. Membership, Terms of Reference and Conduct of Meetings

The Membership and Terms of Reference and Procedure for the Conduct of Meetings for the Committee were **noted**.

3. ERCC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2014 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

The Action Points from the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2014 were discussed:-

- minute 3 – Marketing and Student Recruitment (MSR) had been asked to investigate and report on what proportion of all London students are SOAS students. The acting Head of

MSR reported that SOAS students accounted for 4.7% of all of London's 97,000 students studying subjects that SOAS offers.

- minute 7 – the acting Head of MSR reported that SOAS had won highly commended in the categories of Best Student Recruitment Campaign and Best Prospectus at the Higher Education Information Services Trust (HEIST) awards which took place in July 2014. The Chair congratulated the team on their achievements in raising SOAS Marketing's profile in this way.

The Director of Library and Information Services (LIS) gave an update on the Web First project. Phase 1 of the project had finished at the end of the 2013/14 academic year but the work had not been fully completed. There were problems with the Web platform and its underlying architecture. Work on rectifying these problems would begin very soon and should be completed by the end of this calendar year. A review was currently being undertaken to ascertain what the issues with Phase 1 were and what lessons could be learned for future projects.

There were no other matters arising.

5. Research Themes for the Centenary

The Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) spoke to the report at Appendix C, (which would be going to Academic Board shortly). The five research themes did not of course encapsulate all of the School's research but highlighted the main strategic priorities. It was agreed that the research themes will be very helpful in strengthening and promoting SOAS' identity. The SOAS China Institute and the South Asia Institute had drawn up some preliminary research themes and the School would be working very closely with the Institute heads to ensure that the Institutes' objectives are closely aligned with the research themes for the centenary.

6. Marketing and Student Recruitment

The acting Head of MSR spoke to the report at Appendix D.

While application numbers had increased there had been a deterioration in conversion rates from 27% in 2013 to 21% in 2014. In terms of the undergraduate (UG) market there has been increased competition with other institutions introducing unconditional offers and scholarship/bursaries to stimulate conversion.

With regard to post-graduate (PG) applications there had not been the usual late surge of applications and MSR are reviewing the applications to pinpoint why this is. MSR and Admissions are working with academic departments on ways that SOAS can compete effectively.

Recruitment targets need to be increased by 16%. This will be addressed through the following measures:-

1. promotion of the 'Meet the World at SOAS' campaign this year to raise awareness of SOAS;
2. improving conversion rates – to achieve this MSR is:-
 - working closely with Admissions on the START project (Student Recruitment and Admissions improvement project);
 - further embedding the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) to enable much improved and automated communications to be sent to applicants;
 - looking at tailored offers (in conjunction with Widening Participation);
 - looking at making unconditional offers to outstanding applicants;
 - improving conversion communications; and
 - introducing Saturday open days.

The Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) congratulated MSR on the success of the recent clearing campaign. Entry grades had been reduced by one to two grades but the overall numbers of students was still under target. It was agreed that conversion activities were a priority for the

whole School and MSR and Admissions will work even more closely with academic departments.

Members discussed the School's entry requirements. An unconditional offer policy has been drawn up by Admissions setting out the basis on which SOAS will make an unconditional offer. The committee agreed that there should be a degree of flexibility in making unconditional offers.

It was agreed that it would be very helpful for academic staff to see a plan/calendar of student recruitment events eg Open days and Insight Days in advance so they know when their input may be required. The acting Head of MSR shall bring this plan to the next meeting (**action**).

Members discussed the possibility the School having a guaranteed accommodation policy for first year students coming from outside the M25 area. It was agreed that this was a matter for the Director of Student and Registry Services and it would be taken up by him and he would report back at the next meeting (**action**).

7. Development and Alumni Relations

The Director of Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) spoke to the report at Appendix E.

It was noted that:-

- Total pledged income for 2013/14 was £22.7million and cash income received (ie money 'in the bank') was £15 million;
- It was good to note that there were many other major donors in addition to the Alphawood Foundation (which had donated £20million in 2013);
- legacy fundraising had been exceptional and had brought in just over £465,000 in 2013/14 and funds will be further boosted by two potential legacy gifts which will be reported on in due course;
- the Alumni and Friends Fund will be a focus for 2014/15 and one important aim is to increase alumni giving, there had however been an increase in staff giving which was a very positive development;
- the definition of Alumni has been redefined to '*former students who have completed a degree programme at the School, and/or former students who have studied with SOAS for a term of teaching...and for whom we hold a valid email and/or postal address and have not opted out of receiving communications*'; and
- it was agreed that Careers and DAR should work very closely together going forward to involve alumni in mentoring and work placement schemes.

8. Communications/Media Relations

The interim Head of Communications spoke to the report at Appendix F.

The School's social media channels are working well and internal communications is very much a current focus – more staff are reading the weekly Staff News Bulletin and notice boards are updated regularly. A student news bulletin, '@SOAS', had been introduced – this was the first time that the School had reached out to students with a specific regular bulletin and the early signs are that it is being received well. Another new initiative – termly open meetings for Professional Services and Faculty Administrative staff held by the Registrar has been introduced and the first such meeting was held on 18 October.

Also highlighted was the Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise)'s research blog and the positive comments received in relation to the SHNB hoardings and foyer messaging.

A brief presentation on communications for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) was given. The Communications team is working closely with Research and Enterprise and a

communications plan is being put in place; which includes informing department heads (confidentially) of their results before the overall results are released on 18 December.

9. External Relations Strategy 2014-17 and Centenary Celebrations

The Director of External Relations and Development (ERD) reported that ERD is drafting the External Relations Strategy 2014/17 in light of the Centenary Objectives, which are:-

1. Profile raising – in the UK as well as our key regions (of expertise and in key territories eg USA)
2. Building a sense of community – amongst the whole SOAS community: staff and former staff, students and alumni, honorary members and volunteers, partners; and
3. Fundraising to support core SOAS aims and projects.

Members discussed the possible reasons for denoting certain territories as key SOAS territories. Such reasons could include the fact that they encompass SOAS areas of expertise and that they are key areas for student recruitment and fundraising.

Some of the potential activities to support the objective of building sense of SOAS community were discussed. The Centenary Planning Group will consider these activities which include the launch of Senate House North Block and a centenary Scholarships reception and a SOAS timeline to help tell the SOAS story to a worldwide audience as well as SOAS' internal community.

There will also be a celebratory event for staff sometime in the academic year 2016/17.

10. Brunei Gallery Advisory Panel (BGAP) Membership and Terms of Reference and Minutes Update on Brunei Gallery activities from the Galleries and Exhibitions Manager

The Membership and Terms of Reference for the BGAP were **approved**.

The minutes of the BGAP meetings held in July 2014 were **noted**.

The Galleries and Exhibitions Manager reported that:-

- the *Rainbow behind the Black* exhibition which had been due to open in January 2015 has been cancelled and replaced with *Persia Illustrata: Maps and Views of Persia's History* – and the Galleries and Exhibitions Manager is working very closely with the LMEI on this exhibition;
- the *Empire Faith and Kinship: The Sikhs and the Great War* exhibition had been hugely successful – its run was extended to 28 September to catch a number of School groups and final visitor figures are 23,000
- this exhibition contributed to the Brunei Gallery's best ever year to date with over 64,000 visitors (not including events);
- the issue of loans for the *Missionaries and Idols in Polynesia* (due to run from July to September 2015) has been largely resolved and there is a good chance that David Attenborough may agree to open the exhibition;
- the current project to gather together a full complement former Directors' portraits is progressing well; all portraits have been produced and when glazed and framed will be hung in the Committee Room (116) in 2015; and
- as a member of the Museum Mile group SOAS was approached by Fox Promotions regarding the forthcoming film *Night at the Museum 3: Secret of the Tomb* (which was filmed at the British Museum). To celebrate the release of the film the 12 museums and galleries from Museum Mile are holding promotional events with the Brunei Gallery hosting various

family friendly events in October half term including a film screening. The publicity/partnership will be paid for by Fox Promotions.

The Director of ERD and the Galleries and Exhibitions Manager agreed to meet to explore ways in which the School can be promoted to visitors to the Brunei Gallery.

In response to a question from the Director of DAR the valuation of donated objects (such as works of art - ie gifts in kind) was discussed. Any gift received by the Brunei Gallery is given an approximate valuation for SOAS' insurance purposes and is added to the School's insurance policy.

The Director of Finance and Planning confirmed that the School's heritage assets over a certain value (around £20,000) are valued. These valuations need to be taken into account so that SOAS has an accurate record of all donations received by the School and can ensure appropriate levels of stewardship and that gifts are recorded appropriately. In addition, SOAS is taking part in an annual benchmarking survey of philanthropic donations, the Ross-CASE Survey and this data will be needed to answer such surveys.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee **noted** that the date of the next meeting is Friday 27 February 2015.