

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009 at 1.15pm in Room 116

**Chair:** Ms Sharon Page

**Members:** Professor Michael Hutt\*  
Professor Graham Furniss\*  
Dr Elizabeth Moore  
Dr Nadjie Al-Ali\*  
Professor Gilbert Achcar  
Professor Werner Menski  
Mr Nick Butler  
Ms Fiona McWilliams  
Mr Michael Sherry  
Ms Sue Young  
Mr Alan Parker\*  
Mr Mpegwa Mwakangata\*

**In attendance:** Ms Dzidra Stipnieks, Ms Jamie Bruce

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

**21 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2008 were **APPROVED**. There was some discussion regarding action points, in particular encouraging academic colleagues to engage with the media and help with student recruitment activities when they travel overseas.

**22 Brunei Advisory Panel**

The Committee **NOTED** the minutes of Brunei Advisory Panel meeting held in January.

Committee members discussed the approval process for exhibitions in areas of the Brunei Gallery building other than the galleries. In particular concerns were raised over the suitability of some exhibitions eg the recent MoD exhibition in the Brunei Suite. It was **AGREED** that the Exhibitions Officer should be consulted about all exhibition proposals whether, or not they are in gallery spaces.

**23 Departmental updates**

The Committee received written reports from Heads of Department on progress regarding action points in the External Relations Strategy. Heads of Department answered questions on a range of issues including the development of an employability strategy, the implementation of the promotional plan, the impact of the current economic climate on student recruitment and fundraising. It was **AGREED** that more could be done to encourage academic colleagues to support student recruitment activity when they travel overseas.

**24 Graduates' Attributes**

The Committee received a paper from the Head of College Careers Service on Graduates' Attributes. There was a discussion about the uniqueness of SOAS graduates and their attractiveness to potential employers. It was **AGREED** that research into graduates' attributes should be included as part of the market research project.

**25 External Relations Strategy – priorities and resource implications**

The Committee discussed the implications of the agreed external relations priorities on resources, particularly given the projected deficit. Heads of Professional Services will have an opportunity to ask for additional resource at an Away Day in February. It was **AGREED** that section heads should review the External Relations Strategy in light of agreed priorities and feedback comments on resource implications to the Committee Secretary.

**26 External Profile**

Raising the School's external profile has been identified as a key priority. The Committee felt that, on balance, the School has recently received more negative publicity than good. This had often led to negative perceptions of SOAS with key stakeholders. Moreover, the negative coverage was regularly generated from within the School community. The Committee discussed the emergence of blogs and other social sites as a means of communicating news and information in contrast to traditional outlets. Various measures were being taken in order to address these changes and raise the School's profile including; refocusing and resourcing of the communications team, the development of a research database and regular monitoring of blogs and social sites. It was **AGREED** that the Committee would discuss this issue further at its next meeting and in particular, agree a strategy for better management of the School's reputation. It was also **AGREED** that help and advice would be sought from Brunswick Consultants.

**27 Dates of Meetings 2008/09**

The Committee **NOTED** the date of the next meeting:

1.15pm on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2009 in Room 116

**Action points**

**Minute 23**

NB, MS and SP to contact academic colleagues to encourage them to help with student recruitment and marketing activity.

**Minute 24**

MS and SY to meet re Graduates' Attributes being factored into the market research project.

**Minute 25**

Departmental heads to review External Relations Strategy in light of agreed priorities and feedback comments to the Committee Secretary.

**Minute 26**

MS, FM and JB to set up meeting with Brunswick Consultants.

There were no reserved minutes.