

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES

EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Friday 26 February 2010 1.15pm – 3.15pm Room 116

AGENDA

- I Minutes**
To **approve**: Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2009 and minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 2 December 2009 [Attached]
- II Matters Arising**
- III Brunei Gallery Advisory Panel**
To **note**: Minutes of the Brunei Gallery Advisory Panel meeting held 10 February 2010 [Attached]
- IV Proposed New Terms of Reference**
To **receive**: Oral update on Committee Review process from Director of External Relations & Development
- V Kingston City Group Audit of Marketing & Branding**
To **receive**: Oral update from Director of External Relations & Development
- VI Theme for ERC meetings**
To **approve**: Friday 26 February: Reputation and credentials
Tuesday 25 May: Building supporter engagement
- VII External Relations Strategy**
To **receive**: Updated External Relations Strategy [Appendix A]
- VIII Internal Communications Review**
To **receive**: Internal Communications Action Plan from Communications Manager [Appendix B]
- IX Reputation and Credentials Review (formerly Brand Review)**
To **receive**: Report from the Reputation and Credentials Review Working Group [Appendix C]
- X Date of meetings 2010**
To **note**: 1.15pm Tuesday 25 May 2010 Room 116
- XI 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

EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Friday 26 February at 1.15pm in Room 116

- Chair:** Ms Sally Neocosmos
- Members:** Professor Gilbert Achcar
Mr Nick Butler
Professor Rachel Dwyer
Professor Graham Furniss
Professor Mike Hutt
Mr Sebilio Uribe*
Ms Fiona McWilliams
Professor Werner Menski
Professor Tim Screech *
Mr Michael Sherry
Ms Elizabeth Wright*
Ms Sue Young
- In attendance:** Ms Debbie Adeusi
Ms Marva De La Coudray
Ms Johannah Flaherty
Mr John Hollingworth
Ms Katie Nugent

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

11 Minutes

- (i) The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November were **approved** subject to revision of Minute 3 (i), paragraph two – '*Professor of South Asian Studies*' should read '*Professor of South Asian Laws*'.
- (ii) The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 3 December 2009 were **approved**.

12 Matters Arising

Chair asked for an update on action points from 3 November ERC meeting:

- 2 The Head of Marketing reported that note cards had been produced and he encouraged members to purchase them. He also informed members that prints were being trialled and said he would report on progress at the next ERC meeting (**action**).
- 3 The Director of ER&D (Director of ER&D) informed members that the Committee Review is still in process and that the Secretariat Manager is preparing a document which will include recommendations for the new session.
- 5 The Head of Marketing informed members that he has **agreed** with the Head of Planning that the SOAS recruitment cycle will be factored into the planning timetable. He had also met with the Director of Academic Development, who **agreed** that the

Head of Student Recruitment or the Head of Marketing should attend the Joint Faculty Programme Panel, as well as the Faculty Management Group meetings they currently attend.

It was noted that work was in hand to enable the display of more than one year's course information on the website.

It was noted that a Student Recruitment operational business plan was being drafted to run alongside the Student Administration & Support Strategy.

The Head of Student Recruitment was asked to report back to the next meeting on his section's current activities and plans (**action**). The Chair commented that any overlaps between Student Recruitment activities/services and the Marketing effort should be factored into a detailed analysis in order to make the School's marketing effort as coherent as possible. The Director of ER&D reported that the activities of Student Recruitment and Marketing were being considered to see where they might be streamlined or improved through better coordination between the two departments.

It was reported that from 22 February 2010 HEIs have to provide electronic CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance to Study) to UKBA who then issue the applicant with a number. This had led to some difficulties in some countries but SOAS was making it as easy as possible for students to apply.

- 8 The Head of Marketing had liaised with the Widening Participation Co-ordinator and the Diversity Advisor and would report back to the ERC when the findings of this research were available (**action**).

There was one matter arising from 2 December ERC meeting that would not be covered later in the meeting:

- 6 The Director of ER&D confirmed that the Director of Library & Information Services had approved the proposal to change SOAS email addresses to [initial.surname] and that the change could be carried out by the IT department. It was **agreed** that this should go ahead (**action**).

13. Brunei Gallery Advisory Panel

The minutes of the BGAP meeting held on 10 February 2010 were **noted** and the Exhibitions Officer gave members an update on upcoming exhibitions.

14. Proposed new Terms of Reference

This had been discussed under Matters Arising, point 3.

15. Kingston City Group Audit of Marketing & Branding

The Director of ER&D gave an oral progress report on the action plan. She stated that it was largely on track with the exception of the timing of the Directorate restructure, which had been deferred slightly in order to take up opportunities for some quick improvements in line with the strategy and in consultation with other Directorate heads. A new restructuring proposal was to be submitted to EB in due course.

16. Themes for ERC meetings

The Director of ER&D explained the reasoning behind the proposed theme for this meeting (Reputation & Credentials) and the next (Building Supporter Engagement).

The Chair asked members for their views and it was agreed that the theme for the next ERC meeting should be 'Building Support Engagement' and that the Head of DARO and Alumni Relations Manager should be invited to present a report on donor and alumni engagement including the results of SOAS' first ever telephone campaign, the aims of which are to attract 400 new donors, update data and encourage engagement **(action)**.

The Director of ER&D asked members for ideas for the first meeting of the 2010/11 session and suggested for their approval 'Employer Engagement'. This would entail Careers, Widening Participation, School of Law, Development & Alumni and many others working together to establish a School-wide understanding of key corporate relationships. It was agreed that the Directors of Academic Development and the Research and Enterprise Office should also be involved and that NGOs should also be considered.

17. External Relations Strategy

The Chair asked the Director of ER&D to highlight parts of the strategy that had altered since the last meeting and then to invite comments from members.

The Director of ER&D thanked members for their helpful comments to date and told them that she would like to come away from the meeting able to recommend the strategy for consideration at the next Resources & Planning Committee meeting. She reported the addition of an executive summary, the inclusion of agreed performance indicators, and some presentational changes for clarity. It was noted that members of the ER&D team were happy to be judged on their performance and there was an appetite to exceed targets if possible.

The Chair led members through the strategy section by section and the following points were noted in discussion:

- The importance of league tables (notwithstanding the vagaries surrounding their construction) and the need for SOAS to present a consistent set of messages and core values to mitigate the variations between league tables
- The Head of Student Recruitment to provide the Head of Planning with a copy of a HEFCE report on PIs **(action)**
- The removal of the specific aim for SOAS to be in the top 50 institutions worldwide now that the methodology ruled this out
- Discussions to take place with the Director and Principal about refreshing the Vision and Strategy document at this stage in the planning cycle **(action)**
- The need for ER&D staff to work collaboratively with colleagues throughout the School
- The importance of efforts to diversify income streams and build our donor support base
- Ongoing lobbying by sector groups in an attempt to mitigate the dominance of STEM subjects in relation to current funding policy
- The relatively small size of the communications team who were frequently diverted from proactive media work by the need to react to adverse publicity. (Members of the team were congratulated on the way they had handled media enquiries in the wake of the Christmas Day incident when the spotlight had fallen on all universities in London).
- Support for the creation of a list of academic 'media experts' who would be readily available for comment when the School was approached; it was noted that media training would be provided
- The growing use of Twitter and Facebook etc discussions among students which would not be moderated unless defamatory or inaccurate content was published
- The need to review the delivery of information to staff in the School now that the weekly information sheets had been stopped in favour of electronic communication

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of ER&D confirmed that while the ambitious strategy was giving rise to a formidable workload for her teams, they were fully committed to the strategy and its delivery.

It was agreed to **recommend** the External Relations Strategy to the Resources & Planning Committee (**action**).

18. Internal Communications Review

The Communications Manager gave members the background to the proposed review which will consist of an audit of the School's current internal communications procedures and recommend improvements based on the needs and comments of the School community. The review would in turn inform a new Internal Communications Strategy. An Internal Communications Working Group representing a wide range of staff had been set up to oversee the review and development of the IICS.

Various points were raised in discussion which will be addressed by the Communications Manager:

- The need for a space audit in the School
- Concerns about potential delay in relaunching the intranet
- Whether someone from Student and Registry Services could join the working group (agreed – for **action**)
- The need to ensure that colleagues who work away from the campus were not excluded
- The need to coordinate the communications audit with the forthcoming Staff Survey

The Chair asked the Communications Manager to report on progress at the next meeting (**action**).

19. Reputation and Credentials Review

The Head of Marketing explained that this title was considered more appropriate than 'brand review' in a university. He emphasised the importance of the review to the SOAS Vision & Strategy, Faculty Plans and future success of the School and asked members for their support and participation.

The Events Manager showed some visual examples of SOAS public spaces and a selection of SOAS publications which illustrated current difficulties with the visual brand. Caution was urged in terms of making everything too 'glossy' and detracting from the slightly chaotic atmosphere and 'non-glossiness' of SOAS which students in particular hold in great affection.

The Dean of Faculty of Languages & Culture emphasised the need to retain the possibility for multiple different interpretations of SOAS as a place and the Director of ER&D confirmed that this was exactly what the reputation and credentials review is all about.

The Chair emphasised the need to explain the purpose of the review very carefully to colleagues in the School in order to avoid undue cynicism about 'branding' in an academic institution.

It was noted that the search for an agency to contribute to the work had started and that the support of EB and the Governing Body would be key to the success of the project.

The Chair thanked the Head of Marketing, Communications Manager and Events Manager for their presentation and asked that progress on the project be reported at each ERC meeting.

20. AOB

There was no other business.

21. Date of next meeting 2010

The Committee **noted** the date of the next meeting:
1.15pm on Tuesday 25 May in Room 116