

**SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES  
STUDENT RECRUITMENT SUB-COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

Thursday, 28 October 2004

Professor Peter Robb (Chair)

Professor Stephen Chan  
Professor Tom Tomlinson  
Mr Michael Sherry  
Mr Terry Harvey  
Ms Lina Hatami

Professor Michael Hutt  
Ms Lesley Waldron  
Mr Andrew Keeble\*  
Mrs Sue Yates  
Ms Kavita Meelu\*

Those marked with an asterisk were unable to attend.

In attendance: Mr Nilanjan Sarkar

**1. Minutes of the Meeting of 11.3.2004**

The Minutes of the meeting were confirmed as accurate and passed.

**2. Matters Arising**

- a. Deposits (minute II):** The matter of introducing a Deposit Scheme for postgraduate applicants who have received an unconditional offer was discussed. Some departments at SOAS already ask for deposits. Lesley Waldron mentioned the benefits of the Deposit Scheme for obtaining visas [for overseas students], as also a security and assurance for both parties. With regards to introducing it for the 2005 cycle, it was suggested that a voluntary scheme for deposits should be investigated and compulsory deposits for 2006 would be considered and discussed at a later date

**Action:** Deposits for postgraduate courses to be implemented for 2006 entry.

- b. English Language Requirements (minute VIII):** English Language Requirements for overseas students was discussed, to clarify position with regards to exemptions. It was felt that a vetting system should be introduced at the Admissions stage. However, there seemed to be a lack of clarity about 'anomaly cases'. Tom Tomlinson suggested that students with a Masters degree from a UK university should not be asked for English language scores; Stephen Chan concurred, adding that this led to a time lapse for the applicants. With regards to overseas students, Peter Robb suggested that waivers be used with discretion by Admissions Tutors/Supervisors, on the understanding that overseas applicants from good universities abroad did not need to meet these requirements. Michael Hutt suggested that a better database of foreign universities would be useful to make such decisions, though some concerns were raised about it being possibly discriminatory. A copy of

the existing conditions of waiver was to be circulated at the next meeting, and changes [if required] were to be discussed.

It was AGREED that a representative from IFCELS would visit the Registry once a week [with immediate effect] in the current year to help with the vetting of admissions forms with regards to English language requirements.

**Action:** English Language waiver rule to be recirculated

### **3. Membership of SRAG**

The membership of RAG was APPROVED with the amendment that the Head of IFCELS would join the Group. It was AGREED that the Dean of Arts and Humanities would Chair the Group.

### **4. Enrolment 2004**

The implications of the enrolment of the previous year [entry 2004] was discussed. It was AGREED that the process of 'conversion' [from applications to offers] needed to be improved, and made faster. It was NOTED being the first to make an offer was important, particularly for overseas students particularly as this affects their decision making process as well as access to visas and funding. Admissions tutors were to be urged to turn back applications as soon as possible, and Tom Tomlinson suggested that they should be sent a reminder after one week.

The Academic Registrar noted that although the conversion rate was disappointing this year, the trend in applications and enrolments was still on the rise, and that the current intake is 30% more than the intake in 1999/2000.

The question of housing for overseas students was also discussed. It was suggested that many applicants had not received their accommodation packs from Shaftesbury Housing in time, and by the time they applied in August most places were gone.  
**Action:** Head of Student Recruitment and Academic Registrar to continue discussions with Shaftesbury Housing to improve situation.

**Action:** Head of Student Recruitment to write a report on factors affecting to the recruitment and admissions procedures, to be submitted before 23 November 2004 in time for Governing Body.

The difficulties of applying for a visa were discussed. It was proposed that more details information on applying for visas is sent out with every offer to international.  
**Action:** Head of Student Recruitment and Registry to devise information on visas to be included with offers.

### **5. SUMS Proposal**

A paper at Appendix D outlines the main recommendation of the SUMS report, and that a rolling target date of September 2005 for implementation was noted.

The Interim Report submitted by Tim Rogers on Recruitment and Admissions was discussed which upheld an overall web-first policy. The Committee AGREED that a move towards a web-first policy would be beneficial.

## **6. Postgraduate Admissions**

Following from discussions outlined above [see 2(b) and 4 above], it was agreed that the pace of conversion of applications needed to be quickened. The Dean of Arts and Humanities suggested decision making on applicants with standard qualifications could be devolved to Registry; Terry Harvey drew attention to the lack of resources, trained and experienced staff for this to be instituted immediately.

With regards to Area Studies, it was discussed that admissions procedures should be reviewed especially for the benefit of overseas applicants.

Terry Harvey reported that applications via The Princeton Review on-line application system was underway, and till date the School had received 3 applications, and a few others were on the way, since the system allowed applications to be tracked before being submitted. However, the question of incomplete applications was also discussed, since the nature of the Princeton Review applications procedure entails that the various supporting documents come in at different times.

**Action:** Academic Registrar and Head of Student Recruitment to explore ways of streamlining postgraduate application process.

## **7. OFFA and Access Implications**

The implications of OFFA and Access Agreements were discussed by the Committee. It was proposed that there would be an increase in resources for Widening Participation activity was discussed. The Dean of Arts and Humanities proposed that SOAS develop a positive strategy for Widening Participation with a focus on reaching out diasporic communities particularly recent arrivals, who have less access to education and resources.

Further developments were to be reported to this Committee in due course.

**Action:** RAG to work on the detail of Access Agreement and financial implications.

## **8. Partnerships**

The paper at Appendix F was noted. Further developments in the proposed activity were to be reported to the Committee in due course. It was stressed that extreme caution needed to be taken in developing partnerships.

**Action:** Head of Student Recruitment and Education Liaison Officer to further develop partnerships strategy to report at next Committee meeting

## **9. Any other business**

The Student's Representative raised a few issues of concern to the students:

- a. **Fees:** Whether or not the proposed fee increase [starting 2006] would affect overseas student or not. It was assured that this was applicable only to home students, whatever the policy that the School may implement.
- b. **Eligibility and employment:** It was suggested that some students were concerned that low eligibility criteria for admission in some courses may be a hindrance for them in the employment sector. The point was noted, though Peter Robb stressed that there had been no definite reporting of such cases till date.
- c. **Facilities:** The committee noted student complaints that student facilities were inadequate, especially computing resources. They were assured that this was a matter that the School was very well aware of and was trying to alleviate [building of the Research Centre and the newly approved library expansions were cited]. The students did however appreciate the positive staff: student ratio, it was reported.

The date of the next meeting of the Committee will be on 24 February 2005, at 9 am in Room 100.

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