

**SOAS, University of London**

**Resources and Planning Committee**

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at 2.30pm**

**MINUTES**

Members:

- Mr G Dalal (Chair)
- Ms Marie Staunton
- Sir Martin Harris
- Mr Steve Tinton
- Baroness Valerie Amos
- Professor Richard Black
- Professor Deborah Johnston
- Professor Stephen Hopgood
- Ms Paula Sanderson (Via phone)
- Mr Nizam Uddin
- Mr David Skinner
- Professor Michael Charney
- Professor Carol Tan

Apologies:

- Mr Chris Bramall
- Dr Chris Ince
- Mr Dimitri Cautain

In attendance:

- Ms Susan Clucas
- Mr Graeme Appleby
- Ms Claire Appleby
- Miss Sally Priddle

**Minutes**

**RP 2017/18 3 A**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

**Action Points**

**RP 2017/18 3 B**

*BI Tools*

6 of 11 departments would be utilising the system and as it was a new system it would not be used as a definitive system. It would cover all staff in those departments utilising the system. The data would be analysed to align with student outcomes and any disruption.

The Registrar outlined that the priorities for next academic year would be: reviewing data and modelling options for Professional Services and budgets; reviewing strategic objectives alongside financial forecasts and operational plans; reviewing central professional services to there was no duplication of work and to secure EB savings.

The tribal data would be used alongside workload planning data to look at efficiencies across the school.

**Action:** Update on BI tool and analysis process to be presented at June RPC.

The Registrar confirmed that the recruitment process for the head of the library was underway. This area would be looked at as part of the restructuring of support services.

**Action:** Discuss the next steps for the recruitment of the head of library.

#### *Interest Rates Swap*

It was agreed that the interest rate swap would not be taken forwards unless new evidence arose.

### **Matters Arising/Matters for Report**

**RP 2017/18 3 C**

The Committee **noted** that Katie Blacklock would not be joining the Resources and Planning Committee.

### **Director's Report**

**RP 2017/18 3 D**

The Committee **noted** the launch of the Office for Students and transitional year comes into force. Compliance with Prevent would not be a criteria. The application process would be extensive. The application would be reliant on financial forecast to HEFCE submitted in June 2017 and this would be updated in June 2018. The School would meet with OfS to discuss the financial position, HEFCE were made aware of the reduction in undergraduate income.

The Committee noted the impact of the lecturer strikes on the university. 75% lectures and teaching been affected which was similar to other London institutions, however other institutions that impact is far less.

The Committee noted that all communications indicated that UCU branches would not be in favour of the UCU deal proposed on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018. The School would focus on minimising the negative impact on student experience.

### **Forecast financial out-turn 2017-18**

**RP 2017/18 3 E**

The Committee discussed the factors that have contributed to the variance including higher than predicted drop out rates, increased cost of catering, unexpected Bank and Credit card charges and less savings made in both academic and professional services. The Bank and Credit Card charges would be invested.

The Committee discussed the improved systems for collating accurate student number data in the autumn term. The data has been analysed to identify the groups of students who are not continuing. This analysis would be fed into the teaching review projects. Data showed that high tariff students did not attend or complete their courses at SOAS. It was agreed that if SOAS moved up the league tables then it would reduce the drop out of higher tariff students.

The Committee discussed the opportunities of distance learning and the structure for CDEP.

**Action:** Report back at June meeting on CEDEP.

**Action:** Report back on CEFIMS at June.

This academic year the School changed their approach to recruiting students to IFCEs, they paid external agents to support the recruitment and this had a positive impact on the number of applications. It was agreed that the School needed to retain IFCEs students and recruit them onto undergraduate courses.

The School received around £350,000 for bank and credit card charges, £100,000 over estimations, this would be investigated and reported back to the Committee in June.

**Action:** Report back to the Committee on the investigation into credit card charges at the June meeting.

The Committee discussed the risks around the catering budgets and the cost of the termination of the existing contracts, further information would be known in June.

**Action:** Report back to the Committee on the catering project at the June meeting.

The Committee **noted** the report.

### **2018-19 UG Admissions Progress**

**RP 2017/18 3 F**

The School's recruitment numbers were not as good as anticipated. The Committee discussed the implication of other institutions lowering their tariff and offering an increased number of unconditional offer places. It was agreed that offering unconditional places would have a negative impact as it could result in lower tariff students joining courses that were not appropriate for them.

The Committee discussed the options for increasing access to widening participation students, it was agreed that if grades were softened then the support structure within the School needed to be secure enough to support them to succeed in their course.

It was agreed that league tables would be increasingly important for recruitment both domestically and internationally but would not be the School's only measure of success. The League tables would be a factor in recruiting staff and developing partnerships with international universities. Improving the School's position would be a priority but it would be essential to improve the culture within the School and increase staff and Students aspirations.

The Committee discussed the opportunities of introducing foundation year to support students to access their undergraduate degrees. If the foundation year was compressed into their undergraduate degree then students would potentially be eligible for 4 year student funding. This would be included in the campus teaching review.

The Committee discussed the postgraduate student data, it was agreed that it is harder to forecast and the School needed to improve marketing and reach an additional group of students.

The Committee **noted** that the Executive Board would be undertaking further work on future savings and investments.

### **Financial Projections**

**RP 2017/18 3 G**

The Committee discussed the various factors that have attributed to a further decrease in financial projections including student numbers and catering deficit.

The Committee discussed the decrease in the cash position and that without additional savings a safe level of cash would be breached by July 2019 and all cash levels would be breached by July 2021. Additional investments would be required to maintain the safe working on buildings and to meet bid expectations, including a £5million investment in the Brunei Gallery as part of the HEFCE capital funding and £20 million investment to refurbish the Phillips building including windows

**Action:** Present an up to date financial narrative to the Board of Trustees including cash level to ensure consistency of understanding.

It was agreed that RPC needed to see options for the School's next steps prior to the July Board of Trustees meeting. It was agreed that the paper needed to clearly state the position of the School and that a decision needed to be made in the summer about the future viability of the school.

**Action:** Costed options paper with recommendations for next steps to be presented at June meeting.

It was agreed that the School need to control the narrative about the next steps and options for the future.

The Committee discussed the increased overheads of facility management services and options being discussed by the working group. It was agreed that whichever option is agreed must breakeven. The working group would review the options for the termination of the current contract.

**Action:** Provide progress update on facilities management project in June.

The Committee thanked Steve Tinton for leading this process.

The Committee discussed the potential financial implications of the various USS pension dispute outcomes.

**Action:** Provide clear communication to Executive Board outlining the School's position, both the threat and the opportunity and be clear on what needs to change.

The Committee **approved** the financial projections for recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

### **Voluntary Severance Scheme**

**RP 2017/18 3 H**

The School have received 23 applications which would result in £1.5million in savings. If a few additional applications are converted total savings of £1.7million would be reached. Executive Board would be looking at additional efficiency savings, retirements and not recruiting to vacancies.

The Committee **noted** the update.

### **Size and Shape of SOAS**

**RP 2017/18 3 I**

It was agreed that the School's current model is unsustainable and to ensure the future of

SOAS the model needed to be reviewed. The principles behind decisions including teaching models, number of students on courses and the SOAS offer needed to be agreed to inform decisions about the next steps. These decisions would be challenging but would establish the future shape and vision of the School. The process would be informed by external support and expertise including the new Lay Trustee, Andrew Atherton.

**Action:** Options paper on the size and shape of SOAS to be presented at the June meeting.

**Action:** Develop efficiencies dashboard by department to enable comparison, breaking the analysis down by PGT and UG. Present at the June meeting.

It was agreed that elements of these decisions needed to be reflected in departmental plans.

It was agreed that the options paper was critical to ensuring buy in of the academic community.

The Committee **noted** the update.

#### **HEFCE TRAC**

**RP 2017/18 3 J**

The Committee **noted** the HEFCE TRAC return.

#### **Proposal for changes to financial committees**

**RP 2017/18 3 K**

It was **agreed** that this item would be discussed at the June meeting.

#### **Cash Position**

**RP 2017/18 3 L**

The committee **noted** the reports.

#### **HR Strategy Update**

**RP 2017/18 3 M**

The committee **noted** the report.

#### **Student Experience Capital Projects**

**RP 2017/18 3 N**

The committee **noted** the report.

#### **Facilities Management Update- including catering provision**

**RP 2017/18 3 O**

It was **agreed** that the catering services work would be delivered through Chairs action.

Action: Deliver Catering services work through Chairs action.

The committee **noted** the report.