Master’s Paper

THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF BIRKBECK

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This is the third year in which my Strategy paper is presented to the spring-term Strategic Away Day meetings of the SPC and the Governors. As discussed at the autumn term Governors’ meeting, I would like these away days to focus primarily on the Estates Strategy of the College as well as the Fundraising Strategy which underpins both the estates strategy and our efforts to ensure that the Birkbeck experience is available to all those who can benefit from it. Both these aspects are key to the future development of the College in the run up to our 200th Anniversary in 2023.

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In this paper, I will, as usual, discuss some of the achievements of the College in the last year. I will then discuss each of our key areas of activity, as represented by the Pro-Vice Master (PVM) portfolios and carried out within each of our five Schools. This paper will conclude with a brief overview of the Estates Strategy and the Fundraising Strategy so as to set the scene for the more detailed discussion on these areas, which will form the main basis for our discussions.

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I am most grateful to the Vice Master (Professor Matthew Innes), the College Secretary (Keith Harrison), PVMs, Deans and Directors of Services for their leadership of different aspects of our work and their contribution to our strategic development.

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As before, the College performed well in the various rankings of Universities worldwide. In the Times Higher Education (THE) league table we maintained our position in the top 1% of Universities worldwide, continuing to appear in the 200-250th ranking category. This was described by the THE as “a great achievement, demonstrating membership of a small global elite”. As before, Birkbeck obtained high ranking for its international outlook (based on staff, students and research activity) whilst our work in the Arts (both in the School of Arts and in the
departments of History and Philosophy within the School of Social Sciences (History and Philosophy) was once again rated in the top 100 worldwide.

Similarly, in the QS world University rankings, we moved up 10 places to our highest ever position at 280th, over 150 places up from our 2014 ranking. As in the THE rankings, we obtained particularly high rankings for our international nature both in terms of staff and students, and were also highly ranked for academic citations per faculty member. In the subject rankings, English literature, History and Philosophy appeared in the top 100 worldwide as in the THE ranking, whilst Law and Psychology ranked in the top 150.

Moreover, in the global ranking of Psychology Departments, our Department of Psychological Sciences was ranked 5th in the world on the basis of the normalised citation index (i.e. the number of citations per paper) and 8th in the world on the total number of papers in the top 10% most highly cited category.

The high ranking of our Department of Psychological Sciences has once again been paralleled by numerous awards to its staff. Professor Martin Eimer was appointed a Fellow of the British Academy (FBA), whilst Professor Ted Melhuish was appointed OBE for services to Social Sciences and Professor Jacqueline Barnes was appointed a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. Moreover, three Professors in the Department, Naz Derakshan, Anne Richards and Michael Thomas were appointed Fellows of the Association of Psychological Studies.

At a more junior level, Dr Kristen Tummeltshamer was awarded the American Psychological Association Prize for an outstanding PhD dissertation for the work she carried out in the Department. Dr Tummeltshamer, who in typical Birkbeck style completed her PhD part-time as a working mother of two young children, is now carrying out postdoctoral research in the USA.

These awards were paralleled by the successful application of the Department for an Athena Swan Bronze Award for work in gender equality in Science Departments. This parallels the Athena Swan Bronze Award given last year to
the Department of Biological Sciences. From 2016, Athena Swan will be broadened from its current focus on STEM to cover the entire range of academic subjects and the College’s participation in this and a range of other schemes promoting equality and diversity has led to the Equalities Review, chaired by the Vice Master. This review provides a cross-College framework to monitor and manage equality and diversity initiatives and to share best practice as well as reviewing our performance against that of other Universities in London and elsewhere.

Awards in the School of Science were paralleled by a number of awards elsewhere in the College. For example, Professor Laura Mulvey (Professor of Film and Media) and Professor Dame Marina Warner (Professor of English and Creative Writing) were named in a new work on 51 key feminist thinkers, the only living British women to be included in this list. Similarly, Professor Nicholas Wachsmann (Professor of Modern European History) was awarded both the Wolfson History Prize (the 8th Birkbeck academic to win this highly prestigious award) and the Jewish Quarterly Wingate Prize for his book on the History of the Nazi concentration camps, Professor Lynda Nead (Professor of History of Art) was appointed a Trustee of the Victoria and Albert Museum and Professor Claire Callender (Professor of Higher Education Policy) was awarded an OBE for services to higher education.

At a more junior level, Leverhulme Research Fellowships were awarded to Dr Caroline Goodson (Senior Lecturer in Medieval History and Archaeology) and to Dr Luciana Martins (Reader in Latin American Cultures) for their work on, respectively, “Places in Agriculture in Italian cities in the early middle ages” and “Image making as deployed in European expeditions to South America 1850-1950”. Similarly, Dr William Ackah (Lecturer in Community and Voluntary Sector Studies in the Department of Geography) was awarded a prestigious Fulbright Award to study the impact of gentrification in African American Church Congregations in Pittsburgh and compare this to African and Afro-Caribbean communities in London.
RESEARCH

12 The awards to individuals described above, clearly testify to the research strength of the College. As in previous years, this has also resulted in the award of numerous research grants. I will highlight only a small number of these which illustrate significant points concerning our research activities.

13 As always, the School of Science obtained the major part of the College’s research grant income. Two specific grants will be highlighted here. Firstly, the Department of Biological Sciences was successful in obtaining a grant from the Wellcome Trust, in excess of £1 million to purchase a state of the art Cryo-electron microscope which is available only in a handful of other Departments in the UK.

14 Secondly, the Baby Lab of the Department of Psychological Sciences was successful in obtaining an MRC Foundation Award to develop new technologies for autism screening in low resource settings. This is of particular interest since it represents one of the first awards under the MRC Global Challenges Research Fund and will allow the team to apply their pioneering research work to study the development of autism in India.

15 Elsewhere in the College, a cross-school collaboration between Dr Fiona Candlin (Reader in Museum Studies in the School of Arts and Humanities) and Professor Alex Poulovassilis (Professor of Computer Science in the School of Business, Economics and Informatics: BEI) resulted in the award of over £1 million from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Their project will combine the expertise of Dr Candlin in the area of Independent Museums with that of Professor Poulovassilis in Databases in order to create a Database of U.K. Independent Museums, allowing the team to map and analyse the emergence, character and development of U.K. Independent Museums.

16 At an institutional level, an application led by the Executive Dean of the School of Science, Professor Nick Keep, resulted in the award of £1.8 million from the Wellcome Trust under their Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF) for the
period 2016-2019. Only the 25 Universities in the U.K. with the most Wellcome Trust funding can apply to this fund, with not all being successful. Our inclusion in this competition is particularly satisfying since we do not have a Medical School to generate large amounts of Wellcome Trust funding. Moreover, our success in actually obtaining this award builds on our earlier period of ISSF support and will continue to allow us to support the careers of young academics whilst also investing in public engagement activities.

17 In order to underpin the success of our research, the Pro-Vice Master for Research, Professor Julian Swann, has overseen a number of administrative innovations designed to bring together academic and professional services with responsibility for research. For example, he has set up the Research Strategy Group (chaired by the PVM Research and including the Assistant Deans for Research in each School) and working with Katharine Bock (Deputy College Secretary, Governance) established the Research Support Group (chaired by the new Head of Research Strategy Support, Dr Sarah Lee, together with colleagues from Professional Services). These two groups, which report to the Research Committee, are now responsible for the implementation of both the College Research Strategy and the recommendations of the review of postgraduate research student provision which was conducted by Professor Carol Watts.

18 The focus of these groups on postgraduate research students as well as research grant and Fellowship applications is of particular importance in order to maintain our successful record in applying for postgraduate research studentships which are now primarily awarded by the Research Councils to consortia of Universities. In last year’s Strategy Paper, I described our successful application for Doctoral Training Centres in Science funded by three Research Councils (BBSRC, MRC and NERC). This year, a Consortium including the College as well as UCL, SOAS, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the University of East London was successful in being awarded one of 14 Doctoral Training Programmes funded nationwide by the ESRC from 2017-2023. Our new DTI will be able to award 41 PhD studentships per year across the various partners. Birkbeck together with its partners is now advertising these studentships in a
broad-range of new academic disciplines, including Archaeology, Applied Linguistics, Economic and Social History, Gender Studies, Law and Sociology as well as those disciplines such as Economics, Politics and Psychology which were part of the previous ESRC-funded Doctoral Training Centre.

In the Arts and Humanities area, the College was successful in obtaining two AHRC-funded PhD studentships jointly respectively with the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery. In the coming year, we will apply for an AHRC-funded Doctoral Training Programme as a member of the Consortium for Humanities and the Arts South-east England (CHASE) DTP with our partners Essex, Goldsmiths, Kent, SOAS, Sussex, the Courtauld Institute and the University of East Anglia.

Finally, in the research area, the College continues its preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) where it now appears that the current REF cycle will conclude with a census date at the end of 2020 with results available a year later. HEFCE is currently consulting on the recommendations of Lord Stern’s Review of the REF. However, it seems that one recommendation which is certain to be accepted is that all research active staff should be submitted to the REF rather than each University having the opportunity of “game-playing” by choosing which staff to select. This recommendation is very much in keeping with Birkbeck’s ethos of inclusivity and the fact that we have submitted a very high proportion of our staff to previous REFs.

Although the details remain unclear, it appears likely that the submission of all research active staff will be accompanied by a change in which each institution will submit a total number of papers for all staff rather than a specific number being allocated to each individual. To prepare for this possibility, the College is conducting an output census involving all academic staff in January 2017. This will inform decisions about which Units of Assessment Birkbeck should submit to and will help to determine where additional resources or better mentoring might be required to ensure the best possible results in 2021.
Lord Stern also recommended a more flexible approach to the issue of academic impact which is also assessed in the REF. He suggested the need to take a more inclusive attitude to public engagement and for impact on educational or cultural life to be given greater weight. Through the work of the College REF working party, the individual Unit of Assessment leads and the School Impact Officers considerable progress has been made in identifying and supporting potential impact case studies for REF 2021. The College has also been providing seed-corn funding for potential impact case studies and held the first of a series of impact master classes in September 2016. The recent ISSF Award (see above) includes funding for public engagement activities and is therefore also relevant in this regard.

In a notable example of impact, the World Prison Brief Resource (produced by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research: ICPR and underwritten by the College Development Fund) was quoted by President Obama in his recent article in the Harvard Law Review on “The President’s role in advancing Criminal Justice reform”. The ICPR has been hosted at Birkbeck since 2006 as an independent charity with a strong track record of carrying out multidisciplinary research supported by a variety of funders. The decision was taken this year to undertake a full merger of the ICPR with the College and it is now established as a dedicated Institute within the School of Law.

INTERNATIONAL

In January 2016, the THE ranked Birkbeck as the 50th most international University in the world in a ranking based on the diversity of the student body, the proportion of international staff and the level of international academic collaboration. As described above, we also score highly for internationalisation in the overall THE rankings and in the QS world University rankings. This is all the more remarkable given the nature of our teaching model which has historically led to a focus on home students living and working in London.
To build on this success, Professor Stephen Frosh, PVM for International Links, has developed an Internationalisation Strategy which was agreed by the Academic Board in June 2016. One of the aims of this Strategy is to enhance our international research collaborations and to provide criteria for the approval of formal international partnerships with overseas Universities.

In terms of international research collaborations, in 2015-2016 the College received almost £2 million from EU Government sources with a small amount from other overseas sources. This represents approximately 20% of the College’s research income. Clearly, there are issues regarding grants of this type in terms of Brexit and we need to join the general lobbying by the University sector for the preservation of these grants in the immediate future and their replacement by UK-based funding post-Brexit. Although there is a clear threat in this area, the College is much less vulnerable than other institutions which have a much higher proportion of EU funding. Moreover, it is likely that the funding which the UK contributes to the general European research pot will in the future be used to provide additional UK-based research funding.

In terms of formal international partnerships, we currently have a number of research and student exchange agreements with Universities in countries such as America, Brazil, China, Japan and elsewhere. Clear criteria for approval of such partnerships are now in place and a process has been outlined, which focuses on the academic and/financial benefits to Birkbeck of each proposed collaboration in a more rigorous way than previously.

Such collaborations can be in the teaching as well as in the research area. For example, the School of Business, Economics and Informatics (BEI) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Shanghai University of Sport (SUS). This will allow SUS students to spend the second year of a three-year Sports Management Programme at Birkbeck with the first and third year of the programme being based at SUS. Following successful completion of the three years of the programme, students will graduate with Masters Degrees from both SUS and Birkbeck.
29 The major activity of the International Office is however, the recruitment of international students which has become an increasing focus of the College in recent years. Indeed, full-time international (non-EU) students now account for £8M of the College’s £70M fee income. The International Office continues to seek new ways of maximising overseas student recruitment. For example, a new International Scholarship Scheme will be on offer in 2017 which should help Birkbeck to attract and convert applications from high quality international students.

30 Moreover, this year we have become a Chevening partner. Membership of this scheme, which is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has increased the number of applications from international students without a major input of funds from the College itself. For 2017-2018, 653 applicants have applied for a Chevening award and selected Birkbeck as their first choice. Of these, 124 applied for one of our partnership eligible courses (the courses each School nominated) with the remaining 529 applying for other courses at Birkbeck and therefore being entered into the general pool for a Chevening award. This new partnership and the additional promotion the College has obtained through it, is undoubtedly a reason why full-time Masters level international applications for 2017-2018 are up very significantly, compared to the same point last year.

31 This increase in applications comes against the background of a very successful recruitment year for international students in 2016-2017. In our major recruitment area for international students, full-time one-year Masters courses enrolment increased by 4% on 2015-2016, exceeding our target. This increase in non-EU overseas students was paralleled by an increase in EU students on Masters Courses. Thus, enrolments of EU students on full-time (one-year) Masters courses increased by 67% in 2016-2017 and part-time (two-year) Masters enrolments increased by 6%.

32 As will be discussed below, these significant increases are also paralleled by increases in U.K. student enrolments on our full-time and part-time Masters
courses. They are likely therefore to be due to the availability of post-graduate loans for U.K. and EU students which were introduced for the first time for students starting in 2016-17. In addition however, in the case of EU students, demand is likely to have been stimulated by our campaign publicising the Government’s commitment to providing loans and our charging home rather than overseas fees for EU students who begin in 2016-2017. This has subsequently been extended to students starting in 2017-2018 (for the duration of their course) but no announcement has been made regarding future years. The availability of loans for EU students starting in 2017-2018 is therefore a focus of our current marketing campaign.

Clearly, these rises in EU student numbers are very satisfying but obviously do render the College more vulnerable to losses of such students, post-Brexit, when loans and home fees are unlikely to be available for new students.

Once again, as with research funding, the College needs to participate in sector-wide campaigns on this issue. However, it should be noted that our EU student profile is very different from that of other Universities. Thus, for example, in 2015-2016, 211 FTE (full-time equivalent) students at undergraduate level were domiciled in the EU and had come to London specifically to study at Birkbeck. In contrast, a further 1,414 were classified as EU students but were domiciled in London. Similarly, at postgraduate level, 119 FTE students were EU domiciled, whilst 275 FTE students, classified as EU, were domiciled in London. This makes it critically important for the College to lobby the Government on the fee/loan treatment of EU nationals who were resident in the UK, before the referendum. Similarly, to avoid our fishing in a diminishing pool of such individuals, we need to lobby on the fee/loan status of those who arrived after the referendum but who will acquire long-term residence status in the future.

**EDUCATION**

As noted above, the significant increases in EU postgraduate students recruited for 2016-2017, were paralleled in U.K. student enrolments on Masters Courses. Thus, full-time postgraduate home students increased by 140% in 2016-2017.
compared to 2015-2016, resulting in an increase in all full-time postgraduate students (home, EU and international) from 542 to 929, an increase of 71%. Moreover, applications for our full time Masters courses for 2017-2018 are 67% up on the same point last year (402 additional applications).

Similarly, postgraduate part-time enrolments from home students increased by 33% in 2016-2017 compared to 2015-2016 with the overall increase in home, EU and international enrolments on these courses also increasing by 33%, from 590 in 2015-2016 to 783 in 2016-2017. Moreover, applications for our part time Masters courses for 2017-18 are 26% up on the same point last year, although it should be noted that we are still at a very early stage in the part time application cycle.

As noted above, these increases are likely to be dependent on the availability of postgraduate loans for home and EU students. In this regard, it is particularly satisfying that very large increases were observed in the 30-60 age group following the success of the College’s political campaign which resulted in the raising of the age-limit of these loans from 30 (which was originally proposed) to 60.

At undergraduate level, enrolments on our three-year full-time courses were slightly down from 1,107 in 2015-2016, to 1,089 in 2016-2017. This was accounted for by a small decrease in EU students enrolling with home enrolments being on a par with last year. This suggests that EU students applying for undergraduate full-time courses may require more reassurance about future fees and loans, than those applying for full-time Masters Courses. This is likely to be the case given that our full-time undergraduate courses last for three years, whilst full-time postgraduate courses last for only one year. Overall however, the level of recruitment to our three-year undergraduate courses was highly satisfactory, particularly given the increases in competition for prospective students (with no increase in the pool of applicants) caused by the removal of the student number controls. Moreover, at the 15 January first UCAS deadline, our applications for 2017-18 were up 14% on last year suggesting we are competing effectively for
younger students who apply at this point of the full time undergraduate degree cycle.

39 Recruitment to our four-year (part-time) undergraduate courses was also satisfactory in 2016-2017. For the first time, since the introduction of increased fees in 2012, we observed a small increase in enrolments by 2% from 408 in 2015-2016, to 418 in 2016-2017. Although small, this does represent a change in the pattern of continuing decline of part-time undergraduate numbers since 2012-2013. Similarly although we are at a very early point in the part time cycle, applications for four year degree undergraduate degrees beginning in 2017-18, are 6% up on the same point last year.

40 This is of particular interest since the Government has announced the introduction of maintenance loans for part-time students from 2018-2019. We are in detailed discussions with the appropriate Government Departments on the availability/terms of these loans and their relationship to the benefit system. Clearly, the availability of maintenance loans is currently the major difference between the benefits available to our part-time four-year students and our full-time three-year students, with both groups receiving fee loans. We are hopeful that the introduction of maintenance loans for part-time students will result in students applying to Birkbeck who would not have otherwise done so. However, the major impact is likely to be on applications for our four-year courses from students who would otherwise have applied for the three-year degree, attracted by the maintenance loan. This would also be a positive development since such students may well be able to combine their studies and their other commitments more successfully when taking a four-year rather than a three-year degree, thereby having a positive impact on their success and on our completion rates.

41 Overall, our excellent recruitment figures for 2016-2017 are a tribute to the dedication and hard work of academic and professional staff across the College. A year ago we were facing a potential recruitment crisis, having missed our recruitment targets for 2015-2016 and seen a downturn in the first phase of applications for 2016-2017. That this has been turned into a position of strength
is due to a range of innovations in admissions activity. The External Relations team, led by Jonah Duffin has successfully refocused its campaign in the light of changes in demography, policy and market competition. Moreover, there have also been significant shifts in admission process and strategy, overseen by a Recruitment Management Group, chaired by the Vice Master. This has resulted in an increased ratio of offers to applications and of enrolments to offers. It should be noted however, that the very large increases in Masters Enrolments provide a less stable source of ongoing income compared to undergraduate number increases due to the shorter duration of postgraduate courses. Moreover, the availability of loans has clearly resulted in a surge in student enrolments which may not be sustainable in future years.

42 Based on our current successes however, we need to be ambitious for the future, not only meeting demand but stimulating it through innovation and the creation of new opportunities. For the past five years, the College’s overall student population has remained essentially static at 9,400 FTE. Within the headline figure, there have, of course, been major shifts in the student body, in its demographics, in patterns and modes of study and the distribution between disciplines and Schools. However, to fulfil our long-term goals and to ensure sustainability across all areas of the College, we need to grow further the student population, towards 10,000 FTE students.

43 As well as continuing and developing our existing activities, we also need therefore to introduce new courses to stimulate recruitment and to fulfil our mission of offering University education to those with family, work and other commitments. We clearly have the capacity to do this. A number of initiatives have been developed both in the access area and in the area of degree level apprenticeships and these will be discussed respectively in the sections of this paper on Access and Community Engagement and on Enterprise and Innovation.

44 At a higher level, the BEI School has introduced the College’s first MBA degree Programme. This part-time 18-month MBA is a collaboration between Birkbeck and Central St Martins University of the Arts London and brings together the
approaches and thinking of a world-leading art and design institution with our expertise in providing business education to working people. The aim is to create a new type of business graduate who can combine genuinely creative thinking and innovation with core financial and strategic management skills. This new development is likely to be the first in a suite of MBA Programmes offering a different approach to the traditional MBA.

In a further novel development, the Department of Computer Science in BEI has been awarded a £50,000 grant by HEFCE to develop a conversion Master’s degree in Data Sciences. This course will combine work in software engineering and data sciences to provide a Masters level qualification for those with no previous computer or data science experience. As well as developing a new course in an area of considerable importance at the present time, this initiative represents a new development at Birkbeck which has the potential to pave the way for increasing Birkbeck teaching in the areas of data handling, Cyber-security and perhaps ultimately areas of engineering.

Similarly, in the School of Arts and Humanities it was possible to use the resources released by a range of existing vacancies, to make two new Professorial appointments in Architecture and Photography, which draw on the high reputation of our Art History Department to open up novel areas of teaching and also research. One focus of this year’s planning round and of the newly established planning group, chaired by the Director of Planning, Nick Head, will be identifying further opportunities for broadening our portfolio and developing new models of delivery to ensure the growth necessary for our future sustainability.

As well as recruiting students and introducing new teaching initiatives, it is also important that we monitor closely the student experience and in particular our scores in the annual National Student Survey (NSS) of final year undergraduates. Last year our overall NSS score was satisfactory with 87% of our final year students satisfied with their overall experience (43rd out of 124 institutions) and 91% finding their course intellectually stimulating. Similarly, there were very good
results at individual subject level. Five subject areas (Archaeology, Classics, Finance, Geology and Linguistics) were rated top in the country for student satisfaction with a further five areas (Economics, English, Environmental Management, Geography and Social Sciences) rated top in London where scores are traditionally lower than elsewhere in the country.

Unfortunately, there are two areas of NSS where our 2016 results give considerable cause for concern. These are Assessment and Feedback where the College ranks 80th out of 124 nationally and Academic Support (the ability of students to readily contact staff and when they do, to get timely advice and support), where the College ranks 122 out of 124 nationally. Clearly, these scores give cause for concern about the experience of our students which is both of importance in itself and will ultimately impact on their retention and ability to complete the course. I have asked Professor Diane Houston, our new PVM for Education to conduct an urgent review of the Student Experience at Birkbeck.

This review will allow us to respond effectively to the needs of a student body which has changed significantly in the last five years. This has resulted in major challenges and pressures in terms of providing academic and administrative support and an environment that meet our students’ needs and supports their aspirations and welfare. As with previous reviews of academic areas, this review is likely to involve also another senior member of academic staff, an independent Governor and a senior Administrative Officer (the Academic Registrar, Fraser Keir, who has already done much work in this area).

As well as being of importance in themselves, these poor ratings feed directly into the new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which the Government intends to use to assess teaching in all Universities. The deadline for TEF returns is 26th January. I am most grateful to Dr Tim Markham, Deputy PVM, for taking the lead in preparing our TEF submission as Acting PVM in the interim between Professor Sue Jackson’s retirement and Professor Houston’s arrival at Birkbeck.
In the TEF, it is proposed that the teaching of each institution will be graded as Gold, Silver or Bronze. In the initial phase of the assessment, this will be done on the basis of statistically significant deviations from weighted benchmarks in six key metrics for the majority mode of provision at the institution. This will be followed by a second phase of assessment looking at any minority mode of provision at the institution as well as the breakdown of the data according to a variety of demographic measures. The final phase of assessment will include the institution’s 15-page submission which is expected to include other quantitative and qualitative evidence as well as a narrative to further contextualise the metrics.

The six key metrics will be the “teaching on my course” (NSS), “assessment and feedback” (NSS), “academic support” (NSS), “non-continuation (HESA) data”, “employment or further study” (DLHE, survey of graduate destinations) and “highly skilled employment” (DLHE).

In the TEF assessment, Birkbeck is considered a part-time majority provider and in this area we have two negative flags for “assessment and feedback” and for “academic support”, as described above. Unfortunately, this automatically results in an initial Bronze rating. However, it is highly unusual that we also have three positive flags as well, for the “teaching on my course”, “non-continuation” and “highly skilled employment” as well as being very close to a fourth positive flag for “employment or further study” where our data just falls short of a statistically significant increase on the benchmark. Therefore, without the two negative flags we would automatically be ranked as Gold at this stage and no institution in the Bronze category has as many positive flags as us.

In our contextual submission, we therefore need to argue most strongly about the unique nature of our results with several areas above the benchmark. Moreover, our rating on assessment and feedback is being measured against a part-time benchmark skewed heavily by a preponderance of Open University students who study in a much less intensive manner. Similarly, although we do have issues about academic support, this is in part due to the time-poor nature of
our student body that require access to staff at very specific times, for example, just prior to lectures.

Although these arguments may carry weight in enhancing our TEF rating, they do not provide an excuse to do nothing about our poor ratings in the “assessment and feedback” and “academic support” areas, reinforcing the need for a review of how we do better in these areas, given the nature of our student body.

ACCESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As well as developing our courses and the student experience we need to continually attempt to improve access to undergraduate programmes, particularly for those who may not be able to directly enter an undergraduate programme.

Although traditionally such students have taken a Certificate Programme (such as Higher Education Introductory Studies (HEIS), or the Certificate in Legal Methods), Dr Roz Dixon, the PVM for Access and Community Engagement has led the development of a new initiative in which students can study a Foundation Year at Birkbeck.

In 2017-2018, for the first time, students will be able to enter four-year full-time evening degree programmes which will begin with the Foundation Year and be followed by the standard three-year full-time evening degree programme. These will be for students who do not meet standard requirements for the first year of a degree but who demonstrate the likely ability to complete a degree subject with an additional year of study at the outset. Although students on these Foundation Year Programmes (year 0) will be integrated into existing provision, they will formally be carrying out the first year of a four-year degree programme with progression to year one and subsequent years of the three-year degree being dependent only upon satisfactory progress. The fees will be £6,000 for the Foundation Year (equivalent to existing Certificate provision) and £9,000 for subsequent years.
This Foundation Year Programme will be offered from 2017-2018 in all Schools taking advantage of existing provision, such as the Certificates of HE in Life Sciences, Psychology and Legal Methods as well as Higher Education Introductory Studies (HEIS).

In addition to promoting access for all students in this way, we have also funded a programme specifically for asylum seekers entitled “Bridges to Study”. Under this programme, 20 asylum seekers (who because of their status cannot obtain loans and are subject to international fees), will be given fully-funded undergraduate or postgraduate places at Birkbeck with a programme of additional support to smooth their transition to U.K. Higher Education.

Similarly, in October 2016 we launched the initial phase of our outreach teaching initiative in Tottenham. This is supported by the London Borough of Haringey (which contains no other University activity). Eighteen students have begun study on the HEIS course, each of whom is receiving a £2,000 Bursary funded by Haringey for their study, so reducing the loan they need to take to £4,000 for this year. As with all Birkbeck students, these students are eligible for further bursary support based on low household income. Following completion of the HEIS course, these students can progress to further degree study at Birkbeck.

The ability to recruit eighteen students for the first year of the course has been based on the work of our widening access team led by Caroline McDonald with a dedicated member of staff, Faith Williams (funded by the Harinergey Local Authority). Critically, Faith was previously a London Borough of Haringey employee and is a resident of Tottenham with a detailed knowledge of the area, so allowing her to carry out successfully a number of outreach activities.

Although intended to be on a significantly larger scale, the further development of our activities at University Square Stratford can benefit from the knowledge gained in Tottenham. Thus, although we continue to run a number of courses in Stratford, student recruitment has stagnated in recent years. I have therefore asked Dr Roz Dixon to conduct a review of our activities in Stratford with a view...
to recommending both short-term improvements and future developments. In terms of immediate action, Dr Dixon has recommended the recruitment of at least one dedicated outreach worker who will specifically be employed to promote our current Stratford courses. She is also investigating how best our activities in Stratford can be focussed on the USS site compared to their current dispersion, with, for example our library facilities and staff being currently co-located with the UEL Library in another building, rather than being readily available in the USS building.

In terms of future developments, we need to commission an analysis of the areas of teaching demand in Stratford, both in terms of subject and level of provision since the demographic changes in the area may have created opportunities which were not present when we moved to Stratford. Similarly, the entry into the area of new providers such as Loughborough University and UCL, in addition to the presence of UEL, requires a competition analysis allowing us to understand where there will be real demand for our evening provision.

Finally, in the access area, we also benefit from hosting (since 2006) Linking London, a network of 42 HE and FE partners, led by Dr Sue Betts and chaired by our Deputy College Secretary (Operations), Megan Reeves. Following on Linking London’s success in being designated by HEFCE, one of the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) it has now bid successfully (with two other networks) for the follow on HEFCE initiative, the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). This will target wards with unexpectedly low progression to higher education compared to school leaver achievement.

**ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION**

The unique nature of our teaching model offers specific opportunities to interact with employers, for example, by employers sponsoring their employees to study at Birkbeck. As described in last year’s strategy paper, the Government’s Apprenticeship Programme offers a new opportunity for Birkbeck in this area.
Thus, from April 2017, an Apprenticeship levy will be introduced at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's pay bill.

67 Many employers, perhaps justifiably, regard this as another form of taxation for which they will pay funds without gaining any benefit. Similarly, London business organisations and individual businesses are concerned that funds will flow from large employers in London to fund low-level Apprenticeship programmes elsewhere in the country. Clearly, one solution to this problem would be to encourage employers to use the levy to sponsor appropriate study by their employees at Birkbeck, thereby promoting employee development and using the levy in a productive fashion.

68 Under the leadership of Professor Philip Powell (Pro-Vice Master for Enterprise and Innovation) the College has established the structure to develop and deliver higher degree apprenticeships with this infrastructure being able to roll out programmes across the institution as new apprenticeship standards are developed and demand warrants. The first three Apprenticeship Programmes (in the Schools of BEI and Science) have now been developed and approved by the College Programmes Committee for introduction in October 2017. These are the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Chartered Management, (a four-year programme run by the Management Department of the BEI School), BSc in Digital and Technology Solutions (Software Engineer Specialism, a four-year programme by the Department of Computer Science in BEI) and the FD in Laboratory Science, (Analytical Science and Life Science Specialism, a two-and-a-half year programme to be run by Biological Sciences in the School of Science).

69 All three Programmes feature a combination of subject-based academic modules and work-based learning modules ending with a work-based project and portfolio, where the apprentice can evidence their vocational competence. The College recently submitted its application to join the new Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) and we have also applied to the Skills Funding Agency to be able to deliver apprenticeship training to non-levy paying companies.
Our engagement with employers via the Apprenticeship programme is only one part of our employer engagement activities. These involve all Schools of the College and are designed to enhance the employability of our students. Thus, fifty nine events, all delivered by employers, have been held under the Work Readiness programme with an average registration for each event of 83. Similarly, employers have been involved in the Work Learn Fair held at Birkbeck in partnership with the widening access team with 600 students and 31 employers attending on the day, whilst employers have also been involved in delivering workshops entitled “What employers want”.

Overall these events together with the general employer engagement activity have resulted in over 75 employers being involved in events on campus in 2015-2016. Evidently, employers are also involved in our in-house employment agency, Birkbeck Talent. Following a pilot study, this was successfully launched College-wide in 2016 and has so far placed 167 students in jobs or paid internships. Interestingly, many of our employer engagement events involve Birkbeck alumni who work at the organisation concerned. Thus, alumni from each of the five Schools ran “What employers want” evenings, indicating the cross-College nature of this activity. Similarly, alumni have been involved in pilot careers clinic sessions, reviewing a student’s CV and helping them in writing a persuasive application as well as being mentors for those seeking highly skilled employment through the Mentoring Pathways programme.

**ESTATES**

Although the College continues to face a number of uncertainties, such as the future funding of EU students and the sustainability of the recent surge in applications for Masters Degrees, overall we are in a strong financial position. Over the last few years, we have consistently generated surpluses in excess of 5% of turnover which are intended for reinvestment in the College. This financial success has resulted in the College having (at 31st of July 2016) cash reserves totalling £75.4 million. Of this £17.8 million is invested in a fund with a long-term
The availability of this large cash reserve together with the relatively low borrowing rates and our fundraising potential (see below) offers the opportunity to develop a highly ambitious Estates programme, which will allow us to deal with a number of long-standing estates issues, as well as enhance the facilities available to our students and our high quality researchers. I am most grateful to Jeremy Tanner, Director of Commercial Services and Estates Development and his team for their detailed work in developing the Estates Strategy and its proposed programme/options. As previously agreed, the following points have been identified as the core objectives of the strategy:

- Enabling teaching and learning to be delivered in high quality Birkbeck controlled space in or near to the core estate in Malet Street

- Provide facilities to deliver an excellent student experience

- Invest in the quality of research infrastructure to facilitate research excellence

- Continue to improve the quality, fitness for purpose and sustainability of the existing estate

The manner in which we achieve this will need to be discussed in detail at the SPC and Governors Away Days. Below, I set out a brief summary of the issues involved focusing on the relevant buildings where major change is envisaged. Clearly, it will also be important to maintain and enhance the facilities available to the School of Arts in Gordon Square and to SSHP in Russell Square as well as for the School of Law in its existing premises in Gower Street or via a potential move to core University property in Torrington Square.
The outstanding research on infant brain development and autism carried out in the Baby Lab of the Department of Psychological Sciences has contributed greatly to the success of this Department, a number of aspects of which were discussed earlier in this paper.

Funding has been obtained from the Wohl Foundation, the Wolfson Foundation and the Garfield Weston Foundation to develop a Toddler Laboratory for the team on the vacant site at 33 Torrington Square. The recent need to evacuate Baby Lab staff from the adjacent building at 32 Torrington Square due to safety issues with the structure of the building, now offers the opportunity for a co-ordinated development on 32-33 Torrington Square. We have recently instructed the design team for this project with a view to obtaining planning permission early in 2017, allowing building work to start on site at the end of 2017.

The purchase of Cambridge House on the Euston Road by the College has significantly enhanced the amount of freehold property which we own. Our aim in making this purchase was to utilise Cambridge House in accordance with our strategy of maximising the amount of teaching space controlled by the College, particularly in our main campus area.

In the last few months, we have been developing a plan to utilise the Cambridge House site to relocate the entire School of Business, Economics and Informatics (BEI) which is currently dispersed over the main building, the extension building and the Clore Management Centre. This would provide a landmark Business School building for the College in a high profile location whilst allowing us to develop the space currently occupied by BEI as additional teaching space. However, to accommodate the entire BEI School we will need to demolish the existing building and build a nine-storey building. This is in excess of the current planning permission which allows the addition of two storeys above the height of
the existing building. Discussions with Camden Council have indicated that a nine-
storey building would be difficult from the planning point-of-view but could possibly be allowed if there are very strong economic and regeneration arguments.

Although the relocation of BEI and the creation of additional teaching space on the main campus is an attractive proposition, we have also developed an alternative plan given the planning issues. This would involve refurbishing the existing building and adding one or two additional storeys, within the consented planning envelope. The building would be used to provide us with additional teaching space under our own control. However, it would be constructed in such a way as to be suitable not only for general teaching but also for intensive/executive-type courses and for both internal and external conferences. It would also be possible to provide facilities, for example, for graduate students to enhance the student experience.

Clearly, this alternative project does provide us with much needed additional teaching space but this is not in our preferred location on the main site. This project is however, much less challenging in planning terms than the building of the nine-storey building on the Cambridge House site. Moreover, the refurbishment of the existing building and construction of additional storeys is much cheaper than demolition/rebuilding. It also provides us with additional teaching space in a one-stage project rather than requiring the construction of a new building for BEI, followed by the conversion of their existing space for teaching. We therefore need to take a view as to how to proceed, balancing the advantages of the BEI move against the cost and planning issues involved.

Malet Street Extension Building

This 1960s building is nearing the end of its useful life. It is clear that major capital refurbishment expenditure will be required in order for it to continue to function. Our preferred option is therefore to demolish the existing building and build a new building containing some of the existing activities and a considerable
amount of additional teaching space, in accordance with our strategy. We are advised that the new building could be approximately double the size of the existing building which is considerably lower in height than the adjacent buildings and has an unusual footprint which could be expanded.

83 The primary purpose of the new building would be as a state-of-the-art teaching block which we would use in the evening. Potentially, the building could be constructed with a partner (for example, another College of the University), which could use the building during the day. Alternatively, we could follow our normal model of renting out the space during the day.

84 The current Extension Building contains office accommodation for several Departments and also major laboratory facilities for the Department of Biological Sciences. It is likely that some of the office accommodation would need to return to the new building, following a period in temporary rented accommodation, although this would be minimised if the Department of Computer Science moves to a new BEI building on the Cambridge House site.

85 In terms of the laboratory facilities, currently in the Extension Building, whatever their ultimate location, they would need to be decanted during the period of demolition and construction. Laboratory facilities would be difficult to obtain on a temporary basis elsewhere unless we were in partnership with another University or College which could provide those facilities whilst construction was ongoing.

86 To deal with this problem, we would construct first a building for the Department of Biological Sciences and only then demolish the extension building. This would solve the decant problem by moving laboratories to a new permanent site and would also maximise the amount of space available for teaching in the building. Most importantly, it would provide high quality new facilities for one of our strongest research areas.
Currently, our preferred site for the construction of a Biological Sciences block would be the in-fill extension in the south west corner of our main building, outside the Council Room. Given the STEM nature of our research in Biological Sciences and its very high quality, it is potentially possible part of this construction could be funded by Government HEFCE sources, providing STEM infrastructure support.

Overall the proposed Estate programme clearly provides the College with enhanced research and teaching facilities. In terms of teaching, we need to set up an academic group to ensure that new teaching facilities are not merely suitable for current teaching but fit with our vision for future teaching patterns. Moreover, it should be noted that the demolition of Cambridge House and of the Extension Building both enable the future provision of teaching space but only at a subsequent stage of our building programme. In contrast, refurbishment of Cambridge House provides a new teaching facility much earlier in the programme.

As described in our Estates Strategy document, the overall cost of the developments outlined above is approximately £130 million. This is however reduced by approximately £20 million if Cambridge House is refurbished rather than reconstructed, so resulting in a reduced cost of this project as well as eliminating the cost of converting current BEI space into teaching facilities. Although we do have considerable reserves as described above, we would clearly need to identify additional funding to carry out this ambitious strategy. This could include borrowing sums which, as well as being attractive at the present time, would very probably be a condition of obtaining Government STEM funds. We would also look to fundraising, particularly in the run-up to the 200th Anniversary of the College and this is discussed in the next section.
FUNDRAISING

Under the leadership of Chris Murphy, our Development and Alumni team is helping contribute to the long-term sustainability of the College through the raising of philanthropic income from individuals, companies, charitable trusts and foundations. There ambitions are directly aligned to the strategic objectives of the College and focus on student recruitment, retention, the student experience, development of the estate and academic research.

In total £1.79 million new income was secured in 2015-2016 and that figure has already been exceeded in 2016-2017. This fundraising is underpinned by a steady growth in mid-level giving circles. For example, the Masters circle (gifts of £1K-£5K per annum) now has 57 members compared to 19 members in 2013-2014. Similarly, the 1823 circle (gifts of £5K-£25K per annum) now has 24 members compared to 4 members in 2013-2014).

Funding has been provided for undergraduate bursaries, postgraduate scholarships for Masters Students, as well as fully and partly funded PhD Studentships. Moreover, a number of projects mentioned elsewhere in this paper are supported by philanthropic funds, notably our employment agency, Birkbeck Talent, our Bridges to Study project for Asylum Seekers and posts in Student Services supporting retention.

The Development team (in association with our Consultants, More Partnership) is currently preparing our 200th Anniversary Fundraising Campaign “Birkbeck: No Barriers. No Limits”. The case for support is now being finalised and will shortly be tested in feasibility meetings with potential and past donors.

The case for support currently envisages our seeking support under two main headings. Firstly, “No Barriers: Wider Access”, where we will seek support for undergraduate and postgraduate bursaries, support to complete the course/student experience and career development. Secondly, “No Limits: Greater Excellence”, where we will seek support towards the Estates projects
described above, as well as Doctoral Research Scholarships and prestigious Future Leader, Post-doctoral Fellowships.

CONCLUSION

95 I believe that we now have an extraordinary opportunity to achieve step change in Birkbeck. As always, there are external uncertainties such as Brexit and whether the surge in Masters recruitment is sustainable. Nonetheless, we are in a strong financial position based on good financial performance over a number of years and we have an ambitious but realistic Estates Strategy. As we move towards our 200th Anniversary, I believe that we should implement this Estates Strategy and in parallel develop an ambitious Fundraising Strategy both to underpin our Estates Strategy and to improve student access, experience and retention. We should build on the innovation and developments I have described above, in our teaching at access, undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in order to expand the range of opportunities we offer and the number of students who benefit from them. We need to improve and invest in the student experience, the support services and the infrastructure that promotes student success. We should focus on step change improvement in Estates, on innovation in teaching provision/delivery and on improvement to the student experience, underpinned by the potential of a major fundraising campaign.

96 This should allow us to ensure that by the time of the 200th Anniversary, the Birkbeck experience is available to all who can benefit from it and is of the highest possible quality in terms of physical infrastructure and student support.

Professor David S. Latchman
January 2017