

SOAS
Faculty of Law and Social Sciences
FACULTY BOARD

27 November 2007

MINUTES

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|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Elva Bova (PG student rep) | Dr Stephen Hopgood |
| Prof Christopher Cramer * | Dr Tat Yan Kong |
| Professor Matthew Craven (Chair) | Dr Costas Lapavitsas |
| Mr Luke Dillon ** | Prof Machiko Nissanke |
| Mr Ian Edge | Mubasher Rasul (UG student rep) ** |
| Mr Norman Flynn ** | Ms Sonja Ruehl |
| Dr Jane Harrigan | Dr Alfredo Saad Filho |
| Prof Laurence Harris | Dr Lynn Welchman * |

In attendance: Mrs Carolyn Heath (Secretary)
Dan Plesch (CISD)
Mrs Barbara Spina *

Those members whose names are marked with an asterisk were unable to be present: (*) gave apologies, (**) were absent.

18 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

18.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2007 were APPROVED as an accurate record.

19 MATTERS ARISING

19.1 Staff Survey (minute 3.2.1 refers)

19.1.1 It was NOTED that HR have produced an Executive Summary showing the key issues arising from the Staff Survey. One such issue for L&SS was identified as the academic promotions procedure – the lack of transparency, clarity and understanding regarding the process and policy.

19.1.2 The following points were confirmed about academic promotions:

- There is no faculty or school quota for promotions
- No ranking is undertaken by the Faculty Promotions Committee
- All first-time applications are not rejected automatically
- The political culture of the process has changed incrementally but significantly over the last few years – the aim is that it is a merit-based system based on transparent criteria.

19.1.3 It was NOTED that the relationship between the academic promotions procedure and devolved budgets is yet to be clarified.

19.2 Website (minute 4.1 refers)

19.2.1 It was NOTED that the new School website went live on the 27 November as scheduled – departments were strongly encouraged to continue updating the website as much of the information is still incorrect / out of date.

- 19.2.2 The importance of the approval process was NOTED i.e. that this does not become an unnecessary bottle-neck.
- 19.3 Peer Observation of Teaching
- 19.3.1 The Dean encouraged Heads of Department to encourage staff to pair up and proceed with the agreed procedure, and that the co-operation of all staff was appreciated.
- 19.4 Reports from Faculty Centres (minute 12.2 refers)
- 19.4.1 It was NOTED that the report from CIMEL (Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law) will be submitted shortly.

20 IFCELS

- 20.1 The Head of IFCELS, Sue Yates, attended for this agenda item. It was NOTED that she had been invited to discuss the suitability of the contents of the foundation programme re the faculty's UG and PG programmes, and the entry requirements for the foundation programmes – within the context of a school-wide discussion of the possibility of IFCELS making combined offers which include a guaranteed faculty place on successful completion of the foundation programme.
- 20.2 It was NOTED that when IFCELS was first set up, it was clear that all the teaching could not be provided by SOAS staff, but that a SOAS convenor would be in place for each course/subject area – to be involved in the examining, moderating, supervising ISPs etc. Approximately 80-85% of IFCELS courses are now operated in this way.
- 20.3 It was NOTED that the entry requirements for the UG Foundation programmes match the UCAS point requirements for the relevant degree programme – and that the pass marks (for entry to the degree programme) are 65% average for Law and Politics, 60% for all others. It was NOTED that an A level examiner has recently been appointed as a Visiting Examiner to assist with issues of parity.
- 20.4 It was NOTED by Economics that although the A level entry grades have been increased recently, those from the IFCELS Foundation programme have not. This is proposed to be raised to 67% (average).
- 20.5 It was NOTED that there are currently 130 students on the UG Foundation programme – the aspiration is that 65% of students should progress to SOAS programmes. Faculty Board NOTED the serious implications of this aspiration for the Faculty – requiring either diluting the MA/MSc standards or increasing the IFCELS standards.
- 20.6 It was AGREED that the content of the PG Foundation programmes could be improved regarding their content being more directed towards the Faculty's MA/MSc programmes.
- 20.7 Concern was NOTED regarding replication of the Graduate Diploma in Economics – it was AGREED that the Economics Department need to agree pre-requisites with Sue Yates in order that the requirements be better understood.
- 20.8 IFCELS NOTED that they do their best to ensure that students meet the entry requirements for both the PG Foundation and for their desired MA/MSc programme. However it was also NOTED that the English language requirements are lower for IFCELS students (5.5 IELTS compared to 6.0 standard for PG courses).
- 20.9 It was AGREED that IFCELS should take the initiative to liaise with PG Admissions

Tutors regarding these issues – it was also NOTED that the a useful role of IFCELS would be to recruit students for other faculties (rather than L&SS where there are already very high application/enrolment rates from external applicants).

20.10 Faculty Board thanked Sue for attending and for the useful discussion.

21 INTERFACE

21.1 Sue Yates, Director of Interface, stayed for this item. Interface is a team of Business Development Managers facilitating knowledge transfer in the form of consultancy, briefings, short courses etc. The proposal was NOTED that each BDM ‘face’ one of the faculties to enable closer engagement with departments. The aim is that this would take the onus of organising, pricing and selling these activities/events.

21.2 It was AGREED that a further discussion/meeting be held at FMG.

22 DEAN’S REPORT

22.1 Faculty Strategic Plan

22.1.1 It was NOTED that new academic and administrative appointments for 2008/9 were recently approved by Governing Body as follows:

CISD:

- 0.5 Lecturer

Development Studies:

- Lecturer
- [+Lecturer already approved for April 08 start]

DeFiMS:

- Professor (subject to successful bid for ASNs for UG programme)
- Lecturer (subject to successful bid for ASNs for UG programme)

Economics:

- Senior Lecturer in Japanese Economics (subject to successful bid for 0.5 funding for 3 years from Japan Foundation)

Law:

- Senior Lecturer
- Lecturer

Politics:

- Lecturer in Chinese Politics

Faculty Office:

- Student Support Office:
 - Assistant Faculty Officer
 - 1.5 x Faculty Officers (1 is subject to successful bid for ASNs for DeFiMS UG programme)
- Academic Support Office:
 - 2 x Faculty Officers

- 22.1.2 It was AGREED that an amended Faculty Plan be circulated to Heads of Department, containing the agreed posts/resources and recruitment targets.
- 22.1.3 Faculty Board welcomed the change in process, but also NOTED their concern regarding the continued caution re strategic investments – Faculty Board AGREED that there is a need for such investments in the future to facilitate increases in students and the introduction of new programmes.
- 22.2 Resource Allocation Model
- 22.2.1 The importance of limiting/reducing the cross-subsidies to the other faculties was NOTED, otherwise there will be no incentive for L&SS to continually increase our student numbers and surplus.
- 22.2.2 However it was NOTED that the concern is not that there is a cross-subsidy at all (which may always be inevitable for L&C, acknowledging the importance of all subject areas at SOAS) but that it should be controlled in order to maximise the profitability of all areas of the School.
- 22.2.3 It was NOTED that two groups have been set up to develop the RAM – one to consider the operational principles (on which the Dean is a member) and a technical sub-group to examine the working details (on which Alfredo Saad Filho and Carolyn Heath represent the Faculty). It is planned that the RAM will be implemented from April 2008.
- 22.3 Workload Models
- 22.3.1 It was NOTED that a workload model is currently being piloted by A&H. The Dean was not impressed with its complexity and its inability to account for the variations across the school. However, it was NOTED that HR are concerned that there is equity in the models used. Faculty Board was therefore concerned that if the A&H model is felt to be successful that it will be rolled-out to the other faculties.
- 22.3.2 It was AGREED that we need a model which is a transparent description of teaching/roles etc, without making quantitative comparisons between these. The aim is to equalise workloads within departments and to enable transparent information, assisting Heads of Department.
- 22.3.3 It was NOTED that implementation of a model may be difficult in some departments, but that usefully presented data will help to overcome this.
- 22.3.4 It was AGREED that draft model(s) be drawn up for comment at the next meeting.

23 REPORT FROM ASSOCIATE DEAN (LEARNING AND TEACHING)

- 23.1 Summary Report for UG Programme Reviews
- 23.1.1 It was NOTED that there had been ongoing problems this year getting reports from some Visiting Examiners – and that after requests from Exams, Faculty Office and Exam Board Chairs, Registry had been asked to generate letters to be sent from Paul Webley.
- 23.1.2 Key points raised within the summary:
- Difficulty of teaching floaters in departments where the ‘home’ students have high entry requirements. It was NOTED that it may be appropriate & useful to set pre-requisites in these cases.
 - Reminder that where UG and PG students are co-taught in lectures they must be separately taught in tutorials/seminars.

- Previous comments from Visiting Examiners regarding the positive treatment of marginal candidates had led to new regulations to remove discretion for Exam Boards to amend such marks – but it was NOTED that the implementation of these new guidelines had caused difficulties in some of the recent PG Exam Boards. Associate Dean to speak with Marcus Cerny to clarify.

23.1.3 It was NOTED that there is a need for improvements to the candidate profiles.

23.1.4 A suggestion was NOTED that the dissertation marking deadline be brought forward to allow more time to identify scripts to be sent to the Visiting Examiners and for the consideration of the completed profiles prior to the Exam Board meetings. Faculty Administrator & Student Support Team Leader to consider this.

23.2 Assessment Guidelines for PG Students

23.2.1 It was NOTED that L&TQC have requested school-wide assessment guidelines for PG students. However FLTC rejected a proposal received from A&H, particularly regarding points (c) and (d) on the grounds that assessors should ‘see through’ presentational issues and assess work according to the constructed argument / content. It was felt to be impractical (and unfair to other students) and felt that the support offered by LTU and word processors should be sufficient.

23.3 JYA Student Assessment

23.3.1 The proposal that JYA terms 2&3 students should do the same assessment as full-year students was NOTED.

23.3.2 Faculty Board had a long discussion regarding the pros and cons of this proposal, and agreed to defer the item to the next meeting after FLTC have been able to consider it and make recommendations.

23.4 Library Teaching Collection

23.4.1 Concern was NOTED regarding the importance of the teaching collection.

23.5 Timetable

23.5.1 It was NOTED that FLTC had received an interim report from the LTU with the following key points:

- Consideration is being given to rolling-over tutorial arrangements from the previous year (as with lectures)
- Noted the importance of departments/courses which under-recruit being prompted/required to release rooms, to allow space for those who have over-recruited.

23.6 Electronic Assignment Submission

23.6.1 It was NOTED that a suggestion was noted (from Economics) at FLTC of students being required to submit an electronic copy of their essays in addition to the hard copies. The initial aim of this would be to enable essays to be subjected to checks through plagiarism software in cases of concern. It was NOTED that a meeting is scheduled between LTU, Jane Harrigan and Carolyn Heath, and that they would report back to the next FLTC and Faculty Board.

24 REPORT FROM ASSOCIATE DEAN (RESEARCH)

24.1 Internal Research Allocation

24.1.1 It was NOTED that the increase to £750 for 07/08 was very welcomed. Money is also

still available to PhD students for conferences and language training.

24.2 Faculty Research 'Seed Funding' Budget

24.2.1 It was NOTED that the budget of £20k for seed funding must be spend in 07/08 (by end July) – details were circulated to all staff prior to the meeting by the Associate Dean.

24.2.2 It was NOTED that first priority will be given to requests which will facilitate applications for external funding.

24.2.3 Members were also reminded of the School research funding available for applications via the Research Office.

24.3 Faculty Research Student Training

24.3.1 It was NOTED that plans to restructure the PhD training programme are underway. Laleh Khalili is working with the Associate Dean re this – it is hoped that drafts will be available for the next meeting.

24.3.2 It was NOTED that the budget saved should be used for external speakers for PhD students.

25 STUDENT SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

25.1 The Student Services Annual Report from 2006/7 was NOTED.

26 HONORARY APPOINTMENTS

26.1 This item was deferred until the next meeting.

27 COMMUNICATION OF KEY ISSUES AFTER FACULTY BOARD MEETINGS

27.1 This item was deferred until the next meeting.

28 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

28.1 It was NOTED that there was none.

CJH
Draft