

SOAS, University of London
Resources & Planning Committee
AGENDA

Monday 20 October 2014 at 2.30 pm
in Room 116

- I Membership and Terms of Reference**
To note: membership and terms of reference of Resources & Planning Committee and procedures for the conduct of meetings [Appendix A]
- II Minutes**
To approve: the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 June 2014 [Attached]
- III Action Taken**
To receive: updates on action taken
- IV Matters Arising / for Report**
- V Faculty Plans**
- (i) To receive: an overview of the Faculty Plans [Appendix B]
 - (ii) To consider: the following Plans and approve staffing changes for 2015/16 for recommendation to Governing Body
 - a) Faculty of Law & Social Sciences [Appendix C]
 - b) Faculty of Languages & Cultures [Appendix D]
 - c) Faculty of Arts & Humanities [Appendix E]
 - d) IFCELS [Appendix F]
- VI SOAS Institute Plans**
(ii) To receive: an overview of the SOAS Institute Plans [Appendix G]
- X Dates of next meetings**
The Resources & Planning Committee meetings are scheduled for:
Tuesday 11 November 2014
Tuesday 10 March 2015
Tuesday 9 June 2015 all at 2.30 p.m. in room 116

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

RESOURCES AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING

Monday 20 October 2014 at 2:30 pm
in Room 116, College Buildings

Mr G Dalal, Chair (Hon.Treasurer)
Ms S Alier (Chair, Estates & Infrastructure Committee)*
Professor R Black (Pro-Director, Research & Enterprise)
Ms L Gibbs (Registrar)
Sir Martin Harris (Vice-Chair of Governing Body)
Dr T Miller (Chair of Governing Body)
Professor N Rao (Pro-Director, Learning & Teaching)
Professor P Webley (Director)
Sir Graham Fry
Dr L Hammond
Mr J Heskett*
Professor C Oughton
Ms G Robertson
Mr D Skinner
Mr N Uddin

In attendance: Mr G Appleby (Director of Finance and Planning)
Professor M Craven (Dean of Faculty of Law & Social Sciences)
Professor G Singh (Dean of Faculty of Arts & Humanities)
Professor A Pauwels (Dean of Faculty of Languages and Cultures)
Ms A Hartrey (secretary)*
Ms A Perez de Vera (minute secretary)

* Those persons marked with an asterisk were unable to be present.

1. Membership and Terms of Reference

The Chair welcomed new members. The committee noted the terms of reference and procedures for conduct of meetings.

2. Minutes

The minutes of Resources & Planning Committee meeting held on Tuesday 10 June 2014 were approved subject to the following amendment.

Minute 37. (iv) The committee noted that as the SSR score had fallen more than two standard deviations, it was excluded from the calculation and Law could have returned an even higher result.

3. Action Taken

It was noted that minuted items 38, 39, and 40 were now completed, and that remaining minuted item 35 is already included in the RPC agenda for November.

4. Matters arising/for report

There were no matters arising.

5. Faculty Plans

The Chair noted that this was the first time the Committee had devoted a meeting to Faculty Planning, and invited the presentation and discussion of the following papers:

(i) An overview of the Faculty Plans

A report was received from the Director of Finance and Planning at Appendix B which outlined the summary position across all three faculties for the three year horizon to 2017/18.

The committee noted the following salient features:

- There was anticipated improvement over the planning period, with all but the Faculty of Languages and Cultures achieving the 5% surplus target by 2017/2018.
- Challenges included increased costs, primarily through inflation in staff costs (6%-7%p.a.) and an increase in estate costs, as well as an inability to increase student's home/EU fees beyond the capped £9,000 limit.
- Opportunities arise from the removal of the cap on enrolment numbers for Home/EU students from 2015/16, and the capacity the School has to explore this demand without a proportional increase in its resource requirements.
- The outcomes have not assumed any impact from the Research Excellence Framework, and student target numbers have been adjusted to reflect the lower 2014-15 enrolments to date.

The committee discussed the implication of increasing teaching income by a cumulative amount of 32% across the three years, noting approximately 20% of this growth would result from a greater number of students. It was noted that this strategy relies on using the School's latent capacity in possessing a very low student staff ratio (SSR).

There was some discussion regarding the impact of increasing the SSR, as the low SSR is currently used as a marketing tool. It was noted that other Universities were faced with similar situations, and even with the average SSR for SOAS increasing from around 13 to 16, it was likely that our competitors would also be increasing enrolments; therefore, any change would be relative. The Committee noted that it was difficult to judge the impact on SOAS and its league table rankings at this time.

Further discussion followed on the methodology of achieving final targets from a 'bottom-up' approach, in particular, whether there were risks of becoming too self-referential, rather than benchmarking against competitors. The Committee discussed how risk is being mitigated; particularly should one of the programmes not meet its targets. The Committee noted that there is a general contingency for failing to meet income targets in addition to a specific contingency within the Faculty of Law & Social Sciences.

The Committee concluded that the contingency for failure to meet recruitment and therefore income targets be made more explicit in the School's revised financial forecasts to be presented at the next meeting.

Action: Make contingency for failure to meet recruitment and therefore income targets more explicit in the School's revised financial forecasts to be presented at the next meeting.

(ii) Faculty Plans

a. Faculty of Law & Social Sciences

A report was received from the Dean of the Faculty of Law & Social Sciences at Appendix C. The committee noted that as Law fell in the League Tables last year; this may have impacted applications to the programme this year, contributing to Law not meeting its target for the first time. Given the improved performance this year in the League Tables, it is anticipated that in 2015/16 most of the lost enrolments can be recaptured. Consequently the growth for LSS appears steep, but a contingency of around 4%-5% has been built into the targets.

The Committee noted that there were a large number of new programmes listed, and where these were specified as being “rolled out”, they were being delivered on time.

There was extensive discussion regarding the role of Distance Learning and how it applies to individual programmes. This identified some of the issues impeding financial success, including long lead times for students to enrol, a decline across the board in Distance Learning, and a proliferation of models being used. The Committee noted that a Cost Benefit Analysis is currently underway with an expected outcome by the end of term, which would be available for the Committee to note at its meeting in March 2015. There was further discussion of the role of Distance Learning for PhD students, and while there may be some pedagogical concerns in this delivery of research, the Committee noted that the logistics of this strategy is possible.

The Committee discussed Faculty issues in approaching collaboration and partnerships and noted that planning for teaching growth is difficult without details of the amount of staff research commitment. It was reported that promotion criteria were being reviewed and most staff would have research targets in their personal plans, excluding staff on teaching contracts; however; there were no guidelines on the amount of time spent on research in each discipline area.

b. Faculty of Languages & Cultures

A report was received from the Dean of the Faculty of Languages & Cultures at Appendix D. It was reported that despite having a leading share in the market, the Faculty of Languages and Cultures faces a shrinking market both within the UK and globally.

It was noted that this is the third consecutive year that there has been a decline in applications and admissions (in all but Japanese) and if not for the BA English programmes, the Faculty’s position would be worse. Currently the Faculty is allowing for zero growth in existing language programmes. The committee noted that languages are a core part of the SOAS vision, but that marketing them is becoming tougher, as it is no longer about standing out from competitors, but seeking ways to create new markets.

It was reported that while a small number of languages could be sustained in this environment, teaching over 30 is a challenge; yet in many cases SOAS is the only provider of some languages, especially African languages. With language programmes benefitting least from the new fee and funding regime, the Faculty is increasingly reliant on the cross- subsidy from the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. While cross subsidising of language programmes is common across the sector, the size of SOAS means it falls disproportionately on one Faculty.

The Committee noted that cross-subsidising does however, limit growth for all parties. Consequently, there was some discussion on strategies to improve the Faculty's long-term financial position. It was reported that the 10 year horizon of the FLC plan was necessary to provide a solution, because collaborations with other Universities beyond the UK were now being explored. Other options being considered included alternate year entry into programmes to reduce the costs associated with teaching, blended learning opportunities, and ways of increasing overseas enrolments.

c. Faculty of Arts & Humanities

A report was received from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities at Appendix E. It was reported that the direction the Faculty is taking is to move out of smaller programs with a narrow academic-driven focus, and to develop broader programs with greater appeal to student interests.

In PGT there has been good growth, with 50% based on new programs. The Faculty is seeking to extend this to undergraduate enrolments with aggressive growth from three new BA programs in liberal arts particularly targeted at the North American market. There was also increased interest in Art and Media courses, which balance some of the difficulties being faced in areas such as Study of Religions.

There was some discussion about the performance of Music in the NSS, and the Committee noted that the source of the issue was a large number of practitioner teachers, for which the Head of Department is developing an action plan. There was further discussion about the decreased enrolments in Study of Religions, and the Committee noted that with a new head of department and periodic program review in the last six months, a new direction was being taken to introduce a BA and several MAs that focus on world religions and their influence on philosophy. The Committee also noted that while its teaching curriculum needs modernising, this department does well with research income and endowments, making it sustainable.

It was noted that the Faculty was largely meeting recruitment targets and has recently had notable success in securing philanthropic income for programmes.

d. IFCELS

A report was received from the Pro-Director, Learning and Teaching at Appendix F. The Committee noted that both the FDPS Premasters and ELAS programs had suffered a downturn in enrolments in the last two years. This is typical across the sector, with movement in exchange rates and immigration policies cited as key factors, although SOAS students have not had immigration problems. It was noted that the courses are highly successful as alternate pathways for students into postgraduate courses, although these were not always SOAS courses.

6. SOAS Institutes Plans

The Pro Director, Research & Enterprise, presented a report on the two Institutes at Appendix G. The Committee noted the assumption that core to the success of these plans is raising an endowment fund.

There followed some discussion on the name of the South Asia Institute and its impact on successful fund raising. It was reported that of more importance to the Institutes' success was the allocation of staff, being limited to a Director, Deputy Director, and Administrator within each Institute, with academic staff sourced only from the Faculties.

The Committee agreed that the expenditure lines would in the financial statements would reflect this approach.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meetings of the Resources & Planning Committee are scheduled for:

Tuesday 11 November 2014

Tuesday 10 March 2015

Tuesday 9 June 2015

All meetings are scheduled for 2.30 p.m. and will be held in room 116 in the College Buildings, Russell Square.

Action Points
Resources and Planning Committee
 2.30pm Tuesday 10 June 2014

Minute	Item	Action	Deadline	By
Min 35 (ii) (C/F Min 10 (i))	Faculty Plans – Arts & Humanities	Report summary from periodic review for Study of Religions	24 Oct 2014	Dean Faculty Arts & Humanities
5 (i)	Overview of Contingency Plans	The contingency for failure to meet recruitment and therefore income targets is to be made more explicit in the School's revised financial forecasts.	11 Nov 2014	Registrar